

Honeywell | Industrial Safety

WHITE PAPER / BEHAVIOR-BASED SAFETY

How to build a culture of safety





The key to keeping workers safe is to avoid injuries in the first place. That begins with establishing cultural guidelines that help workers make the right decisions and build an atmosphere of trust. This paper presents and describes the idea of behavior-based safety and suggests some key strategies to help you implement a safety-oriented culture.

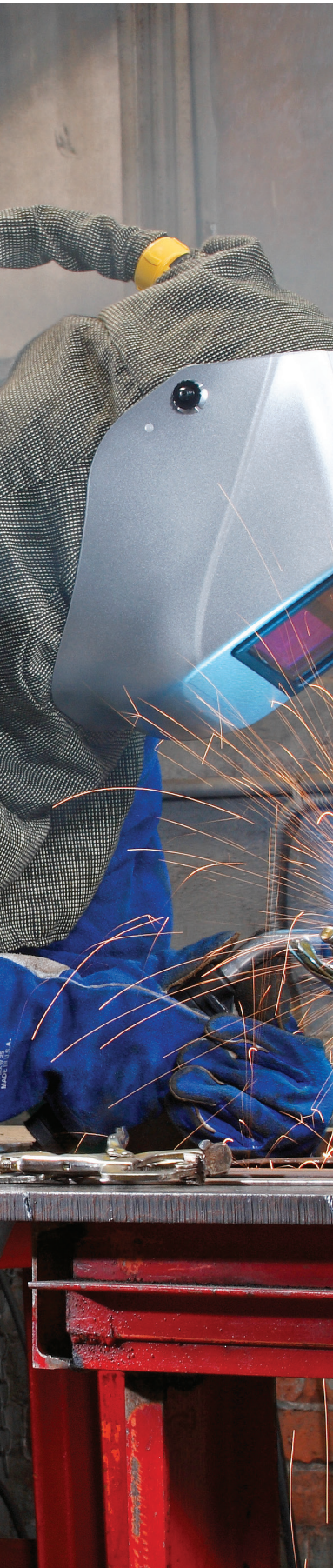
Nobody goes to work imagining something terrible will happen.

But terrible things do happen, because some people disregard basic safety precautions, despite their best intentions. They miss a warning sign, even if it is bright-red and blinking. They take off protective gear because it's a little uncomfortable. They decide that it's too long a walk back to the store room to get the proper ladder.

A worker is injured on the job every seven seconds in the U.S., according to the National Safety Council¹, and nearly all those incidents – 98% – occur because of unsafe behavior.

Many fatalities are wholly avoidable, according to OSHA, particularly in the fields of agriculture, transportation and warehousing, and construction.





Establish a pattern of safe behavior.

A lot of injuries can be avoided when an organization has a culture of safety-first. Behavior-based safety aims to replace unconscious, unsafe behavior with safe habits that are engaged automatically.

Behavior-based safety is focused on human motivations and actions – and in bringing out the best in all of us.

Business processes should encourage safe behavior and dissuade destructive action. These processes help ensure that people make decisions in which safety practices inform the design and implementation of engineering controls, work practices, and business administration.

It is also an ongoing effort.

Behavior-based safety is not a single training session. It is a way of working that safety leaders must continually promote for sustainable, positive results.

In the real world, that isn't always easy to accomplish.

[In a recent survey conducted by Honeywell](#), over half of the safety managers interviewed cited their top challenges as training workers to prevent incidents and avoiding employee workplace injuries.

Behavior-based safety isn't something that applies only on the shop floor or in the field.

It isn't an "attitude adjustment" foisted only on workers. Employees, supervisors, and managers should acknowledge their existing behavior and – when called for – make changes across the business.

The process also must include the people who have their skin in the game.

Workers must be part of the safety conversation. After all, it is they and their colleagues who are in danger of being injured; plus, they have intimate knowledge of work processes that need improvement. Including workers in discussions engenders commitment and passion, especially in the early phases.

That collaboration with workers also underscores the business's determination to do things right, and it reminds employees what is at stake when it comes to their personal safety.

Among the 200 industrial leaders surveyed by Honeywell in a recent study, "Ensuring workers wear and use their safety gear properly" was called a top concern, particularly in the fields of law enforcement and agriculture. You want the worker to recognize the reasons why it's important to wear a safety mask, even if it's hot outside – not only when he thinks someone is watching.

So how do you pull it off?

Let's look at the overall goals first, and then examine the best way to put this into practice.



A short overview of behavior-based safety

The goal of behavior-based safety is to integrate safety management into a company's core values.

It takes a systematic approach, examining the motivation that underlies behavior, and encouraging change based on solid principles about engaging, motivating, assisting, reinforcing, and sustaining safe behaviors.

At a high level, expect that the changes you need to make to improve safety may include:

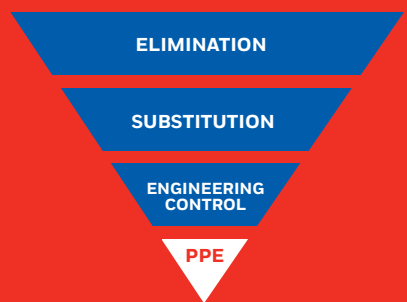
- **Updating engineering controls**, such as physically changing a machine or work environment.
- **Optimizing administrative controls**, which may include changing how or when workers do their jobs. For example, change work schedules or rotate workers to ensure tired people aren't using power tools.
- **Adjusting work practices**, such as improving education for workers about how to perform their tasks in a manner that reduces exposure to workplace hazards.

