

Safety



Lead with Safety

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Today I am going to talk about safety leadership. The more I learn about the art of being safe the more I see that it is a mindset or sometimes referred to as a culture and sometimes the biggest step is a simple one - it is often said that showing up is 80% of the work, well that goes for safety leadership too. As we went all around the state conducting the PLC safety trainings I purposely was paying attention (why because you are never too poor to pay attention) to the crews to see what level of safety awareness each company had. Talking to owners, foremen, and the operators, I could pick up on how they dealt with safety. Certainly, every company gets a high five for sending the crews to spring safety training, but what was the commitment? Many were there to check the box (how many times did I hear "if I sign my name now can I go home?"), and at many levels I understand this but with a little more investment not only can you check the box but you can stand on the box and raise awareness in your company.

I have quoted many times in my career, Major Dick Winters of the "Band of Brothers" mini-series based on his experience in Europe during WWII. He says that "Leaders lead the way." Now when it comes to safety this could not be truer. In the companies that I see that take safety seriously the owners and foremen are right there in the classes asking questions, relating experiences and helping to move the safety ball forward down the field to a safer company. We see this playing out when we ask an operator a question and his owner the same question and we get good answers that are similar. A sure sign of a company that has safety as a culture. Not just in words but in deeds. Not just checking the box but blowing the box up and taking it to the next level. The difference between compliance training and training that looks at compliance as the base line to be stood upon, not a bar to be reached up to.

I have observed too many times to count that an operator goes to a training and brings back an idea that they learned at training and the owner/foreman says, "we don't do that here." Said flat out with nothing to back it up, just "we don't do that." It would be different if they said, "we don't do that because we do this and we find it works better," and have a decent educated discussion. Shutting down a different safety idea has a huge effect on the crew. Not to say all new ideas are good, and let's be fair, some new ideas suck, but never

engaging with your crew and participating in training, the "safety ball" will never move or be taken seriously. This has a two-pronged effect on the crews: One it stops any ideas being shared, which stops the crews from thinking and being safe starts with thinking. Two, you will miss good ideas just because, "we don't do that here".

We had a contractor come for the first time to one of our trainings this year after sending his crew for multiple years. His comment is worth hearing. "I had no idea what I was missing by not joining my crew here." I personally sat through all the trainings this year one day or another and at the very last training where I learned how workmen's comp. costs work and how it does not take long to see how an accident culture (opposed to a safety culture) can cost a company its profit margin or the new equipment margin. Bottom line, nobody wants to see anyone hurt and no company wants to spend money on insurance and one way you can reduce this for your company is for you and your foremen to train, participate, engage, and lead with your crews from the front. "Leaders (owners & foremen) lead the way."

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