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
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

A: Antecedent
B: Behavior
C: Consequence
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
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

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