PROMOTE SAFE WORK

Learning | Leading | Looking after

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Improving Human and Organizational Performance

Learning from Mistakes

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Possible Action Steps: Learning From Mistakes

1. Model a No-Blame, Curiosity-Driven Response

Consistently respond to check-ins and events with curiosity ("Help me understand what happened"), not blame. This sets the tone for psychological safety across the organization.

Action: *Use frameworks like the 4Ds to get workers talking*

2. Make Reporting Easy, Safe, and Valued

Ensure that reporting near misses or concerns is simple, fast, and encouraged — and that people are recognized for speaking up, not punished.

Action: *Ensure reporting methods are consistent and accessible*

3. Close the Loop on Every Report

Every reported issue receives follow-up: what was learned, what action was taken, and how the system is improving as a result.

Action: *Enforce that every incident review ends with 3–5 actionable lessons.*

4. Normalize Human Error

Openly acknowledge that mistakes are expected in complex work and emphasize that systems — not individuals — must be designed to catch and correct them.

Action: *Engage with hazard and control pocket guides to ensure the right critical controls are in place to creating safety in the system*

5. Create Routine Spaces and Teams for Learning

Build regular, non-punitive conversations into workflow where teams can talk about what went wrong, what almost went wrong, and what can be improved.

Action: *Consider implementing regular, structured After-Action Reviews following critical tasks (What was supposed to happen? What happened? Why? What will we do differently?)*

Final Thought:

If workers believe mistakes are dangerous to talk about — that's the real safety risk.