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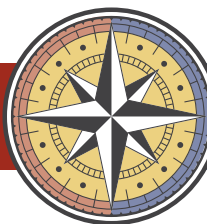
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## EDITORIAL PURPOSE

*The Contractor's Compass* is the monthly educational journal of the Foundation of the American Subcontractors Association, Inc. (FASA) and part of FASA's Contractors' Knowledge Network. The journal is designed to equip construction subcontractors with the ideas, tools and tactics they need to thrive.

The views expressed by contributors to *The Contractor's Compass* do not necessarily represent the opinions of FASA or the American Subcontractors Association, Inc. (ASA).

## MISSION

FASA was established in 1987 as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt entity to support research, education and public awareness. Through its Contractors' Knowledge Network, FASA is committed to forging and exploring the critical issues shaping subcontractors and specialty trade contractors in the construction industry. FASA provides subcontractors and specialty trade contractors with the tools, techniques, practices, attitude and confidence they need to thrive and excel in the construction industry.

## FASA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*The Contractor's Compass* is a free monthly publication for ASA members and nonmembers. For questions about subscribing, please contact [communications@asa-hq.com](mailto:communications@asa-hq.com).

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## EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS

Contributing authors are encouraged to submit a brief abstract of their article idea before providing a full-length feature article. Feature articles should be no longer than 1,500 words and comply with The Associated Press style guidelines. Article submissions become the property of ASA and FASA. The editor reserves the right to edit all accepted editorial submissions for length, style, clarity, spelling and punctuation. Send abstracts and submissions for *The Contractor's Compass* to [communications@asa-hq.com](mailto:communications@asa-hq.com).

## ABOUT ASA

ASA is a nonprofit trade association of union and non-union subcontractors and suppliers. Through a nationwide network of local and state ASA associations, members receive information and education on relevant business issues and work together to protect their rights as an integral part of the construction team. For more information about becoming an ASA member, contact ASA at 1004 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3588, (703) 684-3450, [membership@asa-hq.com](mailto:membership@asa-hq.com), or visit the ASA Web site, [www.asaonline.com](http://www.asaonline.com).

## LAYOUT

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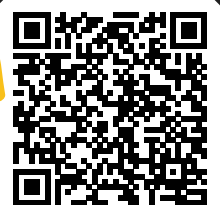
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# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear ASA Members:

Wow, what a year! I believe it goes without saying that this past year has been unlike any we have ever experienced. Having this opportunity to serve as your ASA President was a bit frightening for me at first. I have never been a public speaker and I think so highly of the presidents who have come before me that I never thought I could effectively fill their shoes. Joining the National Board was a game changer for me. Little did I know just how amazing that time would be and how much support is out there in this incredible organization.

As I look back on this past year that I have been blessed to serve as your ASA President, my overwhelming emotion is gratitude.

First and foremost, I want to thank my Lord Jesus Christ for providing me the opportunities I have had in my life and for guiding my steps down every path. I also want to thank the past presidents for their time, flights, food, hotels, and endless support, as well as the National Board for your guidance, mentorship and gentle nudges when I needed them. This job wouldn't have been possible without the industry leaders who give their time to ASA as well as the ED's who are the backbone of their chapters. It has been my honor and privilege to work with each and every one of you. The current Executive Committee has always been there for me, as well as Richard Bright and his incredible team. Thank you all so much. I personally want to thank Beverly Reynal and her family for supporting me by accepting a second term to work by my side. It was an incredibly selfless act and I truly appreciate it.

I would not have been able to have had such an incredible year without the love and support of my lovely wife, Amber. She is truly an amazing human



being. When my role has required my time and especially travel, she has taken over the role of mom and dad to our three beautiful children, and I love all of you dearly. Amber's support of my joining the National Board is something I will forever appreciate. I will always be grateful that our paths crossed and we get to spend our lives together.

There have been so many people whom I have had the joy to meet, especially industry leaders nationwide who have come together with me to discuss opportunities, challenges, safety, production, scheduling, and software with subcontractors without the fear and worry of being a competitor. This has proved by far to be one of the most valuable experiences this past year.

It is not an understatement that 2020 was a tough year for many, and to anyone who lost a loved one during this time my sympathies go out to you. While the construction industry was rightly deemed essential, many of our members continued to work while navigating the challenges of constantly changing regulations and

updated CDC guidelines, scheduling changes due to job site closures, and managing the entire health and well-being of your workforces because of the COVID chaos we all found ourselves in. As always, ASA rose to the challenge and kept its members informed, never stopped educating, and made sure that every ASA member knew that its local chapter was there for them through the good and the bad. I am immensely grateful to be a part of such an incredible force within the subcontracting industry.

Our work doesn't stop. ASA chapters are busy meeting the needs of their members. ASA educational webinars are continuing to happen and events are beginning across the country as we begin to open back up. I hope you are as excited about this as I am! SUBExcel is happening again in 2022, and registration for that has just opened. I look forward to spending time with all of you on the sandy beaches of Florida! As the renewal invoices are coming out I want to encourage you to continue to stay engaged with ASA National and your local chapter. I know that together this organization gets stronger every day.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to serve this great association. I know that ASA will continue to excel under the leadership of Mr. Carroll, Mr. Plowman and Mr. Miller. I will humbly join the past presidents that you can always count on. They were always there for me, and I will always be there for you.

Once more, thank you all.

God Bless,

Brian Cooper  
ASA President 2020-2021



# CONTRACTOR COMMUNITY

## Past ASA President Shares His View



In a **special section of the May issue of ENR**, focusing on navigating current challenges and new opportunities in the construction industry, Courtney Little speaks for all of

our members: "Subcontractors are generally optimistic. We must be to do what we do every day. We take on a lot of risk for a less-than-optimal rate of return. Infrastructure work certainly helps related trades. The flipside concern is by whom, when, and how the work will be funded."

## Richard Bright, COO of ASA, Discusses the New Normal

Richard answers questions in the same special ENR section on how COVID-19 has affected the market and what the future holds. **Read it here.**

## Southwest Focus on Recovery

And in the same special ENR section, the Southwest recovery is highlighted, with ongoing and new projects and adjustments. **Read more here.**

## OSHA's COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard

On June 10, 2021, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) finally released its much anticipated **COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS)**. The ETS is much more limited than anticipated and only applies to healthcare and healthcare support service workers.

The ETS (which spans just over 900 pages) makes it clear that it only applies to "settings where any employee provides healthcare services or healthcare support services." OSHA estimates that around 10.3 million workers will be covered by the new

ETS. These businesses may be relieved to find that many of the provisions are consistent with prior OSHA guidance and that they are already in compliance in many respects.

For businesses that are not covered by the new ETS, OSHA simply updated its Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace. Though many employers have relied on this Guidance to assist them over the last year, compliance with the OSHA Guidance (as opposed to the ETS) is voluntary. That said, since many jurisdictions have drawn from the guidance to create their own state and local rules – some of which are mandatory – it will be important for all businesses to make sure they are staying in compliance with the rules that apply to them.

## Special Thanks to ASA President, Brian Cooper

As ASA President Brian Cooper finishes his term, ASA would like to give Brian a special shoutout for helping get all of our members through a year like no other. Throughout his 2020-2021 term, the entire landscape changed - not just for subcontractors but for all of us in every aspect of our lives. Many of our member businesses had to change their focus, thereby navigating hairpin turns to survive, and then come out the other side stronger and more resilient than anyone could have imagined. Brian Cooper led ASA through these harrowing times and showed us all how to have grace under pressure.

Thank you, Brian, for your steadfast leadership.

## Interview with Jordan Howard, Director of Associated of General Contractors of America (GCA)

Jordan Howard, Director of the Federal and Heavy Construction Division at the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), is interviewed by Mike

Oscar, Government Relations Director for the American Subcontractors Association. They discuss how they work together to educate and inform Congress on important matters critical to the construction industry. **Listen Now.**

Share Your Voice in the 2021 Construction Business Survey - and you could win \$1000

Foundation Software's 2021 Construction Business Survey is back. Last year, nearly 600 construction professionals responded to share their unique perspectives on the state of the industry. Let us know what you think on topics ranging from software usage, business processes and expectations for the future.

In less than 10 minutes, you can let your voice be heard and see how your company stacks up against others in the industry.

All participants will receive a free copy of the 2021 Construction Business Report when it's published this fall. **More information, and to take the survey.**

## EEOC Issues COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance for Employers

This article is from **SESCO Management Consultants** ASA's Human Resource partner. To learn more about this and all of the other benefits available through your ASA membership, **click here.**

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued new COVID-19 vaccine guidance for employers. The new guidance addresses topics the EEOC either left unclear or did not expressly resolve in earlier publications.

