

Accident Review: A Visit to the Real World

A short, but very important visit to the real world: Identifying the root causes of workplace accidents may threaten, or inconvenience some people in the organization. Occasionally, the analyses identify problems in the entity that some people would rather not emphasize. It would not be surprising to learn that the entity does not have the resources to fix a particular problem — that the identified factors might not be a priority for management to address. Of course, not acknowledging the potential factors does not "make them go away," and the threat to worker safety will continue until the issue is finally addressed.

The Safety Advisory Committee needs to be sensitive to this reality:

- The Committee needs the support and direction of top management.
 - The Safety Advisory Committee's function, it should be remembered, is to provide advice for management to consider. If the Committee and management are "not on the same page" then the relationship will produce little benefit, and worse, possible conflict.
 - Top management must have continuing input on establishing the Committee's goals.
 - That input/direction will obviously fall somewhere between "worker safety is our first priority, so all problems are to be fixed immediately" to "don't rock the boat".
 - Top management needs to share this input with the rest of the management team so that they can understand and accept the process.
 - The Committee needs to "check-in" regularly with top management so that the Committee's actions remain responsive to management's needs and directions.
- The Committee's communication should put emphasis on recommended solutions that address contributing causation factors.
 - The Committee must take pains to avoid placing blame; the goal is to assist in creating a safer workplace, not to find fault.
- The Committee must remember that it is not responsible for enforcing a safety program, and has absolutely no authority to mandate action.
 - Management does not owe the Committee an explanation for its decisions or actions.