

Risk Planning: Predicting and Preventing Injury

The session will address the importance of understanding the risk of their operations and how to control it to the lowest level possible. There is a major focus on the identification of critical risks and understanding how this serves to allow for the assessment of hazards, and the development and implementation of a control strategy to reduce the risk of loss.

Abstract

Companies build occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMS) to provide a framework for employees to work safely. We build systems to control hazards and mitigate risk and yet we continue have incidents some of which have serious and tragic outcomes. What can we do better? How should we be approaching our jobs to reduce the likelihood of equipment damage, process downtime, employee injury and disability. What else do we need to know and start doing to reduce workplace incidents resulting in loss? As supervisors, middle managers, and senior managers (the operations management team) we need to get involved by:

1. Understanding all aspects of our Occupational Health and Safety Management system and the hazard assessment processes.
2. Reviewing and understanding work processes and workflow – ask the tough questions and do not assume we have it right because we have always done it this way.
3. Understand human fallibility and human error and use this knowledge to predict incidents and prevent them before they happen at your worksite.
4. Learn from incidents, even no loss incidents, by getting involved in the investigations and ensuring corrective actions are implemented.
5. Actively inspecting work sites, recognizing hazards, and ensuring controls are in place.

Occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMS) are implemented for many reasons. The most obvious reason is to provide a basis for communicating between all levels of the corporate hierarchy. There are also regulatory drivers that require employers and employees to assess hazards and design safe work systems. We are constantly challenged to maintain compliance and ensure workers' health and safety is protected. The foundation of this is ensuring all employees, including the operations management team recognize the hazards in the workplace and the preferred control strategies to be used to reduce the risk of injury or loss. [The framework of the OHSMS is important but more important is the operations management team's understanding of the system and how it is supposed to work.](#) The operations management team needs to recognize that these systems are imperfect and so a process for continuous improvement is needed. The common Shewhart Cycle or Deming Cycle best describes the continuous improvement process as: Plan-Do-Check-Act. The Check-Act part defines the opportunity for continuous improvement.

[The operations management team also need to stay connected to the worksite and take time to understand the details of the work processes and workflow happening on their sites.](#) Typically problems are first identified after a serious incident, so taking time to proactively review how work is being completed is an important part of risk assessment and risk management. They need to ask the tough questions and don't assume that just because there hasn't been a serious incident that things are as good as they need to be.

It is recognized that a big cause of serious and often fatal workplace incidents is errors by employees; that is; employees do something they are not supposed to do, or they fail to do something they are supposed to do. The operations management team needs to accept this and work with the frontline employees to seek out better work processes and work methods that are more error tolerant. This includes working to better understand employees' perception of risk and risk tolerance if they are to build effective systems to reduce risk.

Many aspects of the OHSMS include proactively reducing risk at the work site. One of the most important aspects of this is the worksite inspection. Daily, weekly, or annually, the operations management team needs to take time to get involved. It provides a real opportunity to understand work processes, workplace hazards, and the associated risks.

When incidents do happen, even those that happen without significant loss an investigation is completed to learn how the approved work system failed. It has been said that the single greatest contribution the operations management team can make to workplace safety is to get involved in workplace incident investigations and make sure the changes that are needed to prevent re-occurrence get implemented. Incident investigation and causal analysis is undertaken to determine the OHSMS weaknesses so that corrective action or improvements can be made. Incident investigation and causal analysis are important tools in the continuous improvement process of any OHSMS.

In this 1-hour session we will review these topics and provide a general review of the basics of health and safety with a focus on hazard assessment, risk management, and risk reduction.

Speaker Bio

Glyn is a Partner in the firm EHS Partnerships Ltd. He has been teaching and consulting in the area of workplace safety for over 35 years of experience. Glyn is a chemical engineer by training and is a Professional Engineer. He completed a Master's degree specializing in occupational health and safety. He teaches occupational health and safety at the University of New Brunswick. He holds numerous professional certifications and is a CIH and a CRSP. He is a regular conference speaker and has been a contributor to Canadian Occupational Safety magazine. He can be reached at gjones@ehsp.ca