## Confidentiality

- Information about an employee's vaccination status is considered "confidential medical information" under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Like all medical information, information about an employee's vaccination status must be kept

confidential and stored separately from the employee's personnel file. Unfortunately, with this general rule in mind, the EEOC has not yet offered guidance for employers on how to easily identify the vaccination status of employees at the workplace to enforce ongoing mask mandates for non-vaccinated workers (e.g., via a badge or other outward identifier).

### Employer Inquiries

- Employers may ask employees whether they obtained the vaccine from a third party in the community (pharmacy, personal doctor, etc.), and this question is not a "disability-related inquiry."
- Employers may ask employees to provide documentation or other confirmation of the vaccination from such sources without the request being a "disability-related inquiry."

### Vaccinating Subsets of Employees

- Employers may offer vaccinations to certain groups of employees and not to others (e.g., assembly versus office workers), so long as the employer does not discriminate in the offering based on a protected class.

### Vaccine Incentives

- Employers may offer incentives to employees who voluntarily receive the vaccine from a third-party vaccine provider (health department, pharmacy, personal medical provider, etc.).
- Employers may offer incentives to employees to voluntarily provide documentation that they received the vaccine from a third-party vaccine provider.
- Employers may offer incentives to employees who voluntarily receive a vaccination administered by the employer or its agent, so long as the incentive is not "so substantial as to be coercive." One gap in the guidance provided by the EEOC is any further discussion of what constitutes a "coercive" incentive. What is so substantial as to be coercive and thus no longer voluntary under the ADA? **Hopefully, the EEOC will further clarify this question but an**

**incentive under \$500 would likely be permissible.** This was a central issue in the EEOC's prior efforts to delineate regulations covering permissible incentives related to employer-sponsored wellness plans under the ADA. Although the EEOC had released new Trump-era wellness regulations in January 2021, they had not yet been published in the Federal Register when President Biden took office, and so they were withdrawn.

- Employers may not offer an incentive to an employee in return for the employee's family member getting vaccinated by the employer or its agent.
- Employers may offer to vaccinate family members without offering the employee an incentive. However, employers must not require employees to have their family members get vaccinated and must not penalize employees if their family members decide not to do so. Employers must also ensure all medical information obtained from family members during the screening process is used only for the purpose of providing the vaccination, is kept confidential and is not provided to any managers, supervisors or others who make employment decisions for the employees.

### ASA's Sheila Ohrenberg Testifies at House Small Business Committee's Infrastructure Hearing

On June 10, 2021, Sheila Ohrenberg, a long-standing ASA member, President of the Sorella Group based in Kansas City, KS, and President of the Women Construction Owners and Executives (WCOE), testified at the House Small Business Contracting and Infrastructure Subcommittee Hearing entitled, "Utilization of Small Contractors in the Infrastructure Plan." The hearing focused on the importance of infrastructure investment and how it will promote contracting opportunities for small businesses, who will play a central role in upgrading the nation's infrastructure. The hearing provided Committee Members

the opportunity to learn more where contractual opportunities lie as well as the resources small businesses need to undertake infrastructure projects.

Per Sheila's testimony, "maintaining and modernizing infrastructure is essential to any business. Infrastructure investment is critical for small business owners like me. An infusion of federal infrastructure projects means work and creating jobs and growing the business. Maintaining and building infrastructure expands access for business, enhances business operations, creates demand, and is vital to growth. Construction work means being on the road – road congestion leads to wasted fuel, lost productivity and more pollution. For WCOE members working on transit systems or highway construction or almost any project, delays mean higher costs and then the scope of the project is cut down or curtailed indefinitely." We extend Sheila our heartfelt appreciation for testifying on this important topic to the subcontractor construction community.

### UPS Savings Breakdown

ASA members - yes, you know about how you can save with UPS, but here are the details:

Once you create an account at [www.savewithups.com/asamembers](http://www.savewithups.com/asamembers) or sign in to your existing one, ASA members can begin saving through the variety of discounts. These discounted services include:

- 10% on UPS Next Day Air® Early
- 50% on Domestic Next Day / Deferred
- 30% on Ground Commercial / Residential
- International: 50% on Export / 40% on Import / 25% Canada Standard
- Savings begin at 75%\* on UPS Freight® shipments over 150 lbs.
- In addition, members can take advantage of UPS Smart Pickup® service for free.
- Members also have access to the UPS simple rate discount

So what are you waiting for? Here's your written invitation! 😊



# ALWAYS SOMETHING AWESOME



Lumber prices hit an all-time high of \$1,686 per thousand board feet in May, an increase of 406% from the \$333 it was trading at the same time last year. So...as a lumber company, how do you adjust? And what's causing the shortage? ASA chatted with Neil Agarwal and Kaitlin Krasic at G.E. Frisco, an award-winning and family-owned construction materials supplier, and one of the largest and most trusted lumber and timber suppliers in the Mid-Atlantic region, to see what they're doing to succeed in these turbulent times.





## FIRST, THE WHY...

### 1. Shuttered Mills

Either due to COVID cases or anticipated slowing of demand, lumber mills had to make a decision between slowing down production or to shut down completely at times. Both actions resulted in the decreased supply of a commodity that, as it turned out, was highly sought after during the pandemic.

### 2. Unforeseen Demand

Due to the very mild winter, construction projects actually did the opposite of what was expected - they sped up during the pandemic instead of slowing down. Combined with the mass amount of home projects that popped up throughout the pandemic (because you can only binge watch TV for so long), everyone became very aware of the circumstances that were afoot. With decreased supply and high demand, prices will rise, and rise they did!

### 3. Supply Chain Disruptions

Thanks to all of the COVID outbreaks, flooding in the SE, fires in the NW, and storms in TX (which shut down a major national resin manufacturing facility used in the creation of engineered wood products), the supply chain for lumber went through what can only be described as a "perfect storm," adding to the existing problem of decreased supply.

## HOW G.E. FRISCO ADJUSTS...

### 1. Increasing communication and transparency.

- Getting out there on social media.
- Writing articles; tell the facts, not the myths.
- Every piece of communication from the company explains the "why" to help customers know what to expect along the way.
- Making sure the internal communication is healthy and in real-time, so our team can best convey the situation to our customers and we can price our products accordingly.

### 2. Becoming more operationally efficient by keeping a leaner inventory.

"We are not overbuying anything but still ensuring we can meet most of the day-to-day customer demand for our products. We now keep only a 3-4-week inventory on hand"

### 3. Working with subcontractors to make sure that the pain of increased costs is minimized.

"We have worked with customers to help them get paid faster and request additional money from general contractors and/or owners. We've strategically reduced our own margins to better work with our customers."



### Vision Boards

A small company, G.E. Frisco has also taken advantage of the turbulence of these times to encourage their employees to think about their own personal and professional goals and create vision boards. More than half of the employees have utilized them, and their use is growing in popularity.



The Contractor's Compass is recognizing excellence in ASA's ranks. Every month we are highlighting the activities, achievements, and actions of ASA members that might inspire others. Have something you want to share? Send us an email at [communications@asa-hq.com](mailto:communications@asa-hq.com).



## FEATURE

# Maintain COVID-19 Plans as the Pandemic Changes Course

by Kevin McMahon, AIHA Construction Committee

### AIHA publication remains a valuable blueprint for meeting the COVID challenge

Now that vaccines are widely available and COVID-19 cases are substantially lower, construction companies should re-evaluate their COVID-19 plans to be consistent with CDC and OSHA guidelines, which are frequently updated as the re-opening continues and the pandemic changes course. The challenge ahead for leaders in the construction industry will be to navigate these changes with a workforce that will vary in terms of vaccinations, coupled with the possibility that virus variants could evade vaccines and a seasonal uptick in cases which could occur

this coming fall/winter. Construction companies will need to pay close attention to these changes and maintain their plans.

AIHA, the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) in the workplace and community, released a publication, ***Focus on Construction Health: COVID-19***, developed by AIHA construction safety and health specialists, to meet the unique needs of construction employers. Available as a free download, the

publication covers how exposures can occur and what construction exposures are likely to be low, medium, and/or high risk. The document provides a practical seven-step strategy for reducing and controlling COVID-19 hazards on the job site. For instance, it guides contractors through the decision-making process for selecting personal protective equipment (PPE), and provides information on face coverings and respirators. It also links to CDC and OSHA guidance and other helpful resources.

An important part of COVID-19 plans, as outlined in Step 5 of the seven-step







strategy for controlling COVID-19 on construction projects, is a Job Safety Analysis (JSA); a valuable planning tool to aid in identifying preventive measures for specific work activities, which can be updated readily as the pandemic changes course. Guidance from the experts on controlling COVID-19, coupled with input from workers



performing the activities, will contribute to the most effective JSAs. Periodic, even daily review and revision of a well-documented JSA can help keep pace with changes.

The guide was developed as a companion document to ***Focus Four for Health***, a free publication that shines a spotlight on four common construction

health hazards: manual material handling, noise, air contaminants and high temperatures. Like *Focus on Construction Health: COVID-19*, it outlines the problems – and then gives practical ways to address them.

