

# Indicators for Measuring Safety Procedures

By Jim Lucker

The choice of what to spend time and energy on measuring within our companies is a tremendous strategic responsibility, Measurement focuses employees and causes action.

It is the responsibility of leadership to ensure that we make the right measurement choices, because those choices drive our behavior and thus define our company's culture. Measurement choices define whether we will be proactive or reactive in all of our activities, including safety.

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One of the most common oversights in today's safety programs is the focus on measuring past results (i.e., incidents) and ignoring causes.

To achieve the Zero Injury Workplace,

we need to look ahead and measure the leading indicators of safety and then validate those efforts with measurement of results. As we move closer to the goal of "Zero Injuries," the resulting reduction of incidents means less relevance of the incidence measures.

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The following are the most common indicators of safety used by proactive companies committed to Zero Injuries:

**1**

**Safe Behavior Compliance.**

After identifying the at-risk behaviors for a certain type of work or crew, observations of those behaviors are made, and the results shared with the crew. This type of measure focuses the crew on the important behaviors in their work and identifies problem areas. (See Figure 1.)

**2**

**Observation Frequency.**

The number of times a crew carries out their behavioral observations may be the most important measure because it promotes a focus on the above safe behaviors and reinforces training during each observation. (See Figure 2.)

To achieve success in Zero Injury Safety, schedule the observation frequency and monitor the schedule.

**3**

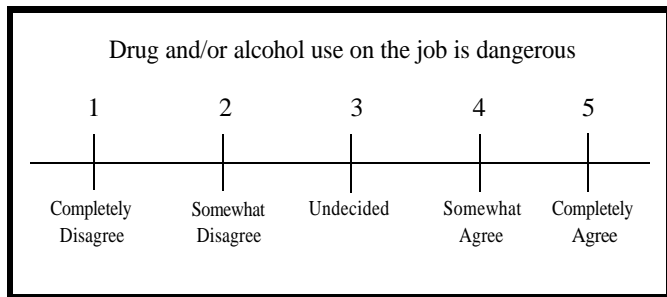
**Percentage of Employees Involved in the Process.**

This measure focuses on involvement and may be defined as "attended training "carried out an observation,"

“attended a safety meeting” or “participated in a safety problem-solving session.” Any of these activities has the potential to improve safety performance. (See Figure 3.)

**4 Cycle Time to Correct an Unsafe Condition.** Measuring the time from identification of an unsafe condition to the time that it is corrected is a true indicator of the effectiveness of our safety process. (See Figure 4.)

**5 Safety Perceptions.** A review of how the employees feel about safety in their work is often a good leading indicator of accident probability, Perceptions very often lead to reality, and if someone thinks we don’t care about safety, they will act accordingly. (See chart below.)



**6 Incidents.** This is the final measure of safety, and it is often relied on too heavily. A firm’s incident rate reflects the effectiveness of all of its safety efforts.

As the industry moves closer to and attains the “Zero Injury Jobsite,” incidents will become less frequent and less important in validating our efforts.

Adding any or all of these six measures to your safety process and sharing the results with employees is the first step toward moving from a reactive safety improvement process to a proactive approach and attaining a “Zero Injury Workplace.”

**About the Author**

Jim Lucker is a senior consultant in the Quality and Productivity Improvement Group of FMI, management consultants to the construction industry. He works with contractors on partnering facilitation, field productivity improvement and safety process implementation.

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