

INDUSTRY:
Power & Energy

SOLUTION:
SafetyDNA® for Leaders

Does Leadership Affect Safety Incidents? You Bet it Does!

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THE SITUATION

According to recent estimates from the National Safety Council, the average cost of a medically consulted injury, including wage losses, medical expenses, administrative expenses, and employer costs was \$39,000 in 2012. This lines up closely with the average workers’ compensation claim of \$36,592 for the same time period.

Clearly, injuries are costly to organizations financially but they are also costly from a morale and organizational culture perspective. Research consistently shows that a strong safety culture greatly impacts the rate of injuries as well as near misses and other leading indicators of injury. Where does a strong safety culture come from? Primarily it comes from strong leaders.

Leaders help create the safety culture of their teams as well as the broader organization. Their day-to-day interactions with employees help determine whether safety is a driving value or a buzz word. Creating a vision, communicating effectively, providing timely feedback, and establishing trust and credibility are core components of effective leadership that drives safety outcomes. These leader behaviors influence every aspect of a work site – the physical environment, the workforce, and the systems and policies, which in turn, drive organizational safety performance.

But how do you go about evaluating leadership, and does it make a difference in safety outcomes?



THE SOLUTION

SafetyDNA® for Leaders is a powerful tool that accurately assesses individuals on the four primary factors that predict safety outcomes, as well as core leadership styles that impact performance, in terms of productivity, morale, and most importantly, safety culture.

The primary focus of this particular study was to evaluate the accuracy with which the SafetyDNA for Leaders assessment related to work group safety incidents.

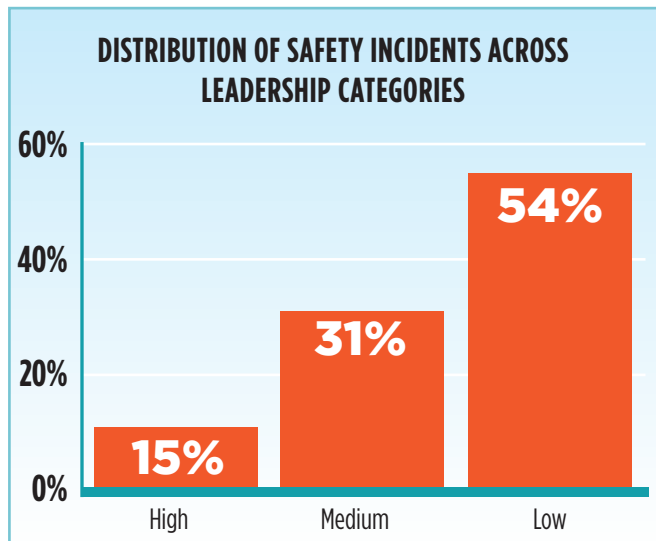
A fossil fuels energy company had 185 leaders from 12 different sites complete the SafetyDNA for Leaders assessment, which takes under an hour to complete online. The front-line leaders, who were either foremen or general foremen, oversaw various craft positions including welders, electricians, boilermakers, and pipefitters, as well as general laborers, who maintained the power generating facilities on a daily basis. Average crew size for foremen averaged approximately 10 individuals but could swell to upwards of 60 during site shutdowns, or “outages,” when upwards of 800 temporary employees would be hired in a two-week period to repair or replace equipment, conduct audits, calibrate equipment, etc.

Safety incident rates for the crew supervised by each foreman and general foreman over the previous two-year period prior to the assessment were gathered. These incidents included first aid and doctor’s visits, as well as OSHA recordable injuries.

One of the outputs for the SafetyDNA for Leaders tool assimilates all of the information in the assessment and categorizes leaders into one of three groups: High (strong leadership and safety profile); Medium (moderate leadership style and safety profile), and Low (ineffective leadership style and safety profile).

OUTCOMES

The chart below shows the percentage of safety incidents by leadership category. The results are straightforward and dramatic. **Leaders in the Low Score group were associated with over one-half of all safety incidents during the two-year period.**



In fact, **crews supervised by low and medium score leaders accounted for 85% of all safety incidents during that time period.** Clearly, effective leadership makes a huge impact on the safety climate of the group and ultimately on the safety incidents of their teams.

The question now becomes what to do with this information? The assessment is only the first step in a broader development process known as the *SafetyDNA* for Leaders Development Program,

which is designed to raise personal awareness for leaders and then to focus on improving their safety leadership skills. Through a series of one-on-one coaching sessions and focused workshops, leaders learn how to communicate safety effectively, to set vision and direction, to provide constructive feedback on at-risk behaviors, and to drive safety culture.

The organization in this particular study now uses the assessment as part of their leader development process. This provides them with a data-driven method to help improve the leadership style and effectiveness of their first-line leaders as part of their continued effort to improve their safety culture and reduce incidents.

SUMMARY

The results of this study provide clear and compelling evidence that leadership significantly impacts safety incidents. It also shows that the *SafetyDNA* for Leaders assessment provides a straightforward, easy-to-administer and unbiased measure of safety leadership that significantly relates to team incident rates.

Understanding your safety leadership profile and how it impacts incident rates is a first step in developing effective leadership behaviors to build strong safety cultures.