These concepts start with an understanding of the elements that exist in a safe working environment.

The hierarchy of controls is a widely accepted system used in industrial environments to minimize or eliminate exposure to hazards. With any given accident waiting to happen, it's more effective to eliminate the problem (you can't be injured by a danger that doesn't exist in the environment), isolate the problem (such as minimizing the number of people who come in contact with the danger), or find a people-management solution.

PPE is the final step in the control hierarchy.

It's the fail-safe for when all the other elements malfunction. Think of it as the last line of defense against injury. When you have done everything reasonably practicable to eliminate a risk, and the team is fitted with good equipment, the risk of injury should truly start at zero. Honeywell provides high-quality gear, but that gear should be used to complement other means of protection.





Attitude is everything

Many organizations manage work – and workers – under conditions of negative reinforcement: “We have to,” or “It’s policy.”

At best, that gets you adequate performance.

Employees do enough to satisfy a compliance standard, but they are not motivated to make the extra effort, whether that applies to safety policies or product quality.

In contrast, positive reinforcement encourages workers to transcend expectations and to invest themselves in their job duties.

Their motivation encourages creative thinking, better decision making, and the confidence to communicate without fear (such as pointing out a dangerous element in the work environment). Among other benefits, employees take personal responsibility for safety procedures for themselves and their colleagues.

In the context of behavior-based safety, the message is clear: *Invest in positive reinforcement processes more than in negative processes.*

Both may be necessary, but a positive approach is more effective. For example, a negative approach is, “If you use a table saw without wearing proper safety glasses, you’re fired.” In a positive environment, you can be confident that the worker will do the right thing when nobody is watching. When colleagues trust one another, it’s easier to gain buy-in.

How do you implement a Behavior-Based Safety program?

The first step is to establish a team to design a behavioral-based safety program

- Set practical, realistic improvement goals that are based on data.
- Develop a critical checklist that coordinates with the hierarchy of controls.
- Put a measurement system into place.
- Choose target behaviors from safety incidents, safety audits, and observations.
- Use collected data to measure progress, inform changes, and give feedback.
- Train managers, supervisors, and employees on their roles and responsibilities.



No silver bullets

Behavior-based safety is part of a bigger safety system, necessary to improve safety and reduce incidents. It's not a magic bullet. You can't simply put together a design team and declare victory. If your behavior-based safety program doesn't have a role for everyone in the organization, you aren't done yet.

- 1. Look for systemic problems rather than individual over-arching policies.**
- 2. Aim for blame-free analysis with a "trust, report, and improve cycle."**
- 3. Establish an equitable and transparent process for recognizing the difference between the small errors that fallible humans make daily and unsafe or reckless actions.**
Even then, look at the motivation behind the poor behavior, and work on a solution that addresses the underlying cause.
- 4. If workers repeatedly do something dangerous – such as running up the stairs – find out why.**
What problem are they attempting to solve by running up the stairs? Why are they in such a rush? Learning the answer may help you eliminate the issue, which (as you can see from the hierarchy) is the most efficient answer.

Consider a factory that rewards workers only for production.

If a worker gets a bonus only when she completes a certain number of widgets, her motivation is widget production. Speed matters. If that means defeating a safety mechanism that would otherwise slow her from reaching into scorching-hot equipment, so be it. The worker is willing to bypass a safety mechanism because she's financially motivated.

What's the right answer?

It's not 100% clear. But if the worker is rewarded financially only on production, not on safe production, no number of "Safety First!" posters in the break room will dissuade her from "fixing" that mechanism. Unless there's an injury, she has more motivation to avoid the safety mechanism than to rely on it.



Humans are the weakest link

Do take human foibles into account. No matter how ingrained your culture of safety is, accidents are bound to happen.

We all make errors when we haven't had enough sleep, or get distracted because of anything from a loud noise to a personal problem.

That's why personal protective equipment (PPE) is an essential and integral part of your safety program. Personal protective equipment may be at the bottom of that hierarchy chart, but it's no less important.

On the days when all the safety policies fail us, PPE becomes the last line of defense against injury, loss, and even death.

It is an essential ingredient for anyone who works in dangerous environments. A hard hat, body belt, or professional work boots can turn a life-threatening emergency into a "Glad I was wearing that protective gear!" moment.

At Honeywell, we are devoted to providing top-quality equipment that transforms "Oh no!" into "Whew, that was close!" –

but we hope you don't really need it very often.

Notes

¹The National Safety Council <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/work/work-overview/work-safety-introduction/>



Your company needs to invest in good quality equipment because while better safety practices can reduce the number of injuries, they won't eliminate them all – **and 99.99% safe isn't good enough.**

PPE is the last line of defense for any safety plan. It's the thing that has to go right when everything else has gone wrong. Honeywell products can give workers a soft landing, literally and figuratively, but it's best to avoid the fall in the first place.

Visit our site www.honeywellsafety.com or contact a Honeywell representative at **1-XXX-XXX-XXXX** to learn more about establishing a mature safety environment.

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