



# Safety Recognition Incentive Programs May Be the Key

BY HADDY ROJAS

Today's safety professionals have been working hard to improve the safety culture within their organizations. A great tool to help accomplish a stronger safety culture is through the implementation of a "safety incentive or reward" program. It is important to engage and motivate employees to not just get the job done, but to get it done safely. That is accomplished with a safety recognition incentive program, which rewards employees on the front end instead of having to pay for workers' compensation and medical expenses on the back end after an employee injury. A safety recognition or incentive program helps build morale and focuses attention on achieving the goals of the organization's safety program. Providing a safety recognition program will raise employees' safety awareness as supervisors monitor employee safety performance and evaluate outcomes. As a result, the workplace will progress to higher levels of safety and health achievements.

Everyone likes to get a pat on the back for a job well done, especially if that pat includes some type of bonus, financial compensation or recognition before colleagues. Public sector organizations often face the dilemma of how to do so when they may have very limited budgetary resources or during difficult financial times. Rewarding employees and motivating safety performance does not always require a tremendous outlay of money. The goal of any safety rewards program should be to engender the commitment to the safety by using initiatives that let people know they are appreciated.

The first step to setting up a Safety Recognition Incentive Program is to identify the activity or activities that you seek to reward such as best safety practices or no accidents. Secondly, let employees know that you are establishing a recognition program. The most meaningful form of recognition involves some type of proof that an employee is valued by an organization. You can also let them know that the budget is tight, but their adherence to the organization's safety program is valuable and it is important to you to demonstrate appreciation of their commitment. One of the best ways to find out what motivates your employees might be to just ask them!



It takes creativity to customize the Safety Recognition Incentive Program to make sure it works well and is accepted by your organizational culture. A monetary reward is not the only way to recognize employees. Some workers actually prefer a more personal “thank you” note, a pin, a certificate or being singled out in front of colleagues. All of these can leave a lasting impression. Another significant form of employee recognition is to develop a mentoring program by rewarding employees with the opportunity to meet with higher ranking administrators or get a higher rank perk. Create an employee-of-the-month parking space. Elect employees to a ‘Safety Wall of Fame’.

A good example of a safety incentive is the Safe Driving Award Programs which many public-sector organizations use with good success in departments. Safe Driving Awards Programs recognize employees who drive a vehicle for 50 % or more of their job duties such as a public transit bus driver. Employees in Safe Driver Award Programs may receive a gift such as a pin, and eventually a monetary reward, for every year they do not have a preventable collision. These exceptional employees are honored for not only driving defensively, but also for protecting lives, while performing their job with the highest safety standards.

The second step to setting up a Safety Recognition Incentive Program is to work with managers to develop guidelines as to how the program will work. It is important to communicate to managers how to evaluate and distribute rewards so that every employee has an equal chance. Develop guidelines that outline how often rewards or perks are given out, and the value of them. Make sure managers are well trained on how to administer the program and distribute awards. The final step is to monitor how the program is working and make adjustments to engage employees and management so that the Safety Rewards Incentive program is truly effective in improving safety performance!



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*Ms. Rojas has oversight of the safety issues of seven Miami-Dade County departments. She has assisted with the implementation of comprehensive safety and health programs, policies and procedures, thus enhancing safety practices and contributing to a proactive approach for safety concerns, and ensuring compliance with the Federal, State and safety and health industry standards. Ms. Rojas holds professional certifications, including Lead Auditor of OSHAS 18001:2007 standard, Safety Management System and Certified Sustainability Manager. She has graduate and undergraduate degrees in Occupational Health Administration from the University of Rosary and Jorge Tadeo of Colombia. In addition, she has chaired the Countywide Safety Council meeting and is the coordinator of the Countywide Safe Driving Award Program.*



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