

# Beyond The Cab

The only safety management newsletter dedicated exclusively to addressing injury prevention and workers' compensation cost control for trucking companies.



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## Did You Hear What Katrina Said?

Several years ago, the space shuttle Columbia disaster forced us all to recognize that the "safety culture" within a company (or other organization) has a strong influence on the ability of that organization to systematically prevent losses. Hopefully some readers of "Beyond the Cab" heeded that warning and have been taking steps to strengthen their company's safety culture over the years following that disaster.

Now the space shuttle Columbia disaster is all but a distant memory to most of us. Hurricane Katrina is the latest disaster to impact our nation on a grand scale, and the lessons that we will learn from that tragic event will likely be numerous. However, topping the list of lessons to be learned from Hurricane Katrina is... planning is essential.

The finger-pointing following Hurricane Katrina has been overwhelming. In fact, finding an article in a newspaper or magazine that attempts to assign blame for this tragedy is easier than finding caffeine pills in a truck stop. What's interesting is that virtually all of the accusations (regardless of at whom they are directed) have a common thread... *a failure to plan.*"



Take a look at the calendar and consider what planning is warranted based solely upon the reality that we sit less than 100 days from the new year. Many safety directors take the opportunity of the new year to implement or revise the safety

efforts of the company. If you're one of the people and like to start fresh with the new year, the time to plan for that fresh start is NOW. But before you begin, consider the following.

### Start with the End in Mind

Your dispatcher wouldn't tell a driver to jump in his truck and just start driving, without first knowing his destination. Similarly, it's only after goals for your safety program have been identified that you can intelligently make a plan of how to get there. For that reason, the very first step in planning for 2006 should be to identify your goals.

Of course this makes perfect sense when looking at the process from a distance. But all too often plans for how to address injury prevention for the new year don't result from looking at clearly defined goals. Instead, what is planned for next year, ends-up looking suspiciously like what was done during the current year... even if it wasn't very successful.

Setting goals for your safety program should include a review of your company's loss history. However, your goals shouldn't be limited to reacting to past claims. Instead consider hazards that (if for nothing other than luck) have not resulted in injuries to your employees. Also consider factors such as employee turnover and employee morale, which are often missed as contributing factors to injuries.

### Solicit Opinions and Ideas

Once you've identified some goals for 2006, turn to your drivers, mechanics and other employees. Solicit their opinions concerning safety goals for 2006. Most of the drivers have much more uninterrupted time than safety directors to contemplate issues such as these. With as much turnover as there is within the trucking industry, the chances are good that your drivers have been employed at places that have strong, effective safety efforts, as well as companies that have weak, ineffective safety efforts. View that as the silver lining to the cloud of "driver turnover" and learn from the successes and failures of their past employers. Even if individual drivers offer little input, you can expect them to be more receptive to the company's safety efforts when their opinions are solicited (and taken seriously).

### Think Outside the Box

Lastly, when considering how you plan to achieve your 2006 goals, try to consider less traditional approaches. Perhaps more so in the trucking (and construction) industries than other industries, safety directors who desire to improve upon the existing safety efforts simply do more of the same. Clinging to the belief that more is better, they have more safety meetings, conduct more inspections, or pour more money into existing incentive programs. Whereas that is sometimes warranted, more often than not, what is needed is an innovative approach.

### Set Goals that are SMART

- Specific - Must be clear and unambiguous
- Measurable - If it's not measurable you won't know if you've reached it
- Attainable - Should neither be out of reach nor effortless
- Relevant - If it's not going to prevent injuries or control their cost it's irrelevant
- Time-Bound - Deadlines on goals help keep the focus on the goals