Thinking About Health and Safety in a New Way

Leadership

Transitioning from leadership proclamations to focused activity by:

- Integrating health and safety with all aspects of the business.
- Providing frontline workers what they need to perform their work successfully.
- Responding to failure in a positive manner. (Just and learning culture) Learning before taking action.
- Removing fear that undermines communication and feedback processes at all levels of the organization.
- Understanding the unintended consequences of decisions and actions.
- Ensuring that senior leaders understand how work is actually performed (blue line) and how organizational factors affect it.

Interactions with Workers

- Moving from 'we tell workers how to be safe' to the 'workers need to help us understand how work is actually performed and how to improve the system'.
- Empowering workers at all levels to communicate operational and health and safety issues that may be difficult for management to hear.
- Involving workers in the identification and selection of defenses including the elimination of obsolete defenses that no longer provide protection but make the job more difficult.
- Solicit input from workers regarding drift and weak signals.

Incident ~~Investigation~~ Learning

- Recognize that how the organization responds to failure matters – a lot!
- Begin incident learning around 'normal work' in a sense 'recreating' events as they unfolded moving toward the event to offset the impact of hindsight bias.
- Emphasis on learning and not blame.
- Focus on 'how' rather than 'why'.
- Systems view: consider all of the factors that influenced the event rather than a single person's action or a component.
- Recognize that human error is not intentional but rather a symptom of error likely situations that must be addressed.
- Identification of performance modes to ensure that the appropriate category of defense is selected.

Helping the organization:

- Encourage management and union leaders to respond to failure in a positive and productive manner to maximize learning and improvement.
- Establish processes to engage workers at the 'sharp end' and communicate issues to leaders at the 'blunt end'.
- Empower operations at all levels to integrate production, quality and health safety in continual improvement efforts.
- Model continual learning through dedication to personal mastery of the new view and systems thinking.

Role of Health and Safety Professionals

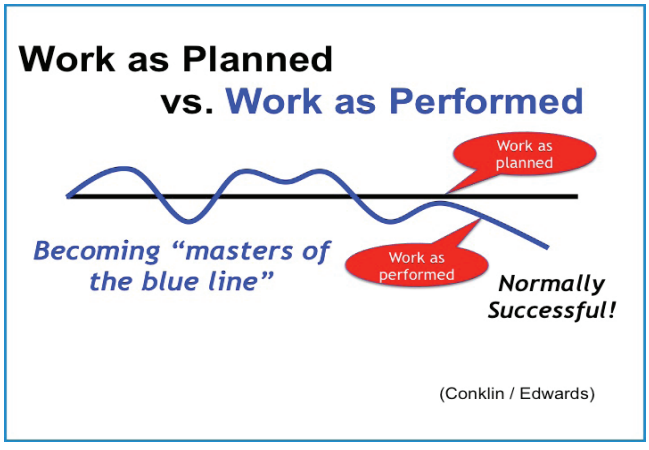
Procedures

- Recognition that every procedure is incomplete because those who develop procedures cannot anticipate every variable or situation that will take place within a process.
- Transition from 'the procedures are the safest way to do the job' to 'procedures are a resource that workers should appropriately use given the situation, tools, equipment, personnel, etc.'
- Workers are provided a substantive role in developing, reviewing and updating procedures.
- Workers and supervisors should be sensitive to operational, procedural and hazard control drift.
- Emphasize critical tasks (high risk potential activities).

Transition from drive-bys and flyovers that focuses primarily on procedures and compliance to more substantive collaboration with workers, helping the organization understand the 'blue line' - how work is actually performed and the organizational factors that influence it – the system. In addition to compliance issues and traditional hazard identification, look for:

- » Error traps
- » Procedures and defenses that make the job more difficult or are outdated
- » Operational breakdowns, understaffing, production delays, etc.
- » Operational, procedural and hazard control drift that can lead to increased risk in ways that may be difficult to recognize.
- » Fear that discourages reporting of problems, errors, incidents and near misses.

Inspections



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