

# For the Trenches

TIPS & NEWS FOR EQUIPMENT OWNERS AND OPERATORS

## Safety.

### It's everyone's #1 job... Is it also your responsibility?

Yes, we're talking about safety. And we know that in most cases, if safety is somebody's responsibility, it's also likely to be one of several that must be juggled and managed.



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This is a brief review of what's available, what's worthwhile and what works, in terms of teaching and refreshing safety habits to the people in your organization, so the safety responsibility becomes easier to carry, more efficient to implement and more successful, too!

First, let's make sure that we agree on what "Safety" means. Do we have a firm definition for "Quality"? We probably have as many as there are readers to this article. Well, safety runs the same risk of losing its impact as it becomes a cliché, so for the purpose

of this write-up we'll define "Safety" as behaviors and beliefs that contribute to maintaining the health and well-being of the workers in an organization.

That definition immediately leaves aside "safety" inspections that are actually maintenance inspections, not at all related to workers' health and well-being but to machine performance; and on the other hand, it forces us to realize, for example, that construction site safety should include topics that may not be related to equipment itself, such as "What to do during an electrical storm."

Why should a company be interested in promoting, regulating and insisting on safety? Besides basic human care for other fellow beings, the reasons include financial ones, reducing the cost of insurance and workers' comp; human resources concerns – high cost of absenteeism and difficulty of attracting personnel; and competitive concerns – while your employees are out, your competitors are grabbing your business.

More and more, your business partners and your prospects will look at your safety record, and will make decisions based on it. At our own company, we see that our most successful customers have good safety programs in place. Coincidence? Hardly so. Safety and success walk hand in hand. You will not have one without the other.

Now we'll take a look at the tools that you can use to make sure that "Safety" is really everyone's #1 job, and not just somebody's #1 headache.

#### What's available?

Without going too far away, wasting much time or spending much money, there are good resources that can help support you in the execution of your safety responsibility. One of them is simply your operators' manuals. Every piece of equipment comes with a manual, and every manual includes a safety chapter that can be longer or shorter depending on the complexity and the potential hazards of the machine. Do an inventory of manuals. Copy the safety portion. Circulate it. Ask questions about it. Have people run contests on it.

The Internet offers very exciting resources. If you simply type "construction safety" on your keyboard, you'll immediately have a choice of sites with great information at your beck and call. [www.safety.com](http://www.safety.com) is a perfect example. Some sites offer free information and materials, others sell you their safety ware; not all of them will be applicable to your industry or to the size of your company but checking them out is not a waste of time.



**Safely home.  
Everyone. Every day.**

[www.safety.cat.com](http://www.safety.cat.com)

- FREE Videos
- FREE Walk-arounds
- FREE Safety tips and practices

The internet is a great resource for materials and ideas.

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Caterpillar has a site dedicated exclusively to safety topics, [www.safety.cat.com](http://www.safety.cat.com), and we recommend it not because it is focused on CAT equipment but because it has information and ideas that can truly facilitate the carrying of the safety mission at your office or jobsite. The walkaround section has valuable, easy to follow information presented in both English and Spanish.

## What's worthwhile?

Make it relational instead of top-down. Why is social media getting so much traction? Because it's interactive. It's people talking to people, peer-to-peer, not management to employees, or vendors to customers.

Get people's input. They probably know a lot about what's safe and what's not, but nobody has bothered to ask them. Their ideas will be pertinent because they'll be grounded on your own reality, on the application, the industry or the field where you are. And then, act on it. The two go together, by the way, ask and act. Nothing makes people lose their enthusiasm faster than realizing that nobody really cared about their opinion.

Take advantage of the competitive streak in all (or, mostly all) of us. The traditional posters that show a countdown of the accident-free days a certain department has had are but one small, dipping-your-toes in the competitive pool. Take it further and have contests between departments or between teams, with bets, prizes, ceremonies, whatever works with your company culture. Again, keep it relational, ask the people for ideas on how to organize the contest, don't just ask the Operations Manager or the person in charge of Human Resources.

## What works?

Two words: repetition, and variety. Contradictory? Yes and no. It's been proven by the advertising industry, and they have spent big bucks doing this research – we all need to hear a message at least eight times before it sinks in.

OK, so we need to say the same things again and again. Depending of what your environment and your industry is, that may mean the three points of contact rule, the safety glasses requirement or the hard hat dictum. But then, what happens? Very quickly, the message that finally became ingrained on us, loses its power and turns into background noise.

So what can we do? We can become creative. We can look for ways to deliver the same rule in fun, different, fresh ways. That may mean something as simple as a different color for the posters, new graphics, trading words, relocating the signs... Surprise your audience. Don't let them become so used to your beautiful, professionally done safety signs that they don't see them any longer.



**When it comes to delivering the message to the field, be creative.**

In closing: there's no magic. You already know that, of course. The catchiest slogans, the prettiest posters, the shiniest signs, the hardest hats, will not work on their own. But we can assure you that keeping in mind a few of the basics – repeat, and vary; involve the people; take advantage of available resources – will help you make a difference. ■

*This article is part of a series of articles designed to help equipment owners and operators lower owning and operating costs. Other article topics include:*

*Scheduled Oil Sampling • Parts Options • Financing • Certified Rebuilds • Getting the Most from Your PSSR (Parts and Service Sales Representative) • CSAs (Customer Service Agreements) • Machine Automation • Machine Evaluations • Technology in the Field • Inside Sales*

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