



## GOALS

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**This safety session should teach employees to:**

- Understand the purpose of behavior-based safety and how it works.
- Use observation and feedback to shape and reinforce safe behavior.

**Applicable Regulations: General Duty Clause, Occupational Safety and Health Act**



### **1. The purpose of behavior-based safety is to create a safer workplace.**

- Behavior-based safety is a method of avoiding human error and improving workplace safety by observing and analyzing employees' behavior while they work.
- The guiding principle of behavioral safety is doing a job safely as the product of a series of safe behaviors.
- Behavior is defined as any action you can see someone doing.
  - Behavior includes visible actions only, not things you can't see, such as attitudes or thoughts.
- Behavior-based safety helps determine why at-risk behavior occurs on the job and the steps necessary to change at-risk behavior into safe behavior.
- This method uses materials and activities to encourage safe behavior.
  - For example, safety signs, training, safety rules and policies, safety meetings
- It also uses observation of behaviors to determine whether behaviors are safe or unsafe.
- And it uses positive or corrective feedback on performance to reinforce safe behavior and change unsafe behavior.

### **2. Behavior-based safety involves selecting and observing desired safe behaviors.**

- Behaviors selected for observation must be:
  - Observable (can be seen or heard)
  - Reliable (seen the same way by two or more people)
  - Something over which an employee has control
  - Described in a positive way (what should be done, not what shouldn't be done)
- Selected safe behaviors (usually no more than five at one time) are compiled into a checklist.
- Employees carry the checklist with them during the workday and spot-check for the different selected safe behaviors.
  - For example, if you observe a coworker performing a behavior on the checklist safely, you put a check in the "safe" column.
  - If a coworker is observed performing a behavior unsafely, a check goes in the "unsafe" column.
- Behavior-based safety observations must be objective—that is, based on what you actually see a person doing, not on opinions or interpretations about a coworker's performance.

### **3. Positive feedback is an essential part of behavior-based safety.**

- Positive verbal feedback is a powerful way to reinforce safe behavior.



- When you give coworkers feedback about safe behavior, be specific about what you observed.
  - For example, to a forklift operator, you might say, “Thank you for driving slowly around that corner and using your horn to warn others.”
  - Avoid generalizations such as, “Thanks for driving the forklift carefully.”
- Deliver feedback on performance immediately after or as soon after the behavior as possible.
- Also, identify the person or group to whom you’re giving the feedback by name.
  - For example, “John, thanks for mopping up that spilled water. You just prevented someone from slipping and falling and getting injured.”
  - Avoid saying things like, “Thanks everyone for keeping the floor clean.”
- Don’t use the word “but” or “however” when giving positive feedback, since these qualifiers diminish the effect of the positive message.
  - For example, if you say, “Good to see you wearing safety glasses, Sally, but...” Sally may only hear the part after the “but,” not the positive reinforcement preceding it.

#### 4. Corrective feedback is required when at-risk behavior is observed.

- When you observe a coworker engaging in unsafe behavior, you must give corrective feedback.
- Corrective feedback is giving information on what a coworker is doing incorrectly and also providing information for improvement.
- Never ignore unsafe behavior—it could result in an accident.
- When giving corrective feedback:
  - Be specific and focus on the correct behavior only—don’t discuss other behaviors.
  - Be objective and talk about the behavior, not the person.
  - Describe the safe behavior, and make sure coworkers understand why this behavior is important to their safety.



#### DISCUSSION POINTS:

Ask participants to identify three to five behaviors essential for performing their jobs safely. Create a checklist and have participants observe one another on the job the following day and give one another feedback on performance. Meet again briefly to discuss the results of the observations.



#### CONCLUSION:

- Behavior-based safety observations and feedback improve workplace safety.
- Doing a job safely is the product of a series of safe behaviors. Behavior-based safety is a method for avoiding human error and improving workplace safety by observing and analyzing employees’ behavior while they work.



#### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:

Have your employees take the Behavior-Based Safety quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can judge their ability to use this knowledge to work more safely and whether they need to review this important topic again soon.