The AIHA Construction Committee is dedicated to raising the profile of health in construction. The committee provides valuable resources on health hazards, including COVID-19 to help employers with their efforts to make construction worksites healthy. For more information visit: [\*\*\*workerhealthandsafety.org/construction\*\*\*](https://www.workerhealthandsafety.org/construction).

#### About the Author

*Kevin McMahon, CIH, is a member of the AIHA Construction Committee and contributor to the Focus on Health: COVID-19 document. He is also Director of Technical Services for HazTek, Inc., a safety management consulting firm that specializes in services to the construction industry.*





# DID YOU KNOW?

## These Are the Cornerstones to a Successful Safety Management System

by Roger M. Paveza, CRIS; Vista Safety Consulting

A “successful” safety management system can mean several things; however, the first thing I always look to ask is if your program is truly effective or have you just been lucky? By consistently following the below cornerstones of safety, it can lead you down the path for a successful safety management program, OSHA compliance, and injury prevention. One study of small employers found that workers’ compensation claims fell dramatically after adopting programs similar to those described in these recommended practices.

Another potential benefit can be when employers are faced with possible OSHA violations and are looking to shift blame to an unruly employee - typically referred to as the “unpreventable employee misconduct” defense. In rudimentary explanation, an employer is not relieved of responsibility simply because an employee did not follow the rules. In order to even attempt to assert this defense effectively, an employer would have to show complete effectiveness (i.e. consistent documentation) with all below cornerstones.

### Safety Programming / Health & Safety Manual

The blueprint of your safety management system starts with your health and safety manual. As several OSHA regulations require a “written safety program/plan,” ensure that policies and work rules contain clear, specific requirements and prohibitions designed to prevent unsafe conditions and violations of applicable OSHA standards. Some key ingredients



for a successful Health & Safety Manual include

- Ensuring that the right people are involved and have a voice in the policies.
- Being industry and company specific. Ensure that the programs apply to your exposures.
- Having a qualified safety director or other professional review safety policies on an annual basis or whenever there are important safety-related developments in the industry.

## Communication / Safety Training

Many standards promulgated by OSHA explicitly require the employer to train (or instruct, or communicate, or inform...) employees in the safety and health aspects of their jobs. Other OSHA standards make it the employer's responsibility to limit certain job assignments to employees who are "certified", "competent", or "qualified" - meaning that they have had special previous training, in or out of the workplace. Also, the term "designated" personnel means selected or assigned by the employer or the employer's representative as being qualified to perform specific duties. Therefore, ensuring that employees read safety manuals, conducting periodic training for employees, and periodically reviewing work rules (and documenting all of these actions) can help establish adequate communication.

Here are some simple points to consider to ensure your next safety training is effective:

- 1. Action.** Action and interactivity will ensure responses from your audience. Your audience can't fall asleep if they are moving around. You'll also gain a higher retention from something that is different from the conference room or trailer. Consider training in the field...remember how much fun field trips were in grade school.
- 2. Seven-minute Rule.** 90% of workers say they regularly daydream during meetings. Adult attention span is about 20 minutes; however, most people can sit and listen to someone else talk for only about 7 minutes before their minds begin to drift off. Therefore, trainers should be willing to do whatever it takes to keep their listeners on their mental toes. Pre-program your presentation

with ways to surprise your listeners into engaging their minds every 5 to 7 minutes. Keeping your audience guessing "What are they going to do next?" is an effective way to hold their attention.

- 3. Relevance.** Mix cause and effect stories into your training session and use examples from your own workplace. Show your audience why they should care. If employees are willing, have them tell personal stories of incidents that occurred close to them. This tool helps to minimize the "it can't happen to me" theory.
- 4. Humor.** Use humor to get and keep people engaged. Intersperse your presentation with jokes, funny pictures, or video clips. You can probably develop a 'safety moral' for just about any funny picture or video clip that comes across your desk.
- 5. Credibility.** Credibility is the most important aspect of a successful training program. Make sure you're prepared. People do not want to learn from experts, they want to learn from people with expertise. Also, keep in mind that a good trainer is also a good listener.

## Self-Assessment / Job-Site Evaluations

One of the most overlooked OSHA regulations is under the subpart "General Safety and Health Provisions" where 29 CFR 1926.20(b)(2) states, "Such programs shall provide for frequent and regular inspections of the job sites, materials, and equipment to be made by competent persons designated by the employers." As self-assessment may be a painful experience, the failure to identify or recognize hazards that are present is one of the "root causes" of workplace injuries, illnesses, and incidents. A critical element of any effective safety and health program is a proactive, ongoing process to identify and assess such hazards.

However, the follow-up/corrective action should not be ignored either. OSHA will refrain from issuing a citation for a violative condition that an employer has discovered through a voluntary self-audit and has corrected prior to the initiation of an inspection (or a related accident, illness, or injury that triggers the inspection), if the employer also has taken appropriate steps

to prevent the recurrence of the condition. In situations in which the corrective steps have not been completed at the time of the inspection, OSHA will treat the voluntary self-audit report as evidence of good faith, not as evidence of a willful violation, provided that the employer has responded promptly with appropriate corrective action to the violative conditions identified in the audit. Accordingly, if the employer is responding in good faith and in a timely manner to correct a violative condition discovered in a voluntary self-audit, and OSHA detects the condition during an inspection, OSHA will not use the report as evidence of willfulness. A timely, good faith response includes promptly taking diligent steps to correct the violative condition, while providing effective interim employee protection, as necessary.

## Accountability / Discipline

Rounding out the aforementioned cornerstones is accountability. I always say, albeit facetiously, that 99% of my clients have a discipline program and 99.9% don't effectively enforce the one they have. Having a working discipline program is a critical component to an effective safety system. Used in the right way, a discipline program

- establishes an organization's commitment to safety by enforcing the rules and procedures designed to keep people safe,
- encourages employees to always be vigilant about following safety protocols, especially when engaging in high-risk tasks such as working at heights, in confined spaces, and in excavations, and
- protects leaders by ensuring follow-through on every rule violation.

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### About the Author:

*Roger M. Paveza, CRIS is President of **Vista Safety Consulting** and frequently partners with the AssuredPartners team to provide professional and technical advice to the construction industry sector. He utilizes his knowledge in all aspects of health and safety and risk management to deliver innovative solutions and cost-effective measures for managing clients' risk. Questions can be sent to [asa@assuredpartners.com](mailto:asa@assuredpartners.com)*



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Watch the 120 second CORE+Flex video. See why you should  
implement this staffing strategy to protect your business...  
to increase profit margins during these unsure times.







## FEATURE

# Overcoming the Mental Health Stigma for a Healthier Workforce

by Scott Wittkop, McCarthy Building Companies, Inc.

Mental health has historically been a challenge across the construction industry. The time has come to change the way we think and talk about seeking professional help for anxiety, depression, mood swings, substance abuse disorders and other emotional or behavioral challenges.

### Construction Industry Impact

Insurance broker Holmes Murphy & Associates states that the "construction industry is particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges among workers because of various factors ranging from financial and family pressures to workplace injuries, chronic pain and substance abuse." This data also suggests that men are less likely to talk about and work

to resolve mental health concerns, which is of particular concern for the historically male-dominated construction industry.

More recently, circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic heightened awareness about how mental health and well-being impacts not only workers in the construction industry, but also how it impacts their families and communities.

According to a March 2021 report by Morneau Shepell, "The mental health of Americans has been significantly lower than prior to the COVID-19 pandemic," with construction standing at the eighth lowest mental health score, among 22 industries. The ***Mental Health Index™*** provides a measure of the current mental health status of

employed adults in a given geography.

All things considered, it is time for the construction industry to join together to begin to shift attitudes, perceptions and behaviors about mental health by increasing awareness and conversations that promote acceptance and the importance of getting professional help. Just as people take care of their bodies by eating right, exercising and going to the gym, they also need to take care of their mental health needs.

### Overcoming the Stigma

Mental health has been defined as including one's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It not only affects how one thinks, feels, and acts, but also helps determine



how one handles stress, relates to others, and makes choices. (<https://mentalhealth.gov>)

Unfortunately, the negative stigma surrounding mental health treatment discourages many people from seeking help. In addition to real and perceived negative attitudes of others, an individual may internalize feelings of shame or embarrassment, according to the website [www.psychiatry.org](http://www.psychiatry.org). The website also states that more than half of people with mental illness don't receive help for their disorders. Often, people avoid or delay seeking treatment due to concerns about being treated differently or fears about losing their jobs and livelihood.

## One Example

Like many other companies, mental health has always been part of McCarthy's wellness strategy. But the pandemic underscored the need to make mental health awareness and acceptance a central focus, especially on jobsites. By expanding awareness and having open conversations that reinforce acceptance, we believe it is possible to enable people to feel comfortable and confident seeking professional help for their mental health challenges.

