

Behavior Based Safety

In 2019, 5,333 workers died on the job and nearly 3 million nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses occurred. On the surface the causes of these accidents are usually obvious, like a slip, trip, and fall or lack of proper personal protective equipment (PPE), but these obvious causes will not prevent future incidences. The best way to prevent an incident from reoccurring is to utilize behavior based safety (BBS), which examines the underlying causes for unsafe behaviors to achieve a safe work place.

How to Use a Behavior Based Safety Approach

It is important to learn to work safely and take all rules seriously. Behavior Based Safety works to determine the root causes of unsafe behaviors through observations, feedback and goal setting and provides the best route to prevent them in the future. Review the steps below to see how you can practice BBS with your colleagues!

- ❖ **Observation** periods can be scheduled ahead of time to ensure everyone is prepared or happen in the moment.
- ❖ **Checklists** can be a useful tool to guide the employee conducting the observation such as a fall harness checklist or a safe operating procedure to refer to.
- ❖ **Feedback** should be shared both during the observation period and after. Feedback during an observation should focus on praising the safe behaviors to encourage the employee to continue those behaviors. Similarly, you may use this opportunity to correct an unsafe behavior as you witness it to help break unsafe work practices.
- ❖ **Goals** should aim to be attainable and sustainable as to not discourage safe work practices. Using the information from the observations, checklists and feedback set goals with your team to prevent unsafe behavior and create a safer working environment.

Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

Preparation is Key: Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review the various types of machine hazards in your workplace and discuss control methods to stay safe when operating machines.

Stay Positive: Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

Share a Story, Ask for a Story: Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

Build a Strong Safety Culture

All employees of the university should work safely in their work environment and learn to recognize hazards and how to avoid them. A strong behavior based program can help strengthen the safety culture. Below are some steps you can implement everyday.

- ❖ **Focus on What is Going Right** it can be easy to point out when a mistake is made, but to reinforce safe practices we want to catch ourselves and our colleagues in the act of utilizing safe work practices to encourage safety on the job.
- ❖ **Cultivate a Safe Work Environment** a safe work environment involves all levels of the University and is not the responsibility of just one person or one department. Working together and collaborating on safety solutions helps create an environment that focuses on safe behaviors and safe solutions.
- ❖ **Don't Rationalize Unsafe Choices** It can become a habit to cut corners because you are running low on time or when no one is watching. Don't rationalize these practices as the "normal thing" to do and instead strive to always work with safety in mind.



Safety Challenge

June is National Safety Month! During this month Risk Management challenges you to practice Behavior Based Safety with one of the following:

- ✓ Catch someone in the act! When you notice a colleague doing something safe, let them know you see their safe behavior and applaud them for it.
- ✓ Provide feedback to a colleague when you see them doing something unsafe and help them break an unsafe habit!

Report all injuries on the Risk Management [website](#) or 847.491.5084.

Safety at Home

Whether at work or at home safety is always important. When working around your house it is important to always think about using safe working practices and following manufacturer guidelines on machinery and directions on packaging.

- ✓ Always use safe work practice and follow guidelines for PPE for paint, power tools and chemicals
- ✓ Teach your family members about the importance of safety while at home and cultivate a safe home working environment by reviewing everyday tools, such as scissors, utility knives or ladders.

For Additional Information

Contact Gwen Butler, Director, Environmental Health & Safety, at 847.491.4936

Do you or your team have a safety story you'd like to share? Contact Risk Management at gwen.butler@northwestern.edu for details.