

THE ABC'S OF SAFETY

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When we start school one of the first things we are taught is our ABC's. They are the building blocks of our ability to read. Without learning our ABC's we are at an extreme disadvantage in life. The ABC's are so fundamental to learning that often when faced with learning new tasks, we are told it is as simple as ABC.

The same adage goes for safety. If you want to have a truly effective Safety Program you must know the ABC's of Safety. These are:

- Awareness
- Attitude
- Belief
- Behavior
- Commitment
- Consistency

Each of the above are important elements and must be understood.

Nothing gets invented, nothing gets developed and nothing gets improved unless someone first becomes Aware that something can, should and needs to be done. If a company is not aware that safety is an important management element, all too often little or no effort will be put into the Safety Program. Ask yourself this question, of the ten most important critical management elements necessary for the success of your company, where does safety rank? I often ask that question in the seminars. I do, unfortunately, all too often hear that safety didn't even make the top ten. Other times it is on the bottom part of the list. In these companies it is clear that they are not aware of the importance of safety. Those companies that are aware have safety near the top of the list.

The next element is Attitude. It is not simply enough to be aware that safety is important, a company must want to have a good Safety Program. I call this the want to attitude. In order for a company to want a good Safety Program they need to understand how a good Safety Program protects the most vital assets and directly contributes to the company's overall success, growth and profitability. The real value is in safety and is worth the effort.

Companies need to Believe in the importance of safety and their Safety Program. If not, the program will never be as effective as it should be. If it is perceived as an interference to production or sales by management many companies will not support safety wholeheartedly. The importance of safety has to be communicated on a regular basis and all levels of management held accountable for the company's safety effort.

Often when I talk to new companies about safety, their understanding relates to the various OSHA Standards. Yet safety is not a Technical Program, it is a Behavioral Program. In order for safety to truly be effective, it has to be totally engrained in the day to day work behavior of every employee. Every time an employee makes a decision affecting his/her safety, the safe right way should be the only decision they make. This will only happen if employees believe in your Safety Program and its importance.

Companies must be Committed to the Safety Program. It must start at the top, all levels must understand the commitment, sufficient resources, manpower and follow-up must be allocated as necessary. This commitment has to be so clear that there is never any doubt about it and what is expected.

Total Management Commitment is the most important element of any Safety Program. Without it, no Safety Program will be successful.

The last of the ABC's is Consistency. There must be Consistency with Intensity. All too often companies go on what I call a safety diet. Someone recognizes that the Safety Program needs to be improved or upgraded. A strong effort is made to turn the program around and for awhile the efforts are successful. Unfortunately, all too often after a while that effort wanes and the success initially gained slips away. That is why consistency is required. Safety is not a project or program, but an ongoing never ending process. It has to be managed that way.

Remember the ABC's of Safety, they will make all the difference.

If you have any safety questions or need any assistance with your program, please call American Safety & Health Management Consultants, Inc., at 1-800-356-1274.