SAFETY TALK: ACHIEVING A STRONG SAFETY CULTURE

Nobody plans to have an accident. You don't leave home in the morning thinking, "I'm going to hurt myself or somebody else today." However, incidents happen and there is always a reason. Workplace injuries might be linked to complacency, job pressures (such as production, deadlines and long work hours), family problems, stress, lack of training or failure to recognize risk. Sometimes the reason may be a simple lack of knowledge, or maybe the worker did not understand instructions due to a language barrier.

Safety culture is a people based safety process. McMaster's safety culture is the product of an environment that places a high level of importance on safety beliefs, values and attitudes.

In a strong safety culture, everyone feels responsible for safety and strives for it every day. In this type of environment, you go beyond the call of duty to identify unsafe conditions and behaviors and step in to correct them. For example, in a strong safety culture, you would feel comfortable going up to the plant manager and reminding them to wear safety glasses. These types of actions would not be regarded as being too forward, but instead it would be valued and rewarded.

Active participation and good communication at every level is also key. Data shows that talking to someone about safety can help change their behavior. But, most importantly, talking to someone about safety makes it twice as likely that you'll change your own behavior! In a strong safety culture, questions about health and safety should be part of everyday work conversations. This can include observations, feedback, open communication and accountability. It is important to build ownership and use the skills and unique knowledge each person you talk to has. In companies with a strong safety culture like McMaster, both management and employees should feel that their safety achievements are the result of a joint effort.

It is important that everyone, regardless of their position or job, has a personal commitment to, and responsibility for, the safety of themselves and others. Ask yourself:

- What is McMaster's safety culture?
- What is my attitude towards safety?
- What prevents us from working safely?
- How can I improve McMaster's safety culture?

A level of safety in the workplace where incidents rarely happen, does not guarantee future success, however it is an indication of a strong safety culture. Steady safety maintenance is the backbone of a strong safety culture and a truly safe workplace.