

Being a Safety Leader

by Steve Hedden and Dean Larson, MEUW Safety Directors
June 9, 2005 La Crosse, WI

- I. Top Ten list!
 - A. How many can relate?
- II. Everyone starts with lofty goals.
 - A. Dealing with employees and getting them to share your vision can be your biggest difficulty.
 1. Rally employees around safety.
 - B. Challenge to being a safety leader.
 1. My title is Safety Director but I would be more aptly named Safety Assistant.
 2. To inspire employees to a higher level of safety and productivity, be a safety leader every day.
 3. Promoting safety does not necessarily mean that productivity will suffer.
 4. Never underestimate the influence you have on your employees.
 - C. Why does poor safety performance occur at good utilities run by good managers?
 1. Murphy's Law.
 2. Outstanding safety performance is not just about compliance and enforcement, it is right attitudes, appropriate behavior, relevant knowledge, and correct actions.
 - D. Commit yourself to be a safety leader and you might be surprised at the commitment of your employees to follow your vision and leadership.
 1. Employees need to feel they are an integral not expendable part of what you are trying to accomplish before they will commit to your goals.
 2. In the absence of safety leadership only a handful of employees will put out their best effort, and be willing to set high goals and standards.
- III. So what does a safety leader look like?
 - A. They don't just demand it they live it.
 1. They are committed to the belief that at the end of the day every employee should be safely home with their families.
 2. Create an environment where safety concerns are heard and fixed quickly.
 - B. You need to set the standard.
 1. If you overlook, or unknowingly encourage substandard work practices, you have just set the standard.
 2. Set the standard for safety excellence.
 3. There needs to be consequences for improper actions and behavior.
 - C. In a short while we will be recognizing 33 MEUW member utilities who have achieved excellent safety performance in the past year.
 - D. On the safety award entry form the MEUW Safety & Education Committee has identified several pro-active measures which if taken should significantly improve the safety culture at your utility, along with decreasing the possibility of injuries. A safety leader:
 1. makes it a priority for employees to attend safety meetings and is involved in safety sessions with the employees;
 2. encourages weekly in-house safety meetings where the MEUW Safety Manual is reviewed and safety concerns can be aired; and
 3. audits job sites on a regular basis to verify that safe work procedures are being followed and encourages safe work habits.
- IV. Being a safety leader at your utility is one of your most important responsibilities. We are here to help in any way we can. Ultimately, you will have the most influence on the safety culture is at your workplace.