



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Safety Mission

When it comes to safety, failure is not an option. At NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, the lost-time mishap rate has been decreased by 77 percent and material losses have been reduced by 51 percent as a result of emphasizing management safety training, top management commitment, and employee involvement.

The Center has plenty of experience, having managed two of NASA's major space flight programs, the 'Space Shuttle' and the 'International Space Station,' safely for years. However, in 1994, the Space Center experienced several incidents that were costly and had the potential for severe injury to personnel. The organization enquiry revealed that there were small problems like slips, trips and falls.

The Center initiated a safety training program with two perspectives – an internally generated senior management safety course and an externally provided safety course. While the internally generated program focused on the Center's work processes, the external program emphasized one manager teaching another about safety. They established a closed circuit TV system called Emergency Channel- 3 to update employees on emergencies and started posting monthly safety slogans named Asset Conservation Reminders. They enhanced the Center's Mishap Management Process to help standardize processes and to determine the root cause in order to take corrective action.

A Safety and Total Health home page was established on the Intranet to cover the basics on hazards, training and mishap rates; a newsletter on safety and health served the same purpose. They also dedicate an entire day to safety and health activities and call it Safety Stand Down Day. An executive safety committee consisting of the top management meets once a month to discuss safety issues. Top management personally investigates mishaps, visiting the site within 24 hours and taking necessary action. They also organize safety scenario drills several times during the year.

Employees have also been encouraged to play a larger role in the safety efforts. They voluntarily contribute articles to the safety newsletter and have formed ad-hoc committees to address safety issues.

The success of the safety mission at the NASA's Center can be attributed to the involvement of the employees - a program of the employees, by the employees, and for the employees.