

SAFETY: *What's Your Role?*

FACT SHEET

LENGTH: 17 MINUTES

PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:

When it comes to having a successful safety program, we all have a role to play and the part played by each employee is defined by his or her actions and behaviors. This program tells the story of two serious workplace incidents from the point of view of those involved. Viewers will learn to recognize the behaviors and actions that contributed to the incidents. For example, being a bad influence, risk-taking, complacency, rushing and being timid about speaking up are all illustrated as traits or "roles" that undermine safety and contribute to workplace incidents. As the program progresses, viewers will learn that setting good examples, being receptive to safety advice, avoiding shortcuts, speaking up and being a safety advocate are roles that prevent injuries and improve the overall safety culture. They are also asked to consider the part they are currently playing and recast themselves into a new role that will make a positive safety difference.

Other points made by this program include:

- Don't succumb to the temptation to take a shortcut.
- Don't be led astray by others' poor safety advice.
- There are no do-overs when it comes to unsafe acts.
- Don't be poorly influenced by unsafe groupthink.
- Time is not more valuable than safety.
- The ripple effect of unsafe acts is widespread.
- The consequences of unsafe choices last forever.
- Your choices and decisions don't just affect you.
- Safety culture requires that safety advocates outnumber those who are indifferent about safety.
- When more people set good safety examples, it becomes easier for everyone to be safe.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

After watching the program, the participant will be able to explain the following:

- Why it is important to not be led astray by others' poor safety advice;
- Why safety advocates must outnumber those who are indifferent about safety;
- Why our safety commitment must be strong enough to overcome the temptation of a shortcut;
- Why unsafe groupthink must be turned around to where safety is the rule;
- How the ripple effect of unsafe acts can be devastating and widespread;
- How your safety choices and decisions can affect your family and loved ones;
- Why it is important to speak up and not be timid when it comes to safety;
- How setting good safety examples makes it easier for everyone to be safe.

INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT:

'BAD INFLUENCE' UNDERMINES THE SAFETY EFFORT

- "Sammy and I were assigned to service the slide conveyor in the distribution warehouse. The conveyor has an elevated platform that holds extra-large storage bins," says Tyler. "Each time a new bin is added to the conveyor, it sends another one of the big storage bins down the slide to the unload station. Those bins are heavy, and they move fast, so there was no question we needed to shut down the conveyor before we started working on it. We just didn't know how to do it."
- "On the day that it happened, I noticed Tyler and Sammy were spending a lot of time looking over the lockout procedures for the slide conveyor," adds Daryl. "So, I went over to them and I explained to them that nobody actually uses those procedures anymore, that it had become common practice just to hit the emergency stop button when we needed to shut down the conveyor. I thought I was helping them."
- Daryl literally took the lockout procedure away from Tyler and Sammy and threw it on the floor. And Daryl claims that he thought he was "helping" them.
- Do you recognize Daryl as someone you may work with? A co-worker who always has a better way or a faster way? Daryl, and others like him, play the role of "bad influence" and their attitude and behavior undermine the safety effort.

SAFETY ADVOCATES MUST OUTNUMBER THOSE WHO ARE INDIFFERENT ABOUT SAFETY

- “As the Safety Committee liaison, I remind people to be safe and wear their PPE,” says Jane. “Frankly, before the two incidents, my efforts were not always appreciated, and some people were downright mean about it. But they went along with it, for the most part, often grudgingly.”
- “The day Paul got hurt, we were working in the chemical area. Some of these chemicals can be caustic, meaning they could cause great damage if they were to get in your eyes,” Chris recalls. “Jane, as usual, was reminding us all to be safe and wear your goggles. She was even handing out goggles to those who didn’t have them.”
- Jane speaks up about safety and encourages her co-workers to wear their PPE. Jane plays the role of “safety advocate,” and her efforts are commonly pitted against those who are indifferent or complacent about safety.
- Where do you fall along this safety scale? It’s an important question because a safety culture cannot thrive if those who are indifferent and complacent outnumber those who are advocates for safety.

