



Weekly Safety Tip

Do You Have What It Takes?



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Safety leadership isn't a formula and it doesn't always come with a fancy job title. It's a mindset and a skill set that is essential for those who make careers out of protecting others on the job. How do you know if you have what it takes?

*Ask yourself the ten questions in this **ASSP Safety Leadership Checklist**, to self-assess, learn, and grow:*

1. The courage to question the way things have always been done.

If you believe your organization's systems, procedures or cultural norms are inhibiting safety, you must be brave and speak up. Lives may depend on it.

2. The ability to communicate clearly in different environments.

Safety leadership puts you in conversation with front-line workers, executives, peers and others who are listening for different information. Choose your words wisely.

3. A sincere interest in connecting with people and listening to what they say.

It isn't enough to nod along during toolbox talks, incident investigations and meetings just to speed things up. People can tell when leaders really care.

4. A relentless desire to learn, explore and find solutions to problems.

Education isn't over when you remove your cap and gown or finish your vocational training. Learning about safety is a critical and lifelong endeavor.

5. The willingness to see and be seen, in an effort to make safety visible.

Safety doesn't happen on the sidelines. Effective leaders know when it's time to leave the office and relate to their teams on a human level.

6. The financial skills to budget, negotiate and advocate for better safety outcomes.

Your organization should invest resources in ways that align with values and objectives. Help them understand why safety must be part of the equation.

7. Safety as a personal value, deeply rooted in your sense of who you are.

Safety is a calling, not a 9-to-5 job. When passion is the reason you show up every day, you are better positioned to do great work and avoid burnout.

8. A technical knowledge of key safety concepts, informed by standards and laws.

Understanding safety regulations is important, but it's also the bare minimum. Stay on top of your game with consensus standards and best practices.

9. An active investment in communities and relationships that help you succeed.

Relying on others isn't a sign of weakness — it's a strength. Share what you know, ask what you don't know and remove barriers to community building.

10. The focus to manage distractions, complete tasks and achieve your goals.

We live in distracting times. Do you know how to turn off push notifications, approach work with mindfulness and accomplish what matters most?

Playing Fast & Loose with Safety Rules



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Have you ever violated a safety procedure or a regulatory requirement and tried to rationalize it afterward with one of these excuses:

- "It was no big deal."
- "Under the circumstances, it was necessary."
- or the always popular "It was only just this once."

No sooner do we sweep our own dirt under the rug than we express outrage upon learning about another department's safety violations. Nonetheless, it is not really about the seeming hypocrisy. Letting "little" violations go, also has a "big" impact on your safety program because those "little" violations can potentially compromise the well-being of your fellow employees in your workplace.

The Temptation to Take Shortcuts

Safety policies and procedures are often regarded as a nuisance that make work less efficient. It may be tempting to take shortcuts and work around the rules in the name of productivity or customer service. Companies and employees break rules constantly. We've all seen it happen.

The transgressions that get committed usually aren't headline types of things. They're "little" violations. Should we be concerned about these little things? After all, there's a world of difference between something like not wearing a seatbelt when backing your personal vehicle down your driveway, compared to not following electrical safety rules when working on energized conductors.

How Shortcuts Undermine Safety

The difference between "little" and "big" violations is not as great as some may think. The very act of tolerating a violation - even a little one - may set the stage for serious harm. Sure, it might not create an *immediate* danger like a Lock-out/Tag-out violation would. But if we turn our back on the little violations, we're basically giving our co-workers the discretion to ignore the rules. Even if the discretion to break rules is limited to "little" rules, do we really trust people to, always, correctly distinguish between what's little and big (like we know we personally can)?

Even if our co-workers *are* able to distinguish between the big rules that they must obey and the little ones that they can stretch a bit, shortcut, or simply ignore, the very toleration of violations breeds a lack of respect for the rules that undermines the overall safety culture. When it becomes known that minor little infractions will be accepted, more and more of them will occur. Before long the "little" things can add up to taking significant risks.

How to Deal with the Problem

How should we deal with this situation? We can all help clarify the issue by asking ourselves a few simple questions:

- Is the rule an established company policy, formalized safety practice, or is it something that is required by OSHA? If so, you must follow it even if you don't think it's necessary.
- How would you feel if you or a co-workers were injured?
- What would you expect, if your son or daughter had to perform the task?

That leaves us with two key take-aways:

- 1) The first thing we need to do is ***resist the temptation to tolerate "little" infractions.***
- 2) We must always keep the bigger picture in mind that ***little violations can have big results.***



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