For us, a key element is focusing on mental health versus mental illness. This means helping people accept that mental health equates to taking better care of themselves, and ultimately positively impacts their families and other relationships. By increasing acceptance to talk openly about mental health we hope to change mindsets in the construction industry and encourage people to move forward to seek any necessary treatment.

When we began to think about increasing awareness of mental health for our own employees and craft workforce, we considered how a multi-disciplined approach could help us communicate more effectively to the people we needed to reach.

Our approach begins with leadership support and includes developing new and updated materials, resources and tools to emphasize and support mental health awareness on jobsites and in offices.

## Actions

Materials include toolbox talks on mental health and suicide prevention, as well as highly visible signage to increase awareness. Helpful information is also available for all employees and families through McCarthy's employee assistance program (EAP).



On jobsites, hard hat stickers for all employees promote important contact information for mental health resources. In addition, meaningful discussions are conducted with all teams about the importance of mental health and how to immediately access available resources. Future plans range from adding more support, resources and training for managers and employees to considering an evidence-based mental health crisis response system.

Internally, we have a cross-functional task force to bring together subject matter experts from safety, human resources and operations. We have also leveraged external organizations like the suicide prevention hotline and others to get the word out in addition to our extensive list of vendor partners.

Mental health should be a priority for every company's health and wellness program and there are many

healthcare and employee assistance vendor partners available to make sure you have access to the latest research and resources. ([www.workplacementalhealth.org](http://www.workplacementalhealth.org)).

In addition, because McCarthy recognizes that sharing information benefits everyone, we are pleased to be sharing with dozens of other companies, industry groups and trade organizations details about our approach and methods, along with samples of posters and toolbox talk materials.

As a community builder, McCarthy believes that investing in mental health awareness, acceptance and treatment not only benefits our employee-owners, craft professionals and their families, but also the communities where we live and work. Just like the critical importance of safety on our jobsites, the overall health and well-being of our employees and their families directly impacts our ability to deliver a great experience on our projects and is vital for the long-term success of our company and industry.

Elevating the focus on mental health to avoid the negative stigma benefits us all.

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## About the Author



*Scott Wittkop is President and COO of McCarthy Building Companies, the oldest privately held national construction*

*company in the nation. With approximately 5,000 salaried employees and craft professionals, the firm is 100 percent employee owned. More information about the company is available online at [www.mccarthy.com](http://www.mccarthy.com).*



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- 1 Ensure that the right people are involved and have a voice in the policies
- 2 Ensure that the programs are industry and company-specific, so they apply to your exposures
- 3 Have a qualified safety director or other professional review safety policies on an annual basis or whenever there are important safety-related developments in the industry





# FEATURE

## The Right Training + Mindset + Relationships = Safety

by Jack Rubinger, contributing writer

For Frank Quarato, a safety trainer, safety touches on the heart, mind, body and soul. He's been teaching and preaching safety for many years, but when he was new to the training industry, he had a lot to learn about working with people, particularly forklift operators.

In one situation, an operator in a training session told Quarato, "What are you going to tell me that I don't already know?"

In that situation, Quarato turned the tables and asked the veteran forklift operator to lead the session because he was the more experienced of the two.

"I learned from going out on the floor with him. The lesson? We don't learn until the moment is right," said Quarato, founder of The Center for Safety & Environmental Management.

Quarato talked about the fear we sometimes face when we're looking at the plight of another person. Our minds may be saying 'that's not me, that doesn't apply to me.'"

He also spoke about getting a false read in potentially dangerous situations and shared a story about a worker forgetting to turn on the blower on a confined space monitor to pull out toxic gases. The worker was so focused on just having the equipment there, which gave him a false sense of security, and in the process forgot to turn it on.

Quarato turned the conversation to the value of checklists, so we don't go into automatic pilot during dangerous situations. He spoke of the brain telling you one thing when the actual reality is another.

Finally, he suggested that communication should be adjusted to match different personality types, including dominant people (talk to them in bullets), intellectuals (use statistics and data to make your point), sensitive people (talk about what they love) and competent people (tell them a better or faster way to do their jobs).

Rather than coming into a training session with assumptions about what employees need to learn, it's better to survey participants in advance to gauge their real knowledge levels. "It's about discovering what they know now, then figuring out what else they need to know or be able to do," said Jeff Dalto of Vector Solutions. Dalto has worked on ASSP/ANSI standards for Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) professionals, including the Z490 EHS training standards. He's also

a proponent of evidence-based training practices, and notes there's no evidence that designing training to accommodate learning styles leads to better results.

The age dynamics of our ever-changing workforce also plays an important role in job site safety. According to the Pew Research organization, Millennials and Generation Z will make up 63.8% of the labor force in 2025. By 2030, they will be 74.7%. It's almost 75%, but by then they cover the age ranges between 20-49, historically the ages with the highest labor participation.

Dalto believes the best training arises when safety professionals have relationships with the trainees in advance, and also believes that we shouldn't think of safety from a pure compliance standpoint or isolated from organizational goals, but rather as contributing to the organization's capacity to succeed under varying conditions.

Vector Solutions offers several training development models.

"Good trainers don't just make things up on the fly, and if they were creating safety training they wouldn't just look at a regulation and transfer some key parts of it to a PowerPoint presentation," said Dalto. "Instead, they often work through models, and ADDIE is the most common one."

Each letter in ADDIE stands for a different step or phase of the process: A for analysis, D for design, D for develop, I for implement, and E for evaluate.

Here's a quick overview of the analysis phase of ADDIE:

- Know a business goal the training is aligned to
- Learn the actual job task the employees will perform
- Know the employee's current ability to perform the job
- Know as much about the employees that will affect the training as you can

Only then, begin a training evaluation strategy, including finding the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that the business goal is tied to, and starting measurements of that KPI

Here's what happens during the design phase of ADDIE:

- Write learning objectives for your training
- Determine what the employees must do to successfully complete your training
- Create tests/assessments for after

training

- Select the best instructional methods
- Select the best training delivery methods
- Divide your training down into smaller, related chunks

Good visual design is also an important component that addresses the mindset of any safety situation.

According to the Center for Visual Excellence (COVE), Neuroscience and Research reveals that most — as much as 90% — of what you think you see is actually your brain filling in the blanks based on bias, memory and past experiences.

"It is essential for older employees or leaders to learn the effectiveness of strong communication that supports understanding and competency," said Von Griggs-Laws, Griggs Safety Consultants.

"In the process, they may also learn how to provide feedback, resolve conflicts, and enhance morale by building teams that will engage & support workplace profitability to lessen recordable incidents and liabilities overall," she said.

Companies looking to improve Environmental Health and Safety processes should adopt tailored learning, mindset and relationship development to help enhance hazard recognition, decrease incident rates and train teams to engage safely with the workplace environment.

While we used to look at training in a silo, and what was good for one is good for all, we're realizing that as individuals, our learning habits and thinking processes are very different. How do we best capture the common denominator that will create the largest benefit for all employees? The best trainers are able to work with all types of employees and have the right message to the right person at the right time.

### About the Author



Jack Rubinger is a freelance writer, with more than 10+ years of workplace safety and construction industry research and writing experience. Looking for an article on a specific construction topic?

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## Increased OSHA Inspections, Enforcement, and Penalties – What Subcontractors Need to Know

by Benjamin S. Lowenthal, Hendrick, Phillips, Salzman & Siegel

Increased Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) penalties are here, and a greater number of OSHA inspections and corresponding citations are anticipated with the Biden Administration now leading OSHA. Subcontractor employers should always focus on worker safety. However, now more than ever, it is critical that subcontractors assess jobsite safety hazards to avoid the likely citations due the anticipated increased OSHA enforcement efforts under the Biden Administration.

### What We Know

Although we can only predict what OSHA will do under the Biden Administration going forward, we know that the U.S. Department of Labor has adjusted the penalty amounts for violations of the Occupational Safety and Health Act to account for inflation.

In 2015, Congress passed, and President Obama signed, the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act (2015 Inflation Adjustment Act for short) as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015. Although the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 was a two-year deal that was negotiated quickly to avoid a default on our nation's debt, it was unique because it contained a provision that allowed OSHA to increase its maximum penalties for the first time in 25 years. Most government agencies typically have the authority to adjust their maximum penalty amounts annually for inflation. However, OSHA had not been allowed to adjust its penalties amounts since they were enacted over 25 years ago. Importantly, the 2015 Inflation Adjustment Act allows OSHA to annually adjust the maximum penalty amounts to reflect inflation, similar to other government agencies.

For 2021, OSHA announced the following changes to the Occupational

Safety and Health Act maximum penalty levels:

Type of Violation	Maximum Penalty Amounts
Serious Violations, Other-Than-Serious Violations, and Posting Requirements	Increased from \$13,494 to \$13,653 per violation
Failure to Abate	Increased from \$13,494 to \$13,653 per day unabated beyond the abatement date
Willful or Repeat Violations	Increased from \$134,937 to \$136,532 per violation

The increased penalty amounts, now expected annually in January of each year, only provide that much more incentive for subcontractors to take the necessary steps to assess workplace safety and ensure compliance to prevent costly and unnecessary OSHA citations.

