Safety Recognition and Reward Systems

Recognition and reward systems can be a useful tool for reinforcing desired behaviors. In terms of safety programs, organization sometimes use recognition and rewards to help maintain enthusiasm, increase participation and show appreciation to individuals, groups or the entire organization for their contributions to the safety and cost containment process.

Although the implementation of such a system may seem rather simple and straightforward, you should put a good deal of thought into its development. In particular, one must be careful to design the system so it does not discourage reporting of injuries and so it does not create animosity toward management or peers.

It is also important to realize that a recognition/reward system is only one component of a comprehensive safety and health program. Successful implementation requires a great deal of management commitment, employee involvement and confidence that the organizational culture and systems will support it.

Use the suggestions below to incorporate safety recognition or reward system into a comprehensive safety and health program.

1. **Closely align rewards and recognition with the current performance measurement and recognition/reward systems.**
    - Clearly define the recognition/reward criteria, and how you will measure the results.
    - Devise challenging, yet attainable goals for the organization, the various departments, work groups, and individuals.
    - Ensure other performance measures do not contradict or undermine the safety-related performance measures.

2. **Ensure senior management is highly visible in the process and well aware of who has received rewards and recognition and why.**
    - Educate senior managers on the goals and objectives of the system.
    - Provide frequent communication to senior managers on the benefits and successes that the program is creating.
    - Request senior managers kick-off the program, attend recognition events, and share in celebrating success.

3. **Make sure the employees perceive the system to be a positive one and that management applies it consistently and fairly.**
    - Involve employees in the development of the system.
    - Make sure you measure everyone's performance and communicate it equally.
    - Avoid communications that single out or embarrass individuals or groups.
    - Ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to receive the recognition or reward.

4. **Make sure people have the knowledge, resources and skills to fulfill the responsibilities and expectations.**

- Identify training needs and make needed training available.
- Make sure the individual has backing from superiors and cooperation of peers.
- Allow time for growth and development of skills.
- Periodically evaluate competency and provide coaching.

Safety Recognition and Reward Systems (continued)

5. **Make sure you base the recognition and rewards not only on the end results, but also on the activities that helped to achieve the results.**

   - Determine which activities help to drive each end result.
   - Give significant weighting and credit for the completion of activities.
   - Provide recognition for identifying and removing obstacles to success.

6. **Develop systems that provide timely feedback so individuals, groups and departments know how they are doing and what they can do to improve performance.**

   - Determine how you will communicate goals, status and scores.
   - Provide coaching in areas where you discover deficiencies.
   - Avoid all or nothing type reward systems.
   - Provide recognition and rewards on an immediate, periodic, and long-term basis.

7. **Monitor the program to ensure it is effectively recognizing and rewarding the individuals and teams responsible for the success.**

   - Give credit to the people who supported or assisted those who are receiving recognition and rewards.
   - Ensure the program is not discouraging reporting of concerns, hazards, incidents, or injuries.
   - Document and communicate the various benefits realized.
   - Continue to raise the bar and challenge people to a better level of performance.
   - Make modifications as needed and clearly communicate them to all employees.

Ideas for Safety Recognition or Awards

Experts generally suggest you avoid providing yearly lump sum monetary awards to all employees because of the potential for them to view it as an entitlement. In addition, since employees of spend cash on routine purchases, they can sometimes forget the reason for receiving the cash award can because there is no visual or tangible reminder.

To maintain enthusiasm, we suggest you give the recognition or award at various times throughout the year. Give some recognition and reward immediately (daily if possible), give some periodically (e.g., monthly or quarterly), and some only occasionally (e.g., yearly or at milestones).

Immediate

This is recognition or a reward for specific safety activities such as use of PPE or safe procedures during observations for identifying hazards and submitting safety suggestions Use this for individual recognition.

Verbal appreciation or note of thanks
Memo to senior management and personnel file
Small token of appreciation (e.g. quarter, candy bar, coffee token)
Tokens with safety slogans and/or company logo (e.g. mug, pen, T-shirt)

Periodic

These are recognition or rewards for good performance over a period of time or performance improvements from previous period. Use these for group or departmental recognition, but also for rewarding exceptional individuals during a particular period.

Departmental trophy, plaque, or luncheon
List in company newsletter, safety committee meeting minutes
Lunch with the manager, director, or supervisor
Gift certificate to local restaurants or stores

Occasional/long term

These are recognition or rewards for maintaining good performance or improving performance over a period of time. Use these for recognizing/rewarding everyone in organization. You can also use this type of recognition or awards when departments, work teams and individuals reach certain milestones.

Catalog merchandise earned using point system
Company cook-out, pizza party, free lunch

One method that you use to help ensure everyone wins; but that the best performers get a little more is a safety point system. This type of system allows people to redeem their points at the end of a specified period of time or when they earn the necessary amount of points for the desired merchandise.

Safety measurement criteria

As indicated, never base the safety reward system solely on numbers of injuries, because it may discourage reporting of injuries and lead to complications.

If management wants to make a reduction in the number of injuries one of the measurements, it should specify the reduction be in lost-time injuries. As always, managers should continually emphasize the importance of prompt reporting and medical treatment no matter how minor the injury may seem.

Possible criteria that you can use as measurements for recognition or reward systems are below.

Organizational safety performance factors

- Specific percent reduction in lost-time injuries
- Specific number of days without a lost-time injury
- Specific percent reduction in incidence rate or severity rate

Departmental safety performance factors

- Exceptional departmental safety audit score
- Specific number of units produced without a lost-time injury
- Specific number of hours worked without a lost-time injury

Work group or team safety performance factors

- Completion of project without a lost-time injury
- Development of job safety procedures or training
- Implementation of job safety improvements

Individual safety performance factors

- Specific number of years, days, or hours worked without a lost-time injury
- Assistance with development of job safety policies and procedures
- Assistance with development or delivery of safety training
- Safety suggestions submitted or implemented
- Consistent use of PPE, safe work practices
- Participation on safety committee of safety project team