

NOW YOU SEE ME



by Ir. Shum Keng Yan

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When we first inculcate the right attitudes towards safety, we focus on observing and measuring behaviours. At the most basic stage, you may want to share insights from "Setting the Stage for Safe Behaviour" (June 2017) and introduce the ABC of Safety (August 2017). This offers an understanding of how Behavioural Observation can be useful. A strong buy-in is necessary as it is not comfortable to be observed but the aim is to identify at-risk behaviours.

Explain the process and the objective to capture learnings which can be shared with those doing a similar job. Learnings can be captured in cards with details of the observation session. There are boxes to remind the observer to check the condition of the workplace, tools and equipment, body position, procedures, how the job is performed and so on.

Often, we bucket the conclusion on "safe" and "unsafe" learnings. Both parties will confirm the observation session, the subsequent actions and follow-ups. The session then wraps up with a positive recognition for good practices and the coaching received.

Some name the record as Behavioural Observation Checklist. I must stress that coaching on the learnings and improvements to the work process is of higher value than the recording.

Next, coach observers on the process. You can use observation by the supervisory level or by themselves (peer). The process can be done using a fixed schedule, ad-hoc or a mix of both. Ideally, observation should be integrated with existing shopfloor inspections or walks. However, many prefer a standalone Behavioural Observation walk in the early stages in order to give it a stronger emphasis. The ultimate aim is to have an integrated safety system with the business processes.

During the walks, capture the learnings on unsafe conditions (sub-standard conditions) and unsafe behaviours (sub-standard behaviours). In the case of "sub-standard", clearly define "standard". Where this is not clearly defined, now is the opportunity to do so.

There are pros and cons in splitting conditions and behaviours. In almost all cases, observation is a recording of unsafe conditions as most feel uncomfortable about "telling" on colleagues. Even with management support, employees feel that recordings of unsafe behaviours will be used against them during performance appraisals.

The records are then tabulated and the trend identified. Let me predict the trend in your company: "Did not wear proper PPE" and "Did not follow Standard Operation Instructions" came up in the top five.

So will Behavioural Observation add value to drive change? If you see the point, send your observation card to me at: pub@iem.org.my. ■

*"The more you look, the less you see" J. Daniel Atlas
(fictional character from "Now You See Me")*