### What We Anticipate

In addition to the increased penalty amounts, we anticipate enhanced enforcement efforts by OSHA, as opposed to an emphasis on compliance assistance, which we traditionally see in Republican administrations. President Biden has made it clear that he intends to have OSHA significantly beef up its enforcement efforts over the next four years. Evidence of this increased focus on enforcement came in the second day of his presidency when President Biden signed an executive order on protecting worker health and safety related to COVID-19 that specifically directed OSHA to review existing enforcement efforts. And during the presidential campaign, President Biden issued a plan that specifically stated that he wanted to "[d]ouble the number of OSHA investigators to enforce the law and existing standards and guidelines." Indeed, it appears the Biden Administration is on track as OSHA currently lists on its statistics website "approximately 1,850 inspectors," which includes state partner inspectors, responsible for the health and safety of workers. That is up from approximately

800 or so federal OSHA inspectors in 2020. Undoubtedly, the increased number of inspectors will increase the likelihood of OSHA site visits and corresponding citations.

In assessing what safety hazards OSHA inspectors will be targeting, OSHA's historical data is quite helpful. Five out of the 10 most cited standards fall under the Construction Industry standard, which include fall protection (1st most cited standard; 29 CFR 1926.501), scaffolding (4th most cited standard; 29 CFR 1926.451), ladders (5th most cited standard; 29 CFR 1926.1053), fall protection-training requirements (8th most cited standard; 29 CFR 1926.503), and eye and face protection (10th most cited standard; 29 CFR 1926.102).

In light of the increased OSHA penalty amounts and anticipated increase in inspections and citations, now is the time for subcontractors to identify and eliminate safety hazards on jobsites, especially under the standards listed above. Subcontractors would be wise to be proactive now, instead of when an OSHA inspector is on site, in addressing safety hazards in order to ensure compliance with OSHA safety standards and prevent costly penalties.

### About the Author

*Benjamin S. Lowenthal is an associate with Atlanta-based construction law firm Hendrick, Phillips, Salzman & Siegel and is a licensed lawyer in the states of Georgia and New York. Ben's practice includes labor & employment matters within the construction industry. Ben received his undergraduate B.S. from the University of Georgia and his J.D. and LL.M. in Environmental Law from the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University. For more information, contact the author at (404) 522-1410, [bsl@hpsslaw.com](mailto:bsl@hpsslaw.com) or visit [www.hpsslaw.com](http://www.hpsslaw.com).*



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## Emotional Safety Drives Employee Engagement Higher

by Dale Carnegie staff

### Why Emotions Matter

Today companies rely increasingly on big data and algorithms to make decisions, allowing them to maximize operational efficiency and improve the customer experience, sometimes in real time.

**"When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion."**

— Dale Carnegie

But, as of yet, humans don't have that logic-only option for most of our decisions because "many of the criteria are by their very nature vague and difficult to quantify."<sup>[1]</sup>

People generally like to think they decide rationally, but research shows that most decisions are heavily influenced by emotions, and then later rationalized as people justify their choices to themselves and others.

That's certainly true when it comes to one of the most important decisions your employees are making every day, without even consciously doing it: deciding whether to give their best effort at work.

Engaging employees is not a simple paint-by-number exercise. Though Artificial Intelligence (AI) promises paradigm shifts in companies' ability to customize an employee experience, and progress in the effectiveness of machines to detect human emotions is being made, for the vast majority

of companies the ability to tailor engagement strategies in meaningful ways to the experience of each individual worker using these advancements is a long way off.

While data can undoubtedly guide an organization to improve the employee experience for their workforce on the whole, aggregated data is nearly useless when it comes to motivating any individual employee. For example, "what they had discovered was that even the extremely smart, high-powered employees at Google needed a psychologically safe work environment to contribute the talents they had to offer."<sup>[1]</sup>

Instead, successful organizations continue to leverage the human element, giving an employee's leader the primary responsibility for engaging them.

Depending upon the company and its resources, leaders typically have a variety of methods to do so: recognition, monetary rewards, extra attention, perks, mentors, learning opportunities, special projects, support for career advancement, flexible work schedules, approval for volunteer activities, etc. Any one of these tactics might produce dissimilar reactions from different employees. It's up to leaders to choose the right ones for each. While public recognition for one employee may make them elated and inspired to achieve even more, the same recognition can simply leave another feeling embarrassed.

Good leaders must know their people well, because that is exactly what allows them to predict whether a particular engagement tactic will elicit a

desired emotion - one that increases the employee's engagement - or not.

### The Power of Positive Emotions

Substantial research now supports the idea that positive emotions in the workplace yield a range of tangible benefits: promoting creativity, increasing attention and intuition, enhancing problem-solving, memory, efficiency in highly complex decision-making, and fostering cooperation.<sup>3</sup> When it comes to their performance, the emotions employees are feeling can be as important as the skills and knowledge they bring to their roles.

In addition, positive emotions appear to facilitate successful organizational change. Given that many companies today operate within rapidly evolving business environments, the ability to effectively implement organizational change is crucial. Researchers agree that employee resistance is among the biggest obstacles, and studies now suggest that employees' positive emotions can moderate the negative reactions that often accompany these change initiatives, leading to more positive outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

**When it comes to their performance, the emotions employees are feeling can be as important as the skills and knowledge they bring to their role.**

<sup>[1]</sup> Hardy, Terry L., (1995) "Multi-Objective Decision-Making Under Uncertainty: Fuzzy Logic Methods" NASA Technical Memorandum 106796. p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Edmondson, Amy C. (2019) "The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth." pp. 31-42

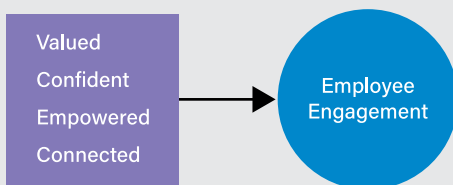
<sup>3</sup> Lutgen-Sandvik, P., Riforgiate, S., & Fletcher, C. (2011). Work as a Source of Positive Emotional Experiences and the Discourses Informing Positive Assessment. *Western Journal of Communication*, 75(1), 2-27. doi:10.1080/10570314.2010.536963

<sup>4</sup> Avey, J. B., Wernsing, T. S., & Luthans, F. (2008). Can Positive Employees Help Positive Organizational Change? Impact of Psychological Capital and Emotions on Relevant Attitudes and Behaviors. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 44(1), 48-70. doi:10.1177/0021886307311470

Our research suggests that emotions are also deeply interconnected with employee engagement, a top concern for executives worldwide<sup>5</sup> given the credible data now demonstrating the superior performance and earnings of organizations who achieve significant employee engagement gains.<sup>6</sup>

### Which emotions matter most?

Dale Carnegie & Associates conducted research to examine emotions in the workplace and their relationship to employee engagement. In our most recent study of nearly 3,300 respondents from 10 countries, analysis revealed that feeling valued, confident, connected and empowered are key emotions for engagement.



### What do we mean by these four emotions?

- **Valued** - Employees feel valued when they are recognized, sincerely appreciated and rewarded for their contributions, in a way that respects their personal preferences.
- **Confident** - Employees feel confident when they believe they are set up for success and that they have the support of their leader and the organization.
- **Connected** - Employees feel connected primarily through their relationships with others. Those with whom they interact most often and with whom they have most in common have the greatest impact on their feelings of connectedness.
- **Empowered** - Employees are empowered by feeling part of something bigger than themselves, by being listened to and by being given autonomy and flexibility to achieve results within their defined role.

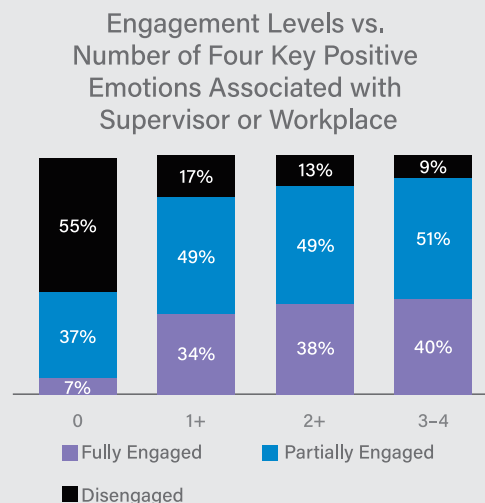
About one in five respondents did not associate any of these key four positive emotions with their supervisor or workplace, though they may have

connected other positive emotions with them. Among these respondents, the level of full-engagement was just 7%, nearly five times lower than among respondents who could claim feeling even one of the emotions: valued, confident, connected or empowered.

