

## **When Supervisors & Employees Think “It is Not My Job!”**

**By Linda Heyse-Highland of LinJen Promotions, Inc.**

**It is pretty easy to let the responsibility of safety rest on the EH&S person. After all, everyone already has their job and not enough hours in the day to accomplish their own tasks. And then there are productivity and deadlines—work has to get done quickly. How much time in the day is there for considering safety concerns?**

**These are some of the challenges facing safety professionals. These challenges go beyond training; they go beyond management’s desire for a great safety record. They speak to the point of “Whose job is it anyway?”**

**Of course, safety is everyone’s responsibility. How do you communicate that responsibility? How can you make that change to your safety culture?**

**Create a safety program that includes these four elements:**

- 1. Communication**
- 2. Leadership Commitment**
- 3. Employee Empowerment**
- 4. Continuous Improvement**

**Communication & Leadership Commitment:**

**Share your safety goals and vision. Begin with creating a theme—perhaps something that connects everyone to the idea of responsibility: Safety—it is my job!”**

**Prior to launching a program, you will need top management’s buy-in. It is helpful for them to lead a kickoff launch (when multiple locations are involved, plant managers, foreman, etc. can voice the company’s focused safety vision).**

**In advance of the program’s launch, every supervisor will need to be educated in the safety program’s rules and rewards. They could receive team-building items, such as portfolios and/or polo shirts displaying your company name, program theme (Safety—it is my job!) and “Safety Leader” printed on handouts. That safety leader message is their reinforcing focus.**

**Supervisors will be commissioned into their safety leadership responsibility. It will also be discussed how their employees’ safe work behaviors will help them achieve recognition (department/location awards or supervisor leadership jackets, etc. for top safety performers).**

**Safety programs need to be promoted through sustained communication. Signage and other visual displays and handouts can keep the program visible.**

**Banners, posters, floor and table decals, equipment stickers, etc. are all useful items to accomplish this. For more personal, tangible touches—use items, such as t-shirts, key chains, small tools, etc., that will display the program name and maybe even offer a safety tip (i.e., ask for help when needed). If you need to highlight important points, use products to display them as well. Depending on your budget, items can be shared monthly or quarterly at toolbox talks, etc.**

#### **Employee Empowerment & Continuous Improvement:**

**Safety programs need to involve every worker in positive safety habits and proactive thinking. We can encourage this with a reward program.**

**Online programs now make rewards and recognition easy. You can determine what safe work behaviors are important—hazard recognition and correction, near-miss reporting, safety leadership roles, etc. Each of these initiatives can be assigned points that can be accumulated for awards that are selected from an online catalog. Each person's safe work behaviors can be viewed with cumulated reporting available for SH&E professional's review.**

**Awards are sent right to the recipient's home (no need to inventory). And with total recording capabilities, it provides easy best practice-sharing, highlights safety champions, provides for budget management and accesses safety reporting uniquely by location and/or department.**

**Rewards can be structured in many different ways: accumulating safety tokens, on-the spot recognition, etc. Whatever venue, keep it simple to use and manage. Also, when rewarding as teams only, remember that some form of individual recognition will encourage rather than discourage participation.**

#### **Empowerment Activities:**

**No one knows more about how to do their job safely than the person who does it every day. Ask them. Form committees and empower them (you may need to include at least one supervisor/manager to participate) to figure out ways to make a safer work environment. (If there is no money, that is part of the empowerment—what can we do to make it work)? Focus on being proactive and recognize employee involvement.**

**What about safety at home? Why not involve the family by creating a safety calendar? Employees' children and grandchildren can submit drawings showing safe behaviors (stop/drop/roll or stranger danger, etc.). Selected drawings can be made into a company safety calendar (functional with shifts, vacation dates, etc.).**

**Wherever you are in your level of safety commitment, continuing communication will make the difference. Listen. Get feedback. Keep everyone involved and make everyone a part of safety.**