

**CREATING A SAFE WORKING
ENVIRONMENT**
at
BLAIR ATHOL COAL

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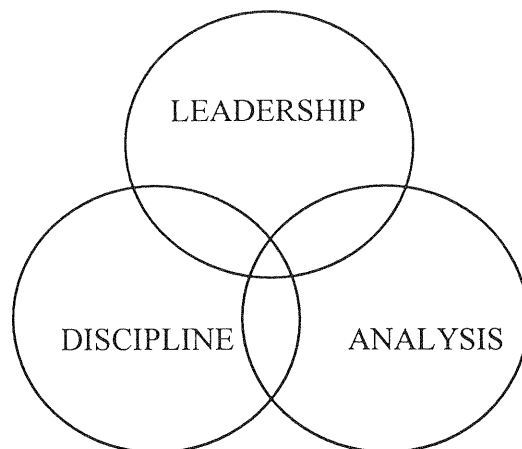
INTRODUCTION

In August 1993 BLAIR ATHOL COAL set out to fundamentally change the way safety was managed at the site.

Some thoughts and experience from the implementation of the Blair Athol Safety System (BASS) are outlined in this paper.

This paper will hopefully stimulate some thinking and planning for your program at your site.

A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS



The above sample model shows the interaction of the three essential ingredients for success in implementing safety programs.

Leadership

Successful leadership will

- Be committed to the program
- Lead by example
- Involve employees in the program
- Create ownership for the program

Discipline

This is the cornerstone of creating a safe working environment. The Blair Athol Safety System (BASS) is based on the NOSA 5 star Safety System adopted by CRA.

BASS consists of 73 elements in 5 groups

1. Premises and Housekeeping
2. Mechanical - Electrical and Personal Safe Guarding
3. Fire Protection and Prevention
4. Accident/Incident Reporting
5. Organisation

The NOSA system through BASS will

- require the necessary discipline for implementation
- provide a framework for measurement
- allow benchmarking to an international standard

Analysis

Whilst discipline is about “doing things right”, analysis is about doing “the right things”

It is fundamental to improvement of the safety performance to analyse where the current safety program is up to and why it may have stalled. This analysis must go beyond statistics.

A review and analysis of various aspects of the current program such as

- Safety training effectiveness
- Isolation procedures
- Safety meeting effectiveness
- Non conformance to existing standards
- Accident/Incident reporting, etc

will provide a better understanding of how to lift performance and where to focus your effort.

IMPLEMENTATION OF BASS

The implementation of BASS began after 3 months of planning. During this phase the senior management team worked on gaining understanding of the program and developing their own commitment to the program. The result was a safety policy statement clearly stating the company commitment and direction and a shared understanding of the commitment required.

The implementation plan detailed every major activity required to be ready for a grading audit by NOSA. The process of doing the plan, provided clarity of what we were trying to do, priority on key tasks, and understanding of the program.

The objective in the first year was to create ownership for the program, start to focus on the workplace by removing some of the stacking and storage problems, and set up the safety organisation and structure.

Once the plan was worked out, dates for the NOSA audits were booked and became milestones for the program.

COMMUNICATION

You cannot do too much communication. BASS was initially outlined at toolbox talks by Superintendents and Supervisors.

A brochure explaining the system was then sent to the homes of employees.

BASS was outlined in the 2 day Basic Safety Training course.

After all this, some people were still wondering what was happening and what was BASS, 3 months after we started implementing the program. The reason they were wondering, the information to date wasn't relevant to that person until they were pulled off their job and put in a room for 2 days to talk about BASS. Then it became relevant to them and they were then listening.

CREATING OWNERSHIP

Without doubt, the most difficult job for management is to create ownership for a safety program. Employees who have been with the organisation a while may be cynical about the company's commitment, after all they have seen these programs before.

Ownership is built through involvement. From the outset, we involved as many people as we could in the implementation. Every site has employees who, when asked, are willing to get involved in a safety program.

SAFETY SYSTEMS

“Things are the way they are because they got that way”

This truism applied to safety is saying that people are using systems of work that have been built up over the years and have been allowed to go uncontrolled. For example, the corner of the workshop that is piled with items that “we may need one day”.

A safety audit of the site will pick up hundreds of safety non-conformances that require attention. The trap is to fix each item as an individual occurrence. The smart way is to identify which non-conformances are occurring because of poor systems of work. By addressing the system of work, non-conformances will not only be rectified but the new system of work will keep the area up to standard.

To illustrate this point, an audit may find several lights out around various parts of the plant. The fact that several lights were out is an indication that the system of lighting checks and replacements needs to be examined. If only the lights out are replaced, then on the next audit a new set of lights out will be evident.

CONCLUSION

In our first grading audit the site received a 2 star grading from a possible 5 star.

The number of lost time injuries has significantly reduced.

The audit measure of safety effort rating was 55%.

There is still a long way to go and there is no easy road.

TIPS AND TRAPS

- TIP Plan out the program, know what is to be achieved.
- TIP Communicate relevant information regularly
- TIP Involve all employees in changes to their work areas
- TIP Trial changes and discuss them over a number of weeks
- TIP Prioritise work to be done
- TIP Safety Committees need a clear focus
- TIP Clearly identify who is responsible for what
- TIP Improve on the systems of work to improve the work place
- TRAP “Nike” planning - just do it
- TRAP lack of employee involvement
- TRAP Painting the floors is the first step
- TRAP Believing that because no one objected they agreed
- TRAP Inspecting without bringing the work area up to standard
- TRAP Set up Safety Committees without authority
- TRAP Employees can't be released to be involvemed