Thirty-eight percent of employees associating at least two of these key positive emotions with their supervisor or workplace were fully- engaged, as were 40% of those feeling three or all four of them.[1]

Perhaps as important, given the serious impact that disengaged employees can have on an organization, the level of disengagement drops dramatically for employees who feel at least one of the emotions we've identified, from 55% to just 17%. Among the fortunate who associate at least three of the four key emotions with their supervisor or workplace, disengagement is rare at just 9 percent.

To maximize engagement - and minimize disengagement - look for ways within the employee experience to help people feel valued, confident, connected and empowered.



### Are Negative Emotions Important?

An employee experience that avoids consistently creating negative emotions for employees is also critical, as there is a direct relationship between negative

emotions and an employee's level of engagement.

**Almost 4 in 10 employees feel at least 1 of 12 significant negative emotions as a result of their interaction with their immediate supervisor.**

Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for people to feel negative emotions at work. Almost four in 10 employees feel at least one of 12 significant negative emotions as a result of their interaction with their immediate supervisor, and fully half reported at least one negative emotion associated with either their supervisor, the workplace, or both.

The most commonly reported negative feelings associated with supervisors in our study included anxious (14%), disinterested (11%) and irritated (10%). The workplace itself elicits anxiety (13%), boredom (12%), disinterest and irritation (both 10%).

At the same time, occasional negative emotions aren't necessarily always counterproductive. Short-term feelings of frustration over a lost opportunity can prompt action or a decision, or stimulate competitiveness and increased effort, whereas ongoing anxiety can lead to avoidance behaviors that negatively impact performance. We focused on the more persistent emotions by asking the question "Which of these emotions best describe how your immediate supervisor (or workplace) makes you feel?"

### What Drives Workplace Emotions?

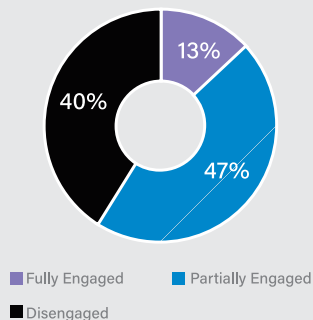
Anything within the employee experience can elicit emotion, from entry into the recruiting process to exit from the company. That includes all elements of the workplace, the office environment, the work itself and the people doing it along with them. The emotions can be mild or intense, fleeting or persistent. Emotions are an adaptive response, an integral part of learning, memory and our decision-making processes, and a significant part of what makes us human.

<sup>5</sup> Navigating uncertainty: Global leadership challenges (Rep.). (2017). London, UK: London Business School. Retrieved April 11, 2018, from <https://www.london.edu/news-and-events/news/key-takeaways-from-the-2017-leadership-institute-survey-13642.Ws5FLojwZPY>.

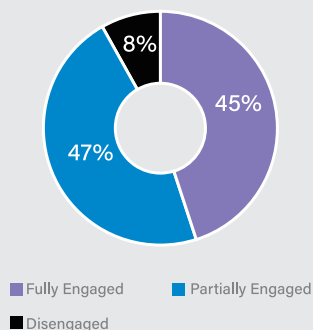
<sup>6</sup> Gallup, Inc. (2017, February 15). State of the American Workplace. Retrieved from [news.gallup.com/reports/199961/state-American-workplace-report-2017.aspx](https://news.gallup.com/reports/199961/state-American-workplace-report-2017.aspx)



### Engagement Among Employees Who Reported ANY Negative Emotion Associated with their Supervisor or Workplace



### Engagement Among Employees Who Reported ONLY Negative Emotion Associated with their Supervisor or Workplace



Attempting to simply hide emotions at work isn't the answer. Hiding emotions is difficult; non-verbal signals tend to reveal them anyway and give others the sense that you're hiding something. Even people who can completely hide their emotions risk a downside; they are often considered "unfeeling" or "unreadable," which can negatively impact the trust others have in them. Moreover, internalizing negative emotions can be physically unhealthy. Demonstrating appropriate emotion is part of building and maintaining relationships; it makes you understandable and helps others relate to you.

Discounting the role of emotions in the workplace is also counterproductive. Instead, organizations should consider emotions as they establish or review policies and processes, focusing not just

on how they work, but how they make those using them feel.

Leaders play a crucial role. The more often two employees interact, and the more they have in common, the higher the impact that relationship will have on an employees' emotions, mood and engagement - whether positive or negative. While the impact of senior leaders is growing with the transparency and direct communication that technology now allows, an employee's manager continues to account for a significant part of the variance in engagement.<sup>7</sup>

## Developing Positive Emotions in Your Organization

Recognizing and accepting the role emotions play, even in professional interactions, is a vital first step.

#### For organizations:

1. Consider emotions in your employee experience design. Just as desired emotions are the focus of a well-designed customer experience, the employee experience should be centered on how each touchpoint makes employees feel. Listen to feedback and take action.
2. Put the emphasis on the right emotions. While making employees feel "amused" or "happy" is nice, it's not likely to be the best focus for increasing engagement.
3. Hold leaders accountable for engaging their employees. If you want employee engagement to be seen as a strategic priority, leader evaluations should reflect how well they foster positive emotions that engage the employees reporting to them, as well as the results they achieve.
4. Ensure your people have the necessary skills. Identifying emotions is one thing - and AI is getting good at that - eliciting desired emotions is another, one still more art than science. In many instances, it's still interpersonal interactions between real humans which have the most impact. If we expect leaders at all levels to carry the primary responsibility for improving employee engagement, they may need training and support.

#### For individual leaders:

1. Be mindful of your own emotions and the impact they have on others. As a leader your responsibility is to promote a positive climate for your team.
2. Anticipate the emotional impact of any change that will affect employees. Prepare for a range of reactions and plan how you will handle them.
3. Find opportunities in your everyday work to make your people feel valued, confident, connected and empowered. Make it a daily priority.
4. Get help if you need it. The interpersonal skills that help leaders succeed in engaging the people they work with can be learned and enhanced.

Organizations and leaders who build positive emotional capital among their employees supply a valuable resource companies can tap into in times of need.

As progress toward tailoring engagement strategies through technology continues, it's important to remember that the emotions employees experience at work directly affect their performance, and that human relationships continue to have a powerful impact on those emotions.

#### About the Editor:

*Robert Graves, MBA, is a Dale Carnegie Certified Trainer for Rick Gallegos and Associates. His focus is Sales Leadership and Customer Service. He is the author of "Making More Money with Technology." He often writes on the evolution of Marketing, Sales and Service. Robert can be reached at [robert.graves@dalecarnegie.com](mailto:robert.graves@dalecarnegie.com).*

#### About Dale Carnegie:

*Dale Carnegie is a global training and development organization specializing in leadership, communication, human relations, and sales training solutions. More than 9 million people around the world have graduated from Dale Carnegie Training since it was founded in 1912. **Dale Carnegie Training** can help an organization build effective interpersonal skills that generate the positive emotions essential to a productive work environment and that lead to increased employee engagement.*

<sup>7</sup> Beck, Randall, and Jim Harter. (April 21, 2015) "Managers Account for 70% of Variance in Employee Engagement." Gallup.com, Retrieved from: [news.gallup.com/businessjournal/182792/managers-account-variance-employee-engagement.aspx](https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/182792/managers-account-variance-employee-engagement.aspx).

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## FEATURE

# Change Management for PPE: A Blueprint for Converting from Hard Hats to Climbing-style Helmets

by Jessica Price, Kent Companies, Inc.



Would you believe the iconic construction hard hat is over 100 years old? The E.D. Bullard Company manufactured the **first "hard boiled" hat** from canvas, glue and black paint in 1919. It was shellacked for strength and had an inner suspension system to distribute the force of potential impacts. The hard hat was originally worn by miners, and only by choice. It wasn't until the construction of the Hoover Dam in 1931 that employers required workers to wear hard hats.

Today, we expect change in every aspect of our business. From building

plans, to schedule, commodity prices and even the weather. It's time we use today's technology to upgrade one of the most important components of PPE – the hard hat. Change can be difficult to navigate, especially when it involves generational change. After all, a hard hat is a personal memoir for craft professionals – showcasing the projects and the grit that shape their career over decades.

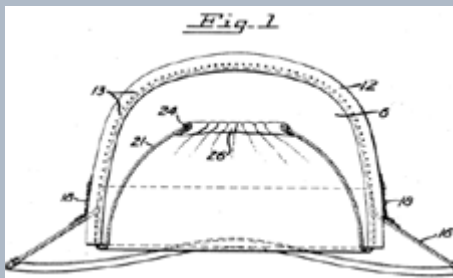
Smart contractors approach a major PPE upgrade with a plan. Here are five tactics to shape your strategy.

### Tactic #1: Know Your Why

We all have a shared goal. Everyone goes home safe every day. Knowing the "why" behind this organizational change is important because the cost to convert can be significant. Yet safety goes beyond a hard hat, high visibility vest, and safety glasses. Safety is a mindset.

