



The Porcelain Press

NSWC Indian Head Division
Safety Department Newsletter

4th InSTALLment

Distributed to a Restroom near you

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Accountability

“Holding them accountable” is the way we typically hear this phrase. Webster’s Online Dictionary defines accountable this way:

- Liable to be called to account
- Being obliged to answer to an authority for your actions

Because of these definitions, the word accountability sometimes conjures up negative images involving guilt and blame. People focus on faultfinding and on blame as they ask “whose head should roll?” No wonder accountability gets a bad reputation. Who would want to be accountable, if it might result in decapitation?

After mishaps, people start talking about accountability. The problem is, *after* the mishap, it’s rather *late* for such discussions. Accountability should be established and implemented early. When you decide beforehand who needs to be accountable for what, and when you practice accountability on a daily basis, mishaps on any scale are far less likely to happen.

Here’s our definition of accountability: ***The ability and willingness to follow through on your own promises and commitments.***

The ability.... Accountability is a skill. It requires learning, practice, implementation and revision. As with other skills, the more you do it, the more proficient and effective you become.

... and willingness... This refers to effort, the discipline of accountability. It requires intention. It’s about showing up and taking care of business, even if you don’t feel like it. Ultimately, accountability only happens when people want to do a good job.

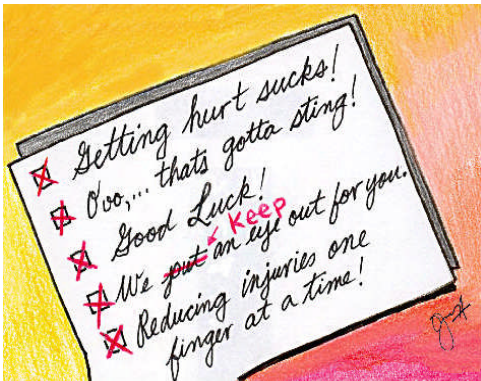
... to follow through... Accountability is an ongoing effort, not a one-shot deal.

... on your own promises... The word promise has an emotional resonance. It’s the kind of word you use when you’re in a trusting relationship. It’s a demonstration of faith. It’s about taking ownership.

... and commitments. In a workplace context, “commitments” are the actions you do to execute your work. Together, promises and commitments cover the scope of things you say you’ll do.

So accountability is not just a question of who is liable after something goes wrong. It’s not simply about who is answerable. It’s more than that. That’s why with accountability the Buck Starts Here – with you.

Create A Safety Slogan Contest



After crossing off the following suggestions, the Safety Department is sponsoring a safety slogan contest in which all employees will be eligible to participate in developing a message that deals with workplace safety. The winning safety message will be used to help promote the safety program over the next year. The contest is open to all employees and their family members. The winning employees’ slogan will receive a Safety Award presented by the CO. Submit your safety slogan to the Safety Department by 30 September 2006.

Ask the Safety Wiz

The Safety Wizard will answer your questions and concerns about the safety program!

Dear Wiz: What happens if someone repeatedly doesn’t wear their safety glasses when it is required?

- ***Seeing is Believing***

Dear Believing: The answer to your question depends on how committed your local area management is in holding personnel accountable for their actions. At the worksite this type of discrepancy can be corrected quickly and operations can resume. What is more important is what happens afterwards and how area management holds individuals accountable for their safety performance.

Accountability for safety is at the heart of every successful safety program. Assigning safety responsibility to individuals without also assigning accountability is safety’s greatest failing. Remember that employees and managers do what they do because of what gets reinforced. Therefore, if the area leadership is sending the signal that there is no accountability for failure to wear safety glasses, they are reinforcing the culture that safety glasses are not important. You may or may not get the answer you are looking for if you redirect this question to your area leadership.

The part of your body most likely to be injured in an automobile accident is your face.

The first ten people who find the subliminal safety message and E-mail it to me at raymond.geckle@navy.mil will win a safety award