



Attitudes and Latitudes

Look me straight in the eye and tell you don't really give a damn about jobsite safety. Can you really say that with a straight face? If you can, then get off my jobsite, 'cause I can't trust you and you're dangerous.

Attitudes have a lot to do with employee safety performance and job performance. Many safety professionals have made the mistake of talking mainly about the attitudes that "cause" accidents, instead of stressing the attitudes that "prevent" accidents.

Here are some "attitudes" that "cause" accidents:

- "Safety is just a matter of chance. I'll get it when my number is up."
- "It's necessary to take chances to get anything done fast."
- "If I'm tough and strong, I can take chances and get away with it."
- "The company really doesn't care about safety."
- "The other workers will think I'm a sissy if I'm always careful."
- "Hey man, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."
- "I've been in this business almost all my life, and the guy that's always worrying about himself is a genuine punk."
- "The hell with safety, it's really only a game anyway."
- "Look at that guy sucking up to that ladder. Why doesn't he just get up there any way he can?"
- "If I did all that stuff OSHA wants I'll never get my job done."
- "I've only had one or two friends killed on construction jobsites, what's the big deal?"

Plusses

O.K., now let's look at the other side of the coin. If we want people to have a good attitude towards safety, then we ought to think about what "prevents" accidents. Here are some really great gems:

- "Accidents have 'causes'. They can be prevented."
- "Accidents interfere with production. Safe work is efficient work."
- "The company is truly interested in safety rules, and so are the people who work here."
- "My fellow employees will respect me if I show good judgement and work safely."
- "Working safely is a mark of skill. I'm proud of my safety record."
- "Look here, guy, I've been a construction worker for most of my life, and I've never had an accident. I'm GOOD!"
- "I came to work this morning in one piece, and I'm going home this evening in one piece. That's a good goal."

- “You can jump off that six-foot high scaffold, but I’m going to use ladder. That’s what the heck they’re made for.”
- “My foreman gives my crew a Safety Talk the first thing every Monday morning. I appreciate that.”
- “Our company has an annual safety incentive program. I’m going to get the TOP PRIZE this year.”
- “I think I’m a safety professional, and that means I have to work safely.”
- “Guys, quit horsing around. If you want to act stupid, join the circus.”
- “”I had a ‘near miss’ this morning, so now I’m going to talk to my supervisor to see if he can give me some good tips to avoid a repeat.”
- “My attitude is that I can’t be TOO SAFE, and it’s a lot better than being TOO SORRY.”

There are many other attitudes for safety. If we accept positive attitudes for safety, they will rub off on the people we associate with and become a part of our daily conversation.

Attitudes are influenced by example. If we set an example of working safely, and working for safety, others will be influenced by what they see and hear. Particularly new employees are influenced by the behavior of veteran workers and others whom they look to as leaders.