Many incidents of traumatic brain injuries could have been prevented by top, front, side and rear impact protection. Climbing-style safety helmets equip teams to work as safely as possible.





The first hard hat, 1919

While traditional hard hats provide an effective safeguard from falling objects, they fail to protect workers from side impact hazards, and they come off with slips, trips and falls. OSHA reports that falls and “struck by object” incidents account for more than 40% of construction fatalities. Even if not fatal, traumatic brain injuries pose a serious risk to workers’ long-term health and wellness.

Leadership must believe safety is more than PPE. It’s for the good of their people.

## Tactic #2: Build the Team

Who needs to be involved? Collaborate as a group to implement change – starting with safety and field leaders, to human resources, marketing and company leadership.

It is crucial to work in tandem with each department internally to explain the “why” behind new policies, laying the groundwork to effectively implement them.

## Tactic #3: Partner for Success

Staying on the leading edge of safety is essential. Partner with lead users in the field for fit tests and trial periods before roll out. These field leaders become your newest safety and PPE champions. After trialing various options in the market, choose an option with a balance of safety, quality, functionality

and design that fits your organization’s budget.

Partner with a supplier that has both national reach and logistics, such as WESCO, Fastenal or MSC. Having a distributor of wide-ranging industrial and construction products can service your team effectively by helping you better understand the benefits of safety products and have accessories ready to go.

## Tactic #4: Align Policy & Procedure

Ensure all human resources and safety compliance policies are set in place. On the human resources desk, PPE usage must be outlined in documentation. It is the human resources department’s responsibility to ensure all policies, training and onboarding accurately state PPE guidelines and requirements. The human resources team stays on top of requirements to ensure the most up-to-date protocols are executed – from recruiting and onboarding and among long-tenured employees, too.

Equipping employees with proper PPE is important, and enforcing the proper use of the PPE is essential. Full-time safety managers work to educate teams by highlighting the benefits of the climbing-style helmets compared to older hard hats. On-going education and awareness of the benefits of the climbing-style helmet increases compliance with proper use. The chin strap ensures the helmet stays on in a full range of motion, whether finishing concrete or working at heights. Safety managers perform daily inspections of our job sites, and they train field leaders to complete thorough job hazard analyses every day.

## Tactic #5: Strategic Communications

Distribute the message via external and internal communications.

Plan for message dissemination across all channels. It is crucial to clearly communicate policies internally through orientation, handbook and/or safety manual updates and on-going training. The learning never stops. Provide continuous education on best

practices, including toolbox talks on how to properly use PPE.

Externally, be sure to update your company’s brand image with customer communications and public relations efforts in your immediate market. Consider photos and imagery that match your new PPE on social media and website pages.

## What Comes Next?

While some contractors are detracted by the hurdles of converting to climbing-style safety helmets – change, appearance and cost – the benefits cannot be understated. Climbing-style helmets provide critical protection from side impact incidents; their durability and longevity surpass traditional hard hats.

Protecting your people means you are protecting your customers, too. Climbing-style safety helmets are a hot topic on job sites and are already required by some general contractors. Pave the way for other subcontractors by implementing these safety standards proactively.

It’s time to call on a nationwide safety upgrade. Do what’s right for your people to get them home safe every day. It is this type of integrated thinking that will allow us, as an industry, to reinvent the hard hat.

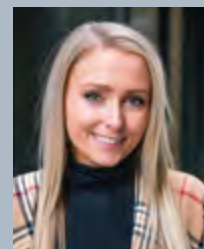
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## About the Author

Jessica Price oversees marketing and communications for Kent Companies, Inc. Kent Companies is the 10th largest concrete contractor nationwide and employs more than 1,600 team members in nine offices across the country. Visit [www.kentcompanies.com](http://www.kentcompanies.com) to learn more.





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# FEATURE

## Five Construction Safety Tips to Follow

by Deanna Quintana and Rachel Burris, NCCER

In April 2021, there were over 7 million people employed in construction and construction-related fields. With this vast number of craft professionals working to build America, the most important thing the industry can do is ensure their safety.

Since the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was founded in 1971, it has had a significant impact on workplace safety. In fact, within the construction industry, **worker injuries and illnesses are down to 2.8 incidents per 100 workers in 2019 from 10.9 per 100 in 1972.**

The OSHA standard includes training requirements and safety standards that have saved thousands of lives.

There are numerous safety protocols and procedures to set in place - let's explore five of the top ones.

### 1. Implement training and retraining

Safety incidents and accidents in the construction industry can be prevented. Proper training sets the foundation for a safe workplace.

Basic Safety (Construction Site Safety Orientation) - The "Basic Safety (Construction Site Safety Orientation)" module (00101-15) that aligns to OSHA's 10-hour program. This means that instructors who are OSHA-500 certified are able to issue 10-hour OSHA cards to their trainees who successfully complete the module. Combined with an NCCER credential, the OSHA 10-hour card will show employers a credible and valuable training record.

NCCER's Construction Site Safety Orientation and OSHA 10-hour training both teach basic hazard awareness, providing an effective way to get introduced to safety concepts. Trainees who complete NCCER's module from an OSHA-500 certified instructor



receive both an industry-recognized credential and OSHA 10-hour card.

Employers who may not have an OSHA-certified instructor on hand can utilize CareerSafe's online training that results in employees earning their OSHA 10-hour card. CareerSafe's innovative and interactive program is entirely online and held to high standards. To ensure the rigor of the training, trainees are required to take assessments to complete the course. Recently, NCCER partnered

with CareerSafe to recognize employers' OSHA 10 training in the NCCER Registry and offer their accredited organizations a discount on CareerSafe's training.

In addition, it can be hard to accurately measure the level of safety training new hires might have received from an apprenticeship, education program or previous employer. Therefore, it is a good idea to review proper safety procedures to ensure any craft professional, novice or



experienced, can operate equipment safely and are following safe practices each day.

Continued safety training can include monthly lunch and learn programs, attending safety excellence certification courses or holding targeted safety training sessions. Creating an environment that regularly strengthens these skills will get workers to embrace an effective safety culture.

## 2. Identify potential hazards

Planning, staging and critical thinking can help craft professionals create a safer work environment and minimize dangers in the field.

To identify potential risks, **Nova Group** introduced the **RED Book**, a miniature job hazard analysis. Cole Davis, Nova Group, said, "The employees check the boxes of what they are going to be exposed to that day, such as trench cave-ins, hazardous materials or different key hazards, as well as what controls are in place to help minimize their exposure." Short for Recognize, Eliminate and Discuss, this book promotes good safety practices for craft professionals in construction.

When employees think about their daily tasks or projects prior to the start of the day, they can identify hazards before an issue occurs, reducing risk of injury or illness in the workplace.

## 3. Make sure essential safety equipment is readily available

Wearing the proper safety gear when working in the construction industry may seem like a given. However, it is important to reiterate how effective personal protective equipment (PPE) can be. Craft professionals can use or wear PPE to minimize dangers in the workplace. According to OSHA's quick card, **PPE covers five major categories**:

1. Eye and face protection
2. Foot protection
3. Hand protection
4. Head protection
5. Hearing protection

For added benefit, make sure the right equipment is being worn for the right job. Consider investing in craft-specific PPE, such as specialty gloves for concrete work or welding. From safety goggles to hard hats, hand protection and more, PPE protects craft professionals and fosters a safe working environment.

## 4. Trust safety managers

Safety is not just an individual effort; It requires a team and, in many cases, safety managers. With any project, there can be numerous craft professionals on the job. These professionals solely focus on safety for the entire site.

Safety managers oversee safety fundamentals – from training staff, to implementing steps to prevent accidents and inspecting daily safety procedures. With a strong passion for protecting others, these professionals are equipped to identify hazards and stay up to date on both existing and new regulations.

Embracing the role of the safety manager, in addition to personal measures that minimize risks will ensure that all employees are informed, prepared and most importantly safe when working.

## 5. Utilize mobile technology

According to **Pew Research Center**, nearly 96% of Americans own a cellphone of some kind and 81% include smartphones. With a majority able to access information at the palm of their hand, mobile technology is allowing communication to happen at a faster speed and with more detail.

Encouraging the use of camera and video tools, employees can

share workplace hazards, alert safety departments and be involved in actively mitigating job site hazards. Even utilizing the basic text/call functions, workers on a project can communicate with each other quickly and efficiently.

From sending daily safety reminders to specialized apps or keeping digital copies of safety procedures and regulations on hand, mobile technology can help foster a safer environment by sharing insight in real-time.

Safety protocols and procedures are not just about the company or the individual, as the impact of a safety issue goes beyond the walls of the construction site. Every year we in the industry focus on safety, every month we focus on safety and every day we focus on safety.

