

Safety Cop



How You Communicate Safety Says a lot About Your Company

Is Your Business Sending Mixed Messages?

Your company's safety program speaks volumes about your business. Your safety promotion efforts are readily visible to your employees, customers, suppliers and, often, to the public. Business author John Woods writes, "Everything you say and do, or don't say and don't do, sends a message to others."

Your business conveys its safety philosophy to everyone in a variety of ways. These examples send the wrong message:

- Management makes a written commitment to provide a safe workplace, but does nothing.
- Poor housekeeping lowers company pride, productivity, marketability and safety.
- Managers are responsible for training new hires, but assume that supervisors or coworkers will teach them how to safely perform their jobs.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

The message you send about safety should be sincere and understandable. Avoid contradictions between what's said and what's done: people (including OSHA inspectors) believe what they see more than what they hear, and they judge safety efforts by what is observable and documented.

Ensure that your safety messages are backed by appropriate actions:

- Make sure that employees know what to do if they are injured on the job.
- Encourage workers at every level to report unsafe acts and conditions, and to otherwise participate in making the work place safe.

- Make supervisors accountable for work place safety in their areas. Do they know how to conduct effective safety training and investigate accidents?

- Follow the OSHA standards for lock out/tagout, hazard communications, fork- lifts, blood borne pathogens, etc. Adhere to record keeping and training requirements.

- Make housekeeping a daily requirement for all work areas, not just public ones.

- Foster development of a "safety culture" that equates safety with productivity and profitability as overall goals for your business.

- Never forget that your employees are valuable business assets. Keep them informed about safety, and clearly communicate what is expected of them. Listen to their suggestions and complaints. Participation helps ensure their active involvement in bettering your work place.

Use unambiguous, appropriate language in all written and spoken safety messages, rules, guidelines and manuals.

Now for Some Self-Examination

Take a moment to review the above points and rate your company. Are your messages clear? Do your actions match the message? Can your employees say that they work in a safe environment, and that your company is concerned about them? How does the public view your company and its safety efforts?

Be honest in your safety evaluation. Remember, like it or not, everybody is watching.

Safety & Risk Management

