NIEHS Track Breakout Session –Palladian Room

TITLE: Overcoming Barriers to Worker Involvement in Safety and Health Programs and its Implications for Safety Culture

Safety Culture/Climate Workshop
The Connection between Safety and Health Programs and Safety Culture
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NIEHS Track

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Overcoming Barriers to Worker Involvement in Safety and Health Programs and its Implications for Safety Culture

The five barriers are:

1. **No formal involvement of workers (and their unions) in the development and implementation of health and safety policies and programs.**
2. **Written policies vs practice, differences in written policy and what is actually practiced in the workplace**
3. **Management mentality – reluctance of management to cede some control and power to workers and their unions?**
4. **Overcoming the historical experience of workers – change is hard.**
5. **How economic downturns and upswings influence safety**

1. **No formal involvement of workers (and their unions) in the development and implementation of health and safety policies and programs**
   - Contractual mechanism or agreement to legally require formal involvement (UAW/GM agreements- employers pays into fund that invests in establishing a safety culture)
   - Formal worker involvement should mean equal status, empowerment (decision-making jointly), not just having a seat at the table
   - Cross functional teams (Joint safety committees with jointly developed SOP's ex. 8 hour process)
   - Should include the workers opinions and insight as valuable and provide time for review on the floor any S&H issue. Include the right worker

Written policies vs practice, differences in written policy and what is actually practiced in the workplace

- Issue of metrics over safety – got to keep or push production and safety is a back seat driver.

  - 6 hour window workaround/shortcuts instead of following procedures

- Level 3 evaluation or process evaluation results should be used to revise and update outdated or needed SOP's

  - Difficulty at DOE to change a written policy event with 851 Rule

- Safety rules so extreme that it corrodes safety climate and processes. Can't get work done or disciplined all the time and to get employer reasons to fire or demote workers (Steel plants)

- Workplace violence policy in NY is a good example of effective written policy public sector workers NYS Dept of Labor- S&H)

- UAW/GM Contractor language for Joint S&H Committee

- ANSI Z10 Standard- OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Management mentality – reluctance of management to cede some control and power to workers and their unions?

- DOE Example – Have good ISM (Integrated Safety Management System but when you have outside DOE leadership (Military) there is a disconnect

- Use external facilitator to assist in dealing with management mentality or reluctance or assist to deal with power structure to effectively deal with safety concerns

- Evaluation results (NIEHS Multi-grantee) –Managers are ok with worker involvement but tepid response for managers making changes that area are agreed upon by workers. Employers should voluntarily try new safety procedures /processes to show willingness to change safety climate and culture.

- Need to diversify management – not just management hiring managers like them but workers to managers (different experiences and influences should be valued)