

Beyond The Cab

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



www.midwesterninsurance.com

Issue9, Volume 2006

Safety Meetings

"Let's get everybody together and have a meeting." Too often those words cause people to cringe - and justifiably so. We have all endured poorly organized and poorly conducted meetings. As a result, they are a waste of everyone's time, except for the person who called the meeting, and we dread the next time we must attend a meeting.

On the other hand, we have all attended well-organized and efficiently conducted meetings. Those gatherings were productive and accomplished the intended purpose, and we departed with a sense of confidence and motivation.

Safety meetings are similar, except that the attendees at a substandard safety meeting often walk away with the feeling that **safety** is substandard - and that is very detrimental to the safety culture (attitude) in any organization. In fact, that is absolutely counter to one of the purposes for conducting safety meetings.

What then are the purposes for conducting safety meetings and how can it be done in the trucking industry? Primarily, there are three purposes. Safety meetings are a demonstration of the importance that management has placed on safety; safety meetings are a forum for open discussion of safety issues; and, safety meetings are another method of increasing an employee's level of hazard awareness.

Time is a non-renewable and limited resource. In the world of work, all time taken away from production can appear to be a waste of time - including safety meetings. However, when management schedules and supports the conduct of routine safety meetings it is sending the message that safety is a company value, just like productivity and quality. In fact, when management sacrifices the time for safety meetings



they typically understand the "cost" of that time and subsequently will ensure that the time is not wasted on a poorly organized and poorly conducted safety meeting.



Safety meetings should be structured to allow an open discussion of the organization's safety posture. Use of the word "structure" means many things. For example, meetings must have an agenda. Meetings must be facilitated, directed, or controlled. They should be scheduled, announced and conducted at a location that supports attendance. Meetings should begin on time and end on time.

The frequency of meetings is dependent upon the organization. The transportation industry definitely has a challenge in this regard, but it can be done. For example, most trucking companies indicate that they have a Christmas employee meeting. Why not put the same level of importance on having such meetings each quarter? Granted, it's a management "stressor," but so are motor vehicle accidents and high turnover, which can probably be reduced with improved employee communications during safety meetings.

Items for review in the meetings should include the results of safety and health inspections (routine and unannounced), the details of the investigation of all injuries (if any) since the previous meeting, and an on-going evaluation of the organization's accident and illness

prevention program. Keep in mind that these meetings are not complaint sessions, rather an open discussion that seeks improvement in the organization's safety efforts. At times this may be a challenge for the meeting facilitator.

Lastly, safety meetings also provide the opportunity to raise an employee's level of hazard awareness. This is partially accomplished during the discussion of inspection and investigation reports because on an individual, and private, level each employee is "self-assessing" the situation. In addition, this forum is also a great occasion for presenting information about particular workplace hazards such as unique/dynamic road conditions, slips/trips/falls in and around the truck, consignee dock hazards, drop/hook procedures, etc. They have probably heard it all before, but for a little while after the meeting they are more aware of the hazards. The more frequent and better the meetings, the longer they will retain the high level of awareness. Incidentally, your drivers may never say that they appreciate the efforts to keep them safe, but on the "inside" they do. Drive on!

CONGRATULATIONS!!!



Since the previous Loss Control Newsletter

**Custom Tool and Manufacturing
(Lawrenceburg, KY)**

Has achieved a
Certified Loss Control Program

Check it out now at...

www.midwesterninsurance.com/certified.htm