

Demonstrating Management Commitment

Construction companies in partnership with workers are responsible for ensuring that jobsite hazards are eliminated, or at least minimized. These partnerships are most effective when they exist within a positive safety climate.

The **safety climate** on a specific construction project refers to managements’ and workers’ shared perceptions of the adequacy of the safety and health programs and the consistency between the organization’s espoused safety policies/procedures and the actual conditions at the jobsite. It is the combination of safety climates from multiple organizations including the project owner, construction manager/general contractor, and subcontractors and it may be influenced by local conditions such as project delivery, scheduling, planning methods and existing norms amongst involved trades.

Management includes those who have the power and responsibility to make decisions and oversee an organization. Their role is to organize, coordinate, and oversee activities to achieve clearly defined objectives in accordance with policies and procedures. In construction, management commitment to keeping workers safe (demonstrated through both words and actions) is critical for establishing and maintaining a positive safety climate. Just saying “safety is #1” does not automatically translate into a positive safety climate. In fact, just saying it can have the opposite effect. There are many ways management can demonstrate its commitment to jobsite safety. Which of the following best describes your company?

UNINFORMED	REACTIVE	COMPLIANT	PROACTIVE	EXEMPLARY
Representation from management rarely comes to the actual jobsite. When they are present, they often act as poor safety role models by breaking organizational safety policies and procedures. Management does not participate in safety audits. If employees bring concerns to any level of management they are not acted upon.	Management gets involved only after an injury occurs. They often blame workers for injuries, leading to suspension or even termination. Safety rules are enforced only after an incident or when audit results are negative.	Management conforms strictly to OSHA regulations, never more or less. Safety compliance is based on owner or regulatory directives. Managers participate in safety audits.	Management initiates and actively participates in safety audits. Managers meet with workers to ask for advice and feedback regarding hazard reduction. Management conducts spontaneous site visits and recognizes workers for identifying hazards, working safely, and keeping co-workers safe. Leaders participate in safety program development and provide adequate resources to ensure a positive safety climate. The safety management system is reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness and relevance.	Management integrates safety into every meeting and engages in continuous improvement regarding safety conditions and hazard reduction. External audits are conducted to evaluate top management’s involvement in safety. Managers are held accountable for safety expectations through annual performance evaluations. Safety trends are analyzed. There is a formalized process for corrective actions.

How to become exemplary

Review the ideas below and check the short-term (1-2 months), mid-term (6-12 months), or long-term (1-2 years) circle to indicate which you will commit to adopt and by when. *Congratulations, if you’ve already adopted the idea!*

Idea 1—Develop safety policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure they are aligned with other organizational priorities

Safety is relevant to many organizational policies and procedures. By incorporating and integrating appropriate safety language into applicable policies and procedures, organizational members will trust that the company really does value safety and more importantly values their employees.

-  — Already Adopted
-  — Short-term
-  — Mid-term
-  — Long-term

Idea 2—Management should be visible to workers and reflect good safety practices

On some sites workers never see senior management. Messages about the company’s commitment to safety are sent down the “chain of command” rather than being delivered face-to-face. Workers are more likely to appreciate, value, and internalize the safety messages if they are occasionally delivered by higher-level management. Also, when senior management is on the jobsite, it is important that they act as ideal safety role models by wearing the proper PPE (e.g., gloves, glasses, boots, hearing protection, etc.).

- Already Adopted
- Short-term
- Mid-term
- Long-term

Idea 3—Allocate adequate resources to effectively implement safety activities

While written safety policies and procedures are necessary, it is critical that management make available sufficient resources for effective implementation and maintenance of safety-related activities. Financial resources should be allocated for ongoing education, including leadership/communication training for supervisors, OSHA 10 and 30 training for everyone in the organization, and also purchasing and providing appropriate PPE for everyone on-site. Investing in systems for collecting information on incidents and close calls, safety climate, and effectiveness evaluation of any changes made also clearly demonstrates management commitment to continuously improving jobsite safety climate.

- Already Adopted
- Short-term
- Mid-term
- Long-term

Idea 4—Management should actively participate in all meetings at all levels

Management should actively participate in meetings where hazards are reviewed. If it’s a meeting where safety is not typically discussed, management should take the initiative to start the discussion. These types of behaviors provide a direct line of communication between workers and management and help demonstrate to all employees that the organization values safety.

- Already Adopted
- Short-term
- Mid-term
- Long-term

Idea 5—Management should strive for Zero Hazard as well as Zero Injury worksites

In pursuit of achieving zero injuries, companies should periodically conduct (or have an outside party conduct) job hazard analyses using audits or other tools. Data from these audits provide guidance on where changes to processes and products might be needed to help ensure zero injuries on current and future jobsites. Reward structures should be designed to encourage workers to proactively identify hazards, and report close calls as well as injuries. Management might also consider measuring jobsite safety climate throughout the organization during a project or activities to gauge safety-related perceptions that may negatively (or positively) affect incident prevention.

- Already Adopted
- Short-term
- Mid-term
- Long-term

Idea 6—Establish formalized process for corrective action

When a safety situation arises, management must take the employee’s concern seriously, and address it visibly and promptly. When workers’ concerns are ignored, or if management retaliates, workers quickly lose trust in the system and are discouraged from reporting potential hazards in the future. Establishing a formalized process to respond to safety concerns and to conduct blame-free investigations of close calls and incidents reflects strong commitment to safety. Management should review all serious incident reports, determine contributing factors, and communicate findings throughout the organization. Consider implementing an on-line incident reporting system that notifies management when a hazardous condition is identified or a close call occurs. In addition, consider creating an “action list” to show how issues raised by workers are being addressed. Place the list in a prominent place for all to see. This reinforces the message that workers’ contributions to creating a positive safety climate are valued and will help keep them involved.

- Already Adopted
- Short-term
- Mid-term
- Long-term