

1. concepts covered

- Safety Leader Defined
- Safety Team Leader Duties
- Walkthroughs
- Conducting the Walkthrough

Without the concept, there is loss of the subject. Martin Heidegger

1. the safety leader

The Safety Leader

Perhaps your business or organization doesn't have a Safety Action Team, a Safety Committee, or a safety "steering committee," but would like to start one, or perhaps it does, but it is in need of a "re-launch" to meet new safety challenges or to promote safety at all levels. After all, the safety manager or the safety department can't be everywhere. To not only change behavior, but to sustain the changes, an action oriented, "team approach" is necessary. Just like a winning football team needs its coach, every safety team needs its Team Leader.

What are a few of the qualities of a Safety Leader?

- Possesses a passion for safety
- Is a good communicator
- Has a willingness to learn
- Can commit up to 20 or more hours a month to this function
- Is able to keep his/her team members updated
- Is able to keep management updated

- Participates with respect and courtesy
- Maintains an active and effective team effort

The role of the Safety Leader has a number of names from “Safety Chairperson” to “Lead Safety Implementation Champion,” to “Risk Champion.” Whatever the name, a Safety Leader sets the direction, works for meaningful goals and follows up on goal implementation and execution.

Main Tasks and Responsibilities

The Safety Leader needs to:

- Be a role model for safety.
- Promote a “safety culture,” which is known and accepted throughout the company (there is no universal definition of a safety culture – only such characteristics as management’s commitment to safety as shown by implementation of safety management systems, policy and procedures, and safety compliance by all team members).
- Prepare team meeting agendas and conduct team meetings (daily, weekly or monthly as appropriate), and follow-up on action items.
- Meet as appropriate with your management champion, preferably at pre-determined times.
- Work to set a reasonable timetable for safety goals, including touchstones or milestones.
- Improve safety performance by conducting periodic inspections and surveillances.
- Ensure “lessons learned” are communicated to management.
- Report to management when safety deficiencies exceed existing resources or corrective action is needed.

- Be accountable to management or the Board for compliance with applicable laws, regulations, standards, policies and procedures.
- Communicate expectations that personnel follow company work policies, standards, and procedures; and a strong safety culture.
- Identify any safety training needs.
- Assist in developing a Job Safety (or Hazard) Analysis (JSA) for each job to help determine training needs.
- Document the training each employee has or needs.
- Serve as co-chair of the Safety Committee, if necessary.

The Walkthrough

The *walkthrough*, sometimes called in improvement circles the “gemba walk” (the word “gemba” means in Japanese “the actual place”), is similar to “MBWA” or Management by Walking Around.

Walkthroughs present opportunities to engage staff in meaningful, positive discussions about workplace safety:

- Assess adherence to safe work behavior
- Reinforce and make note of safe work behavior
- Work to correct any unsafe work behavior
- Assess how well the workforce adheres to safety and health (S&H) standards and support correction of noted deficiencies

Walkthroughs may be carried out by a member of the Safety Committee, a single manager or in combination with other managers and workers.

Conducting the Walkthrough

Observe the work behavior while workers perform a task or activity. Document the walkthrough, but don't make it too obvious; a checklist and/or clipboard may make some associates nervous.

Ask questions. Talk about training, equipment, *PPE, work hazards, any special work preparation, and so on required to safely perform the job. **Personal Protection Equipment*

The leader or manager should focus on the safety behavior and actions of people rather than on unsafe conditions. Make a note about safety hazards; e.g., unsafe workplace conditions, unsafe work practices, etc. Stop any observed activities or conditions that are dangerous, illegal, or against organizational policy.

Discuss the results of walkthroughs with staff at Executive Safety Council, Safety Action Team or Safety Committee meetings:

- keep the workforce familiar with the program;
- let them know what is working well; and,
- the nature and the severity of unsafe acts observed in the organization.

The recommended minimum walkthrough frequencies should be at least on a monthly, or even quarterly basis depending up the nature of the work risk. For example, a dispatch section may not be considered a high risk area but dispatchers may relay upward from the field any current safety concerns.

Note: Consider inviting a representative authorized by the employee Bargaining Unit, if observing bargaining unit employees.

Complexity Chart – Growing Safely

Number of Employees	Action Targets based on Levels of Safety Complexity
1	Safety Management Plan/System in place
2-9	Safety Meetings and/or a designated Safety Representative* /Monitoring/Metrics, Safety Meeting Leadership
10+	Safety Committee, Safety Leadership Function/Activities Grow
25+	Safety Leadership Further Expanded depending on type of operations Sub-Safety Committees as needed
50 +	Full Time Safety Director <i>Safety Action Team</i> and/or <i>Executive Safety Council</i>
100+	Additional Safety Personnel/Actions as needed Executive Level/VP of Safety
<i>Complexity Increases</i>	Cutting Edge Risk Management At the Enterprise Level

*A designated team or associate **Safety Representative** who consults directly with management and line workers can be utilized if the work unit is too small for formal meetings or when work activities are spread out over shifts with one or two associates per shift.

Additional Safety Leadership Duties

The Safety Leader can help identify where potential problems exist and develop appropriate solutions, interventions or recommendations to solve those problems.

Action	Type of Information
Monitoring	What is happening?
Reporting	What just happened?
Analysis	Why did it happen?
Predicting	What might happen?

Some safety occurrences (i.e., near misses) that result from the failure of a system (system events) may not end in catastrophic consequences nor even have immediate consequences. These unforeseen or unplanned events, if promptly reported and properly analyzed, can expose hidden safety weaknesses.

Another team learning and improvement tool is the *debriefing*. Debriefings, formally or informally taking place after safety events, seek answers to the following questions:

- What was planned?
- What actually happened?
- Why did it happen?
- What can be learned for future improvements and planning?

The debriefing helps to learn the “why behind the what,” leading to a greater understanding of how to adapt safe practices to a particular situation in the future.

The Safety Leader knows how to distinguish between Findings, Recommendations, Action Items and Action Steps:

- *Findings* are the raw or un-scrubbed data or facts.
- *Recommendations* are conclusions or proposals based on an analysis of the facts.
- *Action Items* are the final decisions, to be made or authorized by management.
- *Action steps* are measurable tasks to be implemented within a reasonably short time frame, once a decision has been made. They are not meant as sweeping initiatives, but rather small steps to advance the overall goals.

Well-written recommendations should have the following elements present:

- Begin with an **action** verb: decrease, increase, improve.
- Specify a single **key result** to be accomplished.
- Are quantifiable: using **numbers** to project a desired change. (i.e., 10% improvement)
- Set a target **date** for accomplishment.

Recommendations should answer:

- Why is the proposal necessary?
- What are the benefits or any costs?
- What problem(s) will be solved or diminished?
- What techniques or action steps would be used?
- What will be the timeline of the proposal?

1. summary

The most important type of model in an organization is that of the role model – or Leader. An organization can change or initiate Policies and Rules, or institute new work systems, but the real long-term benefits accrue from positive behaviors, as modeled by top and middle management. The role of the Safety Action Team Leader is to "comfort the afflicted but afflict the comfortable."

Focus on observable behaviors. Behaviors and practices banned as unsafe at one location or company may be Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) at another. The Safety Leader, with support of upper management, however, can set the standard and be the role model for safety. Establish a vision of the desired safety culture and communicate it throughout the organization.

The Safety Action Team or Safety Committee is at its best when it makes the case for preventive investments – as anticipatory policies – which can represent opportunities for long-term competitive advantage. The Safety Leader helps communicate this message throughout the organization.

Axiom:

Safety saves time, money, lives, and honor.

Safety reform is not easy!

Peter S. Winokur