Human Performance Meeting Kit

Most of the focus in the workplace when addressing hazards is directed to physical hazards that can hurt or harm us. Examples are many from electrocutions, slips, trips and falls, struck-by incidents, workplace violence etc.

Attention to the harm that can be caused to workers by physical hazards in the jobsite cannot be understated. But human performance factors that affect the workplace must be seriously scrutinized.

HUMAN PERFORMANCE FACTORS

Human performance factors are factors that affect an individual's ability to work safely and efficiently. They may also affect an entire workforce. Factors such as stress, time pressures, distractions, personal abilities, and lack of direction are some common human performance factors that can play a huge role in a jobsite incident such as an injury or property loss.

Stress- There is good stress as well as bad stress. We are more familiar with the bad stress. Stress from work demands, home demands, family problems, health problems, etc. affect us every day. A combination of high expectations for productivity and limited resources to complete work often leads to high stress levels on the job. It is important to be able to handle stress in a constructive way. Exercising or taking time to enjoy hobbies is a good way to relieve stress. Recognize when you are stressed and step away from the situation to take time to relax.

Time Pressure- We all experience time pressures at work. When we try to accomplish too much in too little time incidents are going to occur. Proper planning and reasonable expectations from clients and managers can help alleviate the stress caused by time pressure. At the individual level, it is important to speak up when there is unreasonable expectations or you need additional help to get a task done in a certain time frame.

Distractions- There can be dozens if not more distractions affecting us at any one time. Personal situations at home, a ringing cellphone, wildlife in the work area, and other people around you are just a few common distractions we face on a daily basis. It is important that we recognize things that are distracting us from our work and eliminate them. The smallest distraction has the potential to cause a fatality.

Personal Ability- We all have our strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes we are given jobs that we are not adequately prepared for. It is important to have the proper knowledge and training to complete a work task safely. If you feel that you are not qualified for a work task, discuss the options with your supervisor.

Lack of Direction- Unclear guidance by a supervisor can lead to many problems for workers. If you do not know what is expected of you or the work task you need to stop work and get clear directions. Many workers can feel embarrassed by asking questions and would rather proceed with a task before taking a moment to talk with someone who can clear things up for them. This can lead to an injury occurring or costly mistakes in production.

Fatigue

Tackling the common issue of fatigue is challenging, because its effects can vary from person to person. Tracking simple statistics such as man-hours worked and setting limits on overwork can help to regulate the phenomenon. Some tools, such as environmental, health, and safety software that integrates with a human resources program, can be incredibly useful in calculating not only lagging but also leading indicators.

HUMAN FACTORS

Ergonomics—human-factors engineering—should be considered in all workplace improvement efforts. Feeling safe and staying clear of injuries can immensely contribute toward increased productivity by reducing the stress placed on personnel. Moreover, having the right tools and regular breaks during a workday can significantly

reduce errors and increase efficiency, thus benefitting not only the individual but also the organization.

What is meant by human factors, and why are they important? Human factors can be environmental, organizational, and job factors, and human and individual characteristics, which influence behavior at work in a way that can affect health and safety.

Every person is different, meaning that there are as many variables to a job as there are people. Each individual brings an assortment of skills and a unique personality to the workplace; therefore, each requires personalized support to maximize their capabilities. Ergonomics (the study of the ways in which working conditions can influence the effectiveness of a task being done) looks at both organizational and human aspects that could contribute to job performance. This includes everything from workplace culture to the optimum height of a desk and work equipment.

Workplace culture builds a foreground for safety, well-being, and performance, which is why ergonomics, or "**human-factors engineering,"** should not be excluded from improvement efforts. As part of a commitment to a safe environment, organizations should be accountable for educating their employees on possible work-influencing factors, such as fatigue and situational awareness, and making sure all necessary means have been exhausted to facilitate the most-effective workplace possible. Management must take a proactive stand on this, and listen to not only the numeric indicators, but also the human characteristics behind incidents.

FINAL WORD

Human performance factors can have as much as a role in a jobsite incident as a physical hazard. It is important to recognize the role they play in our work day to day. When these factors interfere with our ability to work safely it is important to stop work and address the issue. Eliminate the hazards associated with human performance just as you such as an unguarded machine hazard or a fire hazard.