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### About the Authors:

*Deanna Quintana, originally from Las Vegas, is a graduate from the University of Florida holding a Bachelor of Science in public relations and a certificate in international communications. As contributing writer for NCCER in Alachua, Florida, she focuses on writing about the construction industry and how to better recruit and educate new craft professionals.*

*Rachel Burris is the senior communications manager at NCCER. She has over seven years' experience in communications and public relations, including writing and editing content for emails, social media, press releases, blogs and articles. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of South Florida and a Master of Business Administration degree from Webster University.*

*For more information on OSHA-10 training, **click here**. For specific information on workforce development programs, **click here**.*

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## Six Reasons Why Investing in Health and Safety Is Worth It

by Patrick Hogan, Handle.com

Every construction company should make the health and safety of their employees a top priority. This is something that every construction professional has heard throughout their careers, but this is not an empty platitude. Everyone talks about prioritizing health and safety in construction for good reasons.

Failing to value health and safety in a project site could lead to injuries, illnesses, mental health issues, and even fatalities. According to a 2020 study by the **Bureau of Labor Statistics**, there were 1,061 workplace fatalities in construction in 2019. This amounts to 9.7% fatality rate, which was the highest recorded since 2007.

There is no way to recover the cost of life. This alone should be sufficient to encourage construction businesses to do everything they can in preventing work-related fatalities from happening. However, there are also **financial benefits in construction** that come with making health and safety a top priority.

### Reduced expenses on workers' insurance

Construction companies pay for insurance that is specifically designed to cover the expenses related to workplace injuries and other damages caused against employees. However, this does not mean that your insurance will cover all the direct and indirect costs related to occupational accidents.

Not all insurance policies are the same, and your insurance may not cover everything. The uninsured costs could pile up, especially when injuries and accidents happen frequently in your projects.

### Decreased time and resources spent on incident investigation

When an accident occurs in the work site, you must investigate and trace the root cause behind the incident. This is standard operating procedure for most construction companies; otherwise, a

preventable accident could happen again and incur more expenses for the company.

Incident investigations and root cause analyses take time to complete. Larger companies may have a team that is specifically dedicated for this type of work, but smaller businesses may struggle to keep up. Investing in a health and safety program could therefore be more financially beneficial for your company since you are able to focus on other more important and more immediate tasks.

### Increased workplace productivity

When accidents and other health and safety issues occur, employees end up taking sick leaves and not showing up for work. This significantly reduces productivity in the workplace. You will not have enough people to complete the tasks, and you may fail to meet project milestones simply because you do not have enough manpower.

Keep in mind that the construction industry has been facing a labor shortage problem. It is difficult to replace skilled workers on short notice, and there is also downtime as you train new, entry-level employees. Losing your workers can lead to bigger financial losses than you think.

### Increased employee retention rate

Being understaffed can be extremely stressful for your current employees. They need to work harder to cover for the missing staff, and being overworked can take a toll on their physical and mental health. Their morale will also be affected if they see their colleagues suffering through work-related injuries.

Overworked employees are more likely to look for another job with better working conditions. This implies that if you focus on keeping the worksite safe and healthy, your employees are more likely to feel better about their jobs and stay with your company. Retaining good and reliable employees reduces training costs and ultimately improves overall workplace productivity.

### Reduced expenses on OSHA fines and other legal costs

Failure to comply with the rules and regulations imposed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) result in penalties and fines. Legal actions can also arise when accidents happen in the workplace, which means you will have to spend money on lawyers and other administrative resources.

Prioritizing health and safety means you also reduce the risk of having to pay OSHA fines and dealing with lawsuits. Note that fines and lawsuits can be expensive. They can take up all your financial resources, especially if you are in the middle of a slow season.

### Improved reputation in the industry

You do not want to be a company that is known for putting your workers in unsafe situations. Otherwise, you will have a negative reputation in the industry, which can impact not only your ability to hire skilled workers, but also your chances of getting new clients.

With a negative reputation, you may struggle looking for people to finance your projects. Word travels fast in the construction industry, and potential investors and property owners would not want to work with a business that does not care for health and safety.

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### About the Author



Patrick Hogan is the CEO of Handle.com, where they build software that helps contractors, subcontractors, and material suppliers with filing documents like

**preliminary notices** to avoid late payments. Handle.com also provides funding for construction businesses in the form of invoice factoring, material supply trade credit, and mechanics lien purchasing.





## FEATURE

# How Digital Checklists Help You Keep Your Eye on Safety

by Rebekah Veldhuizen, Raken

Every jobsite presents its own unique hazards and risks—hazards that construction crews are trained to recognize and handle. But with so much happening on a jobsite, checklists are invaluable.

Is the crew positive that signage has been posted to keep workers out of hazardous areas? Have all electrical hazards been addressed? Have ladders been inspected for safety? Is the entire crew up to date with safety training or any needed certifications?

These questions could go on and on. Which means it's easy for one to

be overlooked. But overlooking even one of these questions could have fatal consequences.

That's where checklists come in—checklists are meant to be the safety nets that ensure every single question has been asked.

### The traditional way of using checklists

Traditionally, checklists have been sent from the office, to the field, where they are then printed out. After completing the checklist (hopefully

the paper isn't lost or forgotten when needed), it is then scanned and sent back to the office. The office then reviews and manually saves it for their records.

Sound confusing?

While printing, completing, scanning, and sending aren't the worst things in the world—any extra steps are opportunities for lost or inaccurate documentation—and lost time. And, the more complicated the process is for those in the field, the less likely it is that these checklists will be used correctly. Which could mean a question



is overlooked at some point, simply because paper checklists are an inconvenience.

## How to improve checklist efficiency

Thankfully, plenty of construction software companies now offer checklists as a feature. This means checklists can be done digitally, which means less back and forth to and from the office, as well as improved overall communication and documentation (assuming the software is easy to use for those in the field).

If you're ready to upgrade your checklist process, consider these features so you can find the most efficient and helpful checklist software for your project.

## Customizable checklists

While it's great to have some auto-created checklists, having the option to edit and create unique checklists means more complete documentation.

Digital checklists should give you the option to also choose the format of your questions, with some options for answers being:

- Multiple choice
- Open text
- Yes, no, or N/A

Customizable checklists mean more transparency in work projects as additional safety measures can seamlessly be communicated back to the office.

## Mandatory questions

Have you ever received a checklist that's only partially filled out? Maybe even the information you were most curious about was missing?

With digital checklists, you should be able to make questions mandatory. Certain questions may seem insignificant, but sometimes these 'insignificant questions' come back to bite you. With mandatory questions, you can be sure that you never let critical information go missing.

## Photo attachments

While checklists say safety measures were being used, checklists can still be questioned because there's no physical proof that safety protocol was being practiced.

Having the option to include photo attachments means there will never be any questions regarding the validity of completed checklists.

Photo attachments also make it easier to communicate exactly what is happening on the job site, and why specific safety measures are being used.

Photo attachments are solid proof of safety in practice, as well as one of the most transparent ways those in the field can communicate and provide context for those in the office.

## Intuitive to use

Even the most insightful construction software can quickly cause problems if it's not designed with the end-user in mind. If software takes months to incorporate into a company, involves lots of training (and plenty of grumbling from those being trained), you begin to wonder: is this software worth it?

And simply put, no. If software doesn't have buy-in from the end-user, the chances that it will be used to its full capabilities is pretty slim.

Instead, look for software that's simple to use.

If your field crews can easily learn how to use and incorporate this piece of construction technology into their daily job, while moving around a construction site, then you've found a winner.

## What every digital checklist has to offer

Digital checklists make documenting safety quicker and easier for those in the field. And those in the office receive more context with photos, as well as more complete information with features like

mandatory questions and customizable checklists.

Digital checklists mean as soon as those in the field sign-off, completed checklists are automatically sent to the office. So those in the office have real-time updates. This type of transparency in communication only builds trust and a better understanding of project progress.

And since all those checklists are saved and organized for you in one convenient location, checklists are incredibly easy to find if your company's safety compliance is ever questioned.

## Where to start

If you're ready to improve communication between the field and office, increase safety on the construction site, and make checklists a seamless process for those in the field, start by trialing a few different options.

The number one rule to follow is to find software that makes life easier for those in the field. This means if the technology isn't easily incorporated within a couple weeks, it's not the right fit. Once you find that technology that's easy for those in the field to pick up within a couple weeks (or even a number of days), you've found the perfect fit.

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### About the Author

*Rebekah Veldhuizen is a content writer for Raken, the cloud-based software that was built to connect the field to the office. Raken helps boost productivity and safety by streamlining workflow processes such as daily reporting, time cards, production tracking, toolbox talks, and digital checklists. [Learn more about Raken.](#)*

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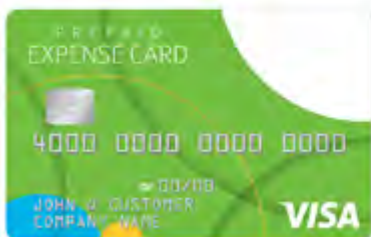
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