Safety Culture at Berkeley Lab

The LBNL core value of “uncompromising safety” has resulted in safety-performance improvements over the years. In order to continuously improve our safety performance we are building on this solid foundation and striving to achieve best in class. To do that, we must examine, understand and where necessary adjust our attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and values which comprise our Safety Culture. How we do that is what this web site is all about.

What is Safety Culture?

A universally accepted definition of safety culture does not exist, however, the following three definitions capture the spirit and key elements that are commonly held.

“An organization's values and behaviors modeled by its leaders and internalized by its members, which serve to make safe performance of work the overriding priority to protect the public, workers, and the environment.”

“Safety cultures consist of shared beliefs, practices, and attitudes that exist at an establishment. Culture is the atmosphere created by those beliefs, attitudes, etc., which shape our behavior.”

“The enduring value and priority placed on worker and public safety by everyone in every group at every level of an organization.”

The subject of safety culture encompasses existing safety systems such as Integrated Safety Management, Human Performance Improvement and Behavior-Based Safety. Therefore, improvement of a safety culture builds on existing safety systems and helps to identify needed adjustments by focusing on the organization's values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors regarding safety.

What are the benefits of a strong safety culture?

Creating a stronger safety culture does not just improve safety; it also can benefit productivity, staff retention, and the overall organizational culture. Below are examples how a strong safety culture benefits an organization.

- It has been observed by OSHA and confirmed by independent research that developing strong safety cultures have the single greatest impact on accident reduction of any process.
- A company with a strong safety culture typically experiences few at-risk behaviors, consequently they also experience low accident rates, low turn-over, low absenteeism, and high productivity.
- Any process that brings all levels within the organization together to work on a common goal that everyone holds in high value will strengthen the organizational culture.