OUR SAFETY COMMITMENT MUST BE STRONG ENOUGH TO OVERCOME THE TEMPTATION OF A SHORTCUT

- “On that day, we had plans to watch the big game together after our shift had ended and that was not going to happen until we finished with the conveyor. You see, Sammy and I were more than just coworkers, we were friends,” Tyler explains. “Our wives were friends; our children were friends. We always had a good time when we got together, so we were in a hurry to get the job done as soon as possible.”
- “I don’t know which one of us decided to take the shortcut, but it doesn’t really matter now. All I know is that the E-stop was hit instead of following the full lockout procedure and Sammy climbed up onto the platform to do the work and I let him do it. I helped him do it. And now he’s dead!” concludes Tyler.
- When Sammy climbed onto the platform, a forklift operator added a new storage bin to the conveyor, causing another bin to slide down and crush Sammy.
- Tyler’s role is a common one; he didn’t set out to commit an unsafe act and yet he did so anyway. The combination of Daryl’s bad advice, plus being in a hurry, cast Tyler into the unexpected role of “risk-taker.” It’s a role all too easy to fall into when our safety commitment is not strong enough to overcome the temptation of a shortcut.
- Of course, Sammy played an equal part in what happened. There are often multiple poor choices that contribute to this type of incident, and it would have only taken one good choice to prevent it.

UNSAFE GROUPTHINK MUST BE TURNED AROUND TO WHERE SAFETY IS THE RULE

- “What does it say about us that we have to be reminded to put on our PPE?” asks Chris. “I’m no exception. She pointed it out and I put them on.”
- “Later on, I noticed that Paul had entered the chemical area too. He’s an engineer. It’s unusual for him to be there,” adds Chris. “Of course, I noticed right away he wasn’t wearing any goggles. I almost said something to him about it. I wanted to, but I didn’t, and that’s when it happened.”
- Paul was blinded when he was splashed in the eyes by a caustic chemical.
- Chris’s role is perhaps the most common. The part he plays will be largely scripted by the “groupthink” of those around him. On the surface, it seems inconceivable that workers in a caustic chemical area would be so nonchalant about wearing goggles.
- Certainly, complacency plays a part, but the real issue here is an underlying group dynamic that has made it acceptable, over time, to not wear the PPE.
- This type of group dynamic can make it hard to speak up. What would you do? Speak up? Or look the other way? Turning that group dynamic around where safety is the rule, rather than the exception, is the key to building a safety culture.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF UNSAFE ACTS IS WIDESPREAD

- “Of course, that didn’t have to happen. And that’s the thing about safety. There’s always a choice, to do the job the right way, or not,” Tyler points out. “On that day, I could’ve made a different choice. We should’ve made a different choice. But we didn’t. And the ripple effect of that is devastating.”
- Unfortunately, there isn’t a dream sequence in this program where we find out the incident didn’t really happen. There are no do-overs when it comes to unsafe acts.
- Of course, now, in hindsight, Tyler understands that he should have insisted that they follow the two-step lockout procedure. He and Sammy should have locked out the power to the conveyor’s motor and they should have installed the slide gate, which would have physically prevented any storage bin from being pushed down the conveyor slide. But they didn’t, and the ripple effect of their decision is far-reaching.

YOUR SAFETY CHOICES AND DECISIONS DON'T JUST AFFECT YOU

- “I still can't believe it actually happened. Most mornings, I wake up, I look around for him, and then I remember again that he's gone. The whole thing is just so ridiculous to me,” Sammy's widow says. “Who risks their life just for a few minutes?”
- “Ironically, his watch is the most priceless remembrance for our son, not for me though. Every time I look at it, it reminds me that Sammy put more value on time than he did his own safety,” she adds. “If you want to know the real value of time versus safety, you can ask my children.”
- “I've heard that Tyler is very sorry for what he did, that he regrets his role in the whole thing, and I don't doubt that. He and Sammy were very close. Honestly, I don't have anything to say about that,” continues Tyler's widow. “I haven't laid eyes on Tyler since I had to go collect Sammy's work things in that cardboard box.”
- “One thing's for sure, one thing I know, regret won't pay the bills and regret won't change what happened. Sometimes, in my dreams, I can see him at work, I can hear him, I can hear him talking about us, putting us first. It just seems so real, then I wake up, look around for him again, and remember,” she concludes.
- Our safety choices have far-reaching consequences. Putting safety first and putting your loved ones first shouldn't be a recurring dream by those left behind. Safety has to be the first choice, every time. Don't you agree?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNSAFE CHOICES LAST FOREVER/THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING UP

