



VITALS

For Medical Transport Professionals

A Weekly Safety Newsletter

Who Is Responsible For Safety?

The absence of accident does not imply the presence of safety. Whoever first said this hit the target. Having "Safety" is not just a matter of having no accidents. It is also not simply a matter of having good comprehensive written programs. The process of safety involves people, every day, every minute. The first lesson to deliver is "Content and Process."

Content

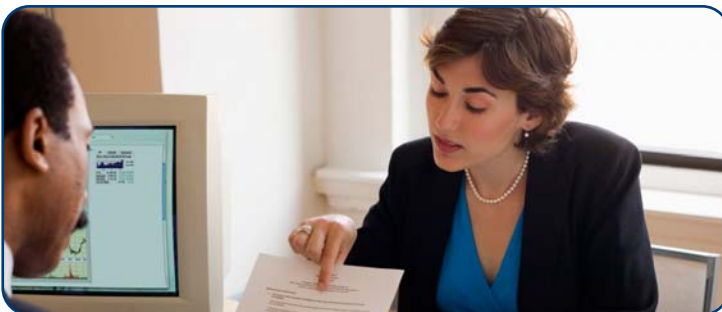
Consists of WHAT you want to achieve or your goal, content includes written procedures, action lists, step-by-step procedures, training guides or simply verbal instructions. Content defines the scope and end point of a task or project.

Process

On the other hand, is the group dynamics of HOW a project, procedure or goal is accomplished AND the effect these actions have on individuals and groups for future accomplishments. Process is the single most important factor in affecting success or failure of a task. Understanding and proper use of Process will improve the ability of a group to meet goals and exhibit behaviorally specific correct actions, such as ALWAYS following pre-trip inspection procedures. Process is like that "warm and fuzzy" part of managing people that is often overlooked. Properly used, process can be used to effectively set and enforce standards, convey positive expectations and solve problems. Use every "crisis" as an opportunity to strengthen groups and improve employee performance and involvement.

Having Safety Means That Employees:

- Understand and follow procedures
- Report unsafe conditions
- Encourage others to work safely
- Find, solve and fix the problems in their areas of responsibility
- Suggest improvements in procedures and equipment
- Don't take shortcuts!



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Ok, who's responsible? Many businesses have well-defined job descriptions for everything from the Company Comptroller to the Custodial Staff. And let me tell you, if the janitor's job doesn't get done, nobody's happy. So back to the question, who has responsibility for safety? Of course, the usual answer is everyone. Nice thought, but let's look at the nuts and bolts. The people who have the most influence on safety are the direct supervisors. These are the people who work with, direct and observe production employees every minute. They provide the positive or negative pressures that motivate (or de-motivate) workers. If the lowest level supervisors have not bought into the safety programs, and claimed ownership of them, not much can or will happen on the safety front.

Department managers and project heads have the most control on safety. Generally, they have, or will take, authority to change procedures or redirect resources. Sometimes the most casual comment, such as, "Let's skip that this time" can cause considerable damage to the safety culture in a company. Especially if the challenge is not communicated and explained properly.

Of course, upper management has the responsibility for safety. These are the DJPs (designated jail persons): the ones that go to jail if criminal negligence is found to contribute to a severe injury or death. Yes, many managers have spent some time in the lockup for ignoring workplace hazards. Beyond that, if upper management wants a high degree of concern for safety, with appropriate actions taken to ensure worker safety, they must:

- Continually communicate this to all management
- Provide resources and personnel for safety tasks
- Ensure written safety programs meet regulatory requirements
- Discuss safety at staff meetings
- Use safety performance as part of pay and bonus reviews

Yes, everyone is responsible for safety, but everyone has different roles to play to monitor and improve the safety environment. If safety becomes static, it will fade into the background and again become a "bothersome" burden. Safety First! Everyone has heard this. An overused safety slogan that many companies paste all over workplaces. The question is... if Safety is First, why do they have to say it? Ever hear (outside of the Board Room), profits First? Probably not, but EVERYBODY knows it and RESPONDS to it! Safety will only be first, and result in behaviors that will improve operations- production, quality- if it becomes part of the company culture from the top management down to the newest employee

-this was handed down several times, but well stated-original author unknown.