

# Personal Risk Taking

*The Psychology of Safety with  
regards to Confined Space Entry*

# This Session Will

Seek to explore the concept of Human Risk Taking

Provide an overview of the psychology of safety

Describe why employees work unsafely and enter confined spaces improperly

Discuss strategies and methods to enhance workplace safety in the most effective manner possible

This session will NOT

Discuss discipline

Quote numbers, statistics, or specific exposures

Provide any advice about the technical aspects of Grain Bin Entry

# HUMAN RISK TAKING

Discipline is generally ineffective at preventing Confined Space Entry (CSE) incidents, injuries, and fatalities?

WHY???

- People don't *want* to get hurt
- A huge percentage of events involve rescue situations
- It is an absolute guarantee that NO ONE thinks "it" will happen to them

Why do people put themselves at risk?

It's all about the consequences (more about that later)

A belief that when bad things happen to others it is somehow their fault and a converse belief that when bad things happen to us, it is just bad luck

Why do people REALLY put themselves at risk???

Job pressure

Safety requires effort

It has never happened before

A lack of a solid "Safety Culture"

Peer pressure

A desire to assist a distressed employee

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SAFETY

What are the two most fundamental concepts when it comes to motivating employees safety???

I.e.... why do employees work safely?

What do they have in common?

When we attempt to motivate persons

Does motivation through avoidance really work?

Do you work harder trying to achieve something or trying to avoid something?

Scale and scope is important, but is known NOT to be the most important consideration, especially relating to discretionary effort...



# Traditional Safety

Typically focused on the person

Motivation by avoidance

Based on rules and regulations

Failure oriented

Management owned and driven

People work safely because they have to...



# Traditional Safety

Somewhat like a Merry-go-Round

*And there's  
nothing wrong  
with traditional  
safety... if you  
are happy with  
the ride...*



# The Punishment Trap

- *Punishment is Easy*
- *Punishment Gets Immediate Results*
- *Punishment Becomes an Organizational Value*
- *Punishment Becomes a Reinforcer for the Person Applying It*

Punishment gets only avoidance behavior.

Punishment does not reinforce anything.

Causing bad behavior to go away doesn't mean that it will be replaced by the behavior you want



# WHY DO EMPLOYEES WORK UNSAFELY?

Its all about the expected results of the  
behavior

Always keep in mind that decisions are  
motivated by a desire to achieve  
something, not avoid something

# The ABCs of Human Behavior



# ANTECEDENTS

**Occur before behavior**

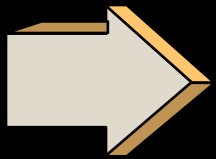
**Communicate  
expectations**

**Provide instructions**

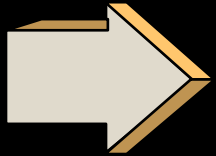
**Cue behavior**



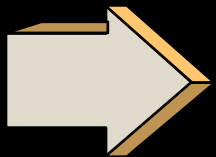
# Antecedents in the workplace



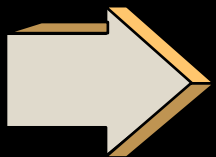
not a strong influence behavior ~ 20%



have short term effects



work best when paired with *consequences*



are overused (ex: train and re-train)

# Some examples of antecedents



## MOTIVATION

IF A PRETTY POSTER AND A CUTE SAYING ARE ALL IT TAKES TO MOTIVATE YOU,  
YOU PROBABLY HAVE A VERY EASY JOB. THE KIND ROBOTS WILL BE DOING SOON.





UNIQUE

JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE UNIQUE DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE USEFUL

# BEHAVIOR

## Undesirable Behavior

- **job behavior which does not meet expectations and requirements**
- **fail to comply with all safety rules**

## Desirable Behavior

- **job behavior which meets expectations and requirements**
- **complies with all safety rules all of the time**

# Consequences



# CONSEQUENCES

**Are either Positive or Negative for the behaviors**

**Predict the probability of future behavior**

**Occur after the behavior**

**Are too powerful to be left to chance**

**Not used often enough**



# Consequence Exercise

# A word about Training Vs Behavior



# Why does the workplace allow unsafe confined space entry?

## Workplace Culture

A sense of production over safety

Each workplace is perfectly designed to get the results it is currently getting

A belief that unsafe acts are the "fault" of the individual (lack of a systems perspective)

# WHAT IS THE BEST METHOD TO IMPROVE CONFINED SPACE ENTRY?

Understand the results from employee actions and CHANGE the consequences!!!

Move from a traditional safety culture of punishment to one of positive reinforcement and accomplishment

Always create situations where employees are more likely to succeed doing CSE the right way rather than to do it unsafely



# Some Options for Improving CSE

Evaluate safety culture to see what the perceptions of the workforce are... (This is a KEY leading indicator)

Establish a FORMAL Behavioral Safety Process

Create a Risk Assessment Group that is fully Cross-Functional

# Remember....

The system of your workplace is perfectly designed to get the results you are currently getting

If you want different results, do something different