- “Just before Paul's injury, I passed through the chemical area to double check that everyone had their goggles on. I feel bad that I missed seeing Paul, because if I had seen him, I would've made sure he put on his goggles,” says Jane. “But to be honest, I'm still bothered that not one person in that area was willing to say something to him about wearing goggles. And now, he's blind.”
- “To this day, I don't know why I was so tentative about speaking up. Looking back on it, I've come to believe that we're all given these moments to make a difference,” Chris explains. “Jane used her moment to remind me and the others to wear our goggles. I failed my moment when I didn't do the same for Paul.”
- “I mean, one moment poorly spent can lead to tragedy. That same moment better spent could've stopped everything, everything would be alright!” exclaims Chris. “But that is not what happened, and the consequences were severe. They'll last forever.”
- Yes, the consequences of unsafe acts do last forever. That's why Jane is so bothered by the fact that nobody was willing to speak up to prevent Paul's incident.
- In hindsight, Chris now understands the importance of speaking up, of not being timid when it comes to safety. Do you? If given the chance, what would you do in that same moment? Would you choose to make a difference?

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUSHING TEMPTATION ASIDE AND WORKING SAFELY EVERY TIME

- “People ask me why I didn't fire Daryl also, but Daryl isn't the one who took the shortcut. There will always be some temptation to take a chance or a shortcut,” says the plant manager. “The existence of the shortcut isn't the problem. The problem is choosing to take the shortcut.”
- “Tyler and Sammy could've easily made a different choice about the procedure regardless of anything Daryl had to say,” he adds. “But once Tyler and Sammy decided to take that shortcut and ignore the lockout procedure, well, all it takes is a second.”
- You may not agree with our plant manager's reasoning about Daryl, but remember, Daryl represents the siren's call we all face to make our work easier, faster or more comfortable. The part we must play is to push temptation aside and work safely every time.

COMPLACENCY'S NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE SAFETY EFFORT

- “I still struggle with what happened and the role I played. It's hard to describe the guilt knowing that my attitude and my actions contributed to someone's death,” Daryl says. “The thing is, if you would've asked me before the incident, I would've told you that we ran a safe operation and placed a high priority on safety.”
- “But looking back on it now, I can see that complacency had definitely set in with me and many others,” he adds. “I'm ashamed to say at that time, I wouldn't have given a single dime for any safety effort beyond the bare minimum. I thought we were being safe enough, and I was wrong.”

RECASTING YOUR ROLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Here's the important thing to know about roles: They can change. In fact, they have to change for safety to be improved. The bad influencers, the indifferent or complacent, the risk-takers, the unaware and the timid are just some of the roles that must be recast and written out of our safety script. Consider what part you play in your organization's safety effort and cast yourself into a role that makes a difference.

SETTING GOOD SAFETY EXAMPLES MAKES IT EASIER FOR EVERYONE TO BE SAFE

- “To prevent a tragedy like Paul’s, all it takes is for one person to speak up. Now, things are changing for the better,” says Jane. “More and more people are speaking up. It’s not just me doing it on my own anymore. And the more people we have setting good examples, it’s become easier for everyone to buy into the safety message.”
- “Now, I do everything I can to support the safety effort,” adds Daryl.
- “If you ever get a chance to speak up about safety, do it,” Chris says. “And when somebody speaks to you about safety, don’t get mad. Thank them and then do whatever it takes to be safe.”
- “I think we finally hit a tipping point where our safety culture outweighs any complacency that might still be around. Now, unsafe acts stick out like a sore thumb and are just not tolerated by anyone. When everyone plays a role in improving safety, everyone’s safety is improved and we all can be proud of that,” concludes Jane.

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POINTS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use the following points to facilitate discussions about lessons learned from this program and how they apply to situations and procedures at your facility.

