



## 10 MYTHS ABOUT SAFETY

### We treat SAFETY as if it is something we have to teach people

1. Protecting one's own life and preventing injury to oneself is an inborn feature of *all* living organisms. Moving away from danger or stuff that can hurt one comes naturally, without thinking! By design, our bodies are equipped with all sorts of self-defence mechanisms like reflexes and fear (of heights, fire, noise, etc.).
2. People are much more aware of safety requirements than we assume.
3. Most people have been well trained and know what is required from them in terms of their jobs and safety in particular.
4. However, attitude towards safety and a safe behaviour culture have to be 'cultivated'.

### Everyone is concerned about their own safety – it's not rocket science

1. We all know what we have to do, why can't we just do it?
2. Many people have a do-not-worry attitude and are preoccupied with other priorities, often of a personal nature.
3. The risk or threat does not seem real or probable to many people – 'it won't happen to me' syndrome.
4. Why is it that, even though we know exactly what to do, we do not do the correct / safe thing? Health is one classical example – to eat healthy food, to exercise, etc. People change based on what they feel and not what they know. Understanding all the advice, having all the knowledge, doesn't matter if there's no deep, profound awareness of why it's important.
5. If we do not see a direct benefit, safety can't be a value.
6. We know what we should and shouldn't do, but we prefer to stay in our comfort zone.

### People only take chances if they have to

1. We are 'lazy' by nature and try to preserve energy – the path of least effort. We do what is easiest right now and does not hurt us.
2. We'll take a shortcut and, if we get away with it, we form the habit of doing it again and again and again . . . . Often, in the long run, we no longer realize the habit is in fact a shortcut.
3. We become 'blind' to risk.

### Safety is a work-related issue

1. Safety has to become a mindset, something we do all the time. Safety has to become a real value inside your heart.
2. We should not switch safety on or off. It is highly confusing, if not impossible, to flipflop between different sets of safety standards, one while at work and another when not at work.
3. We are creatures of habit and need patterns of consistency to function effectively.

### "Safety is one of our company's core values" – Really?

1. On paper maybe, but where the rubber hits the road? Do you walk the talk?

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2. When there is a conflict between safety and other issues like production, costs, etc., what happens?
3. What really drives your bottom line?
4. What are you doing when no one is looking?
5. One of the most common shopfloor complaints is that it is all talk and no ACTION – no use reporting defects, because nothing gets done about it!

### Safety is not an issue for people working in an office

1. We think that safety is an issue for those people 'who push the buttons and use the tools', because they are exposed to the hazards at the front line.
2. Even though there are less risks in an office environment, serious injuries, like slips, trips and falls, *do* occur frequently.
3. The leaders set the tone / standards for safety and most of the managers 'live' in offices and their safety behaviour is seen by all who meet up with them in their offices.

### Systems can fix safety problems

1. Systems are important, but they are only a means to an end and not an end in itself.
2. Systems can lead to a false sense of safety – all is well, because the paperwork and figures look good, leading to an attitude of complacency.
3. Systems are highly prone to abuse – the 'tick-tick' syndrome – and hence the need for critical auditing against reality.

### Safety can be managed in meetings

1. Most meetings are merely 'talk shops' with little ACTION. It's about doing and not just talking.
2. Safety issues, problems and opportunities should be discussed, action agreed on in SMART terms and past action taken reviewed and closed out.
3. Time on chairs is no substitute for spending time on your feet at the coalface or shopfloor. Visible results speak most powerfully.
4. We need VIP leaders – Visible Involved Pro-active.

### We manage Safety! We systemize it, police / policy it, standardize it, computerize it, hoax and coax it

1. The more control you exercise, the less control you have, because you end up policing the rule book.
2. Nothing speaks louder than ACTION and visible, take-home results.
3. All the inspections, audits and reporting are a waste of time if nothing gets done about it.
4. People need to 'see' that something is being done about the safety issues / concerns. That makes feedback to the source critical.
5. Commitment comes when people feel they are making a difference.

### We need to hold your hand

1. Who looks after safety at home? YOUR personal safety? When you are on the road?
2. We have to get people to *own* THEIR Safety.
3. People have to take responsibility for their actions and stop blaming others or the conditions.
4. We have to be pro-active and think of the consequences of our actions.
5. Attitude is a 'people' / culture issue and can best be influenced through leadership.