PROMOTE SAFE WORK

Learning | Leading | Looking after

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Improving Human and Organizational Performance

Improving Listening and Responses to Safety Concerns

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Possible Action Steps: Improving Listening and Responses to Safety Concerns

1. Use Safety Walks to Listen, Not Police

Walkthroughs should be conversations, not inspections. When leaders ask and actively listen, not tell, workers open up and trust is built.

Action: *Use two or three open-ended questions ("What's getting in your way?" "What's one thing that would make this safer?" "Can you walk me through it?").*

2. Show Appreciation for Speaking Up

Recognizing people for raising concerns, not just for avoiding incidents, creates a culture where speaking up feels positive.

Action: *Show appreciation to employees, in safety meetings or one-on-one, to encourage constructive reporting.*

3. Protect Employees from Retaliation—Formal or Informal

Even subtle negative reactions from supervisors and crew members can shut down reporting. Fear of retaliation is one of the number one reasons workers hesitate to report a hazard or concern.

Action: *Monitor for patterns (e.g., tone shifts, comments from crew members) after someone reports a concern and intervene quickly if needed. Enforce a no retaliation policy.*

4. Involve Employees in Solutions

When frontline workers help design fixes, they see that their voice directly shapes the system and trust grows. Workers are experts in how the work gets done and are best positioned to inform impactful solutions.

Action: *Create short-term "safety improvement huddles" where employees co-create fixes to recurring issues.*

Final Thought:

When workers believe that leadership *listens, responds, and follows through*, reporting increases, risks surface earlier, and safety improves long before incidents occur.