1. Tyler and Sammy knew they needed to lock out the conveyor before working on it, but admitted they didn't know how to do it. Why is it important that only authorized workers perform lockout/tagout operations and similar procedures? What does it mean to be an "authorized worker"?
2. Daryl told Tyler and Sammy that hitting the emergency stop button had become "common practice" when shutting down the conveyor. When a shortcut has become a standard operating procedure, what does that say about the overall safety culture at your facility? Are there any unsafe acts that have become standard operating procedures in your work area?
3. Daryl remembered posting on the wall that his department had gone 363 days without a lost time incident, so he assumed that he and his co-workers were being "safe enough." Are the numbers of days we go injury-free a true indication of our safety culture? How does complacency affect the priority we place on safety?
4. Both incidents in the program could have been prevented if someone had simply spoken up and prevented the unsafe act. Why is it important to speak up about unsafe acts before they happen?
5. As a repercussion of Sammy's incident, Tyler was terminated. Do you think Tyler was fired because the incident resulted in a fatality or because he violated the lockout procedure?
6. Have you or a co-worker ever suggested taking a shortcut to make a job easier or to finish it more quickly? What could have been the consequences of taking that shortcut? Do you realize now that taking shortcuts is a bad idea?
7. It took Sammy's tragedy to convince Daryl to become a safety advocate. What will it take to make you become a safety advocate?
8. As a safety advocate, Jane met resistance to her safety efforts from complacent or indifferent co-workers. In order for safety culture to thrive, advocates for safety must outnumber those who are indifferent and complacent. On this sliding scale of safety, which side do you fall? Why?
9. Paul was an infrequent visitor to the chemical area and didn't fully understand its hazards. Why is it important to conduct a brief hazard assessment before entering unfamiliar areas?
10. Chris asks, "What does it say about us that we have to be reminded to put on our PPE?" One thing that it says is that the groupthink of those co-workers around him had made it acceptable, over time, to not wear the PPE. Describe the groupthink in your area. Is safety the rule or the exception?
11. Before the incidents, Jane appeared to be the only safety advocate in the company. Describe how she must have felt being the only person who spoke up about unsafe acts and encouraged others to work safely. Does this help you understand why it is important for everyone to buy into the safety culture?

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ANSWERS TO THE REVIEW QUIZ

1. a
2. c
3. a
4. b
5. c
6. b
7. a
8. c
9. b
10. a

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REVIEW QUIZ

Name _____ Date _____

The following questions are provided to determine how well you understand the information presented in this program.

1. Sammy and Tyler knew they needed to shut down the conveyor before they started working on it, but they didn't know how to do it.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. What did Daryl tell Sammy and Tyler had become common practice when the conveyor needed to be shut down?
 - a. To turn the control switch off
 - b. To lockout the conveyor
 - c. To hit the emergency stop button
3. In addition to being a safety advocate, Jane was also the _____.
 - a. Safety committee liaison
 - b. Safety director
 - c. Company nurse
4. Tyler and Sammy were in a hurry to complete the work on the conveyor so they could _____.
 - a. Go to lunch
 - b. Go watch a ball game
 - c. Go to a movie with their families
5. Wearing the required _____ was a safety rule that was routinely violated in the chemical area where Paul's incident occurred.
 - a. Respirators
 - b. Chemical gloves
 - c. Goggles
6. What does Jane say still bothers her about Paul's incident?
 - a. Paul's disregard for his own safety
 - b. No one was willing to say something to Paul
 - c. Paul wasn't supposed to be in the chemical area
7. Which best describes Chris's reason for not speaking up when he saw Paul without goggles?
 - a. He was tentative
 - b. He didn't care
 - c. He thought someone else would speak up
8. What did Daryl do after Sammy's incident?
 - a. He remained complacent
 - b. He retired
 - c. He became a safety advocate
9. Daryl says that before Sammy's incident, he was aware that the company ran an unsafe operation that didn't place a high priority on safety.
 - a. True
 - b. False
10. When everyone plays a role in improving safety, everyone's safety is improved.
 - a. True
 - b. False