

Self Assessment Guide for Effective Employee Engagement

Overview:

Optimizing safety culture and performance requires employees to actively engage in safety systems. Engaged employees help provide an open door for co-op leaders to assess and increase understanding of actual organizational risks and situations that require planned improvement actions. Without employee engagement the door to these improvement actions tends to remain closed. It is also imperative that employees provide positive and corrective feedback to each other at every level, on a continual basis to reinforce and promote the positive behaviors and conditions that minimize risk of incidents. Our human nature is to take shortcuts (the immediate positive benefits of faster and easier). Without engaged employees the likelihood of shortcuts will increase.

Engagement begins when cooperative leaders establish concern for the well-being of their employees through actions that model the behaviors the leaders wish to instill in their organization. These actions must treat workers with dignity and respect in a fair and unbiased manner. This builds a foundation of good relationships and fosters a strong sense of reciprocity. In this environment, employees tend to go above and beyond their job description to do the right thing for another employee, management, and the organization. Conversely, when employees feel no sense of connection to the organization, we can expect resistance in our safety activities.

Employee engagement should focus on three areas in order for the cooperative to realize value within their program. **First**, cooperatives need to create an environment where workers can easily communicate safety concerns and the challenges they face. Employees must believe that management will listen and act on this information without fear of reprisal. If lack of clarity exists in this area, the employee has no compelling reason to provide constructive input. **Second**, employees must be involved in assessing the level of risk in their work environments in a systematic way. A robust engagement system has to include a broad focus on reducing the risk employees' face on a daily basis. **Third**, employees must be involved in identifying solutions to safety problems/issues. They are involved day-to-day in the work and are best positioned to find the solutions.

Employee engagement is a strategy that requires a long term commitment by top co-op leaders that, if instituted correctly sets the stage for improving not only safety but the overall performance of the cooperative.

Working with Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program ("RESAP") participants, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association ("NRECA") prepared these materials as a resource for RESAP participants. To help promote and enhance safety, these materials may provide guidelines or suggestions exceeding legal requirements and standards of care. To the extent a guideline or suggestion exceeds a legal requirement or standard of care, the guideline or suggestion is not intended to increase or extend the legal requirement or standard of care. When developing and implementing safety procedures and practices, RESAP participants should: (1) consult other resources, in addition to these materials; (2) consult local legal counsel and local safety professionals; (3) consider local, state, and national legal requirements and standards of care; and (4) consider local, state, and national safety and practices. NRECA does not represent that these materials are complete or exhaustive, and disclaims any liability or responsibility associated with a RESAP participant complying, or not complying, with legal requirements and standards of care.

Evaluation Matrix - Effective Employee Engagement

Evaluation	#	Attributes
	1	Top leadership actions consistently shows concern for employee safety and well-being
	2	Employee input is consistently sought on the effectiveness of safety rules/procedures/policies
	3	Management actively listens to employees concerns/issues involving safety
	4	Employee input on safety issues is responded to in a timely manner
	5	Employees are encouraged to participate in finding solutions on safety issues/concerns
	6	Employee teams actively address safety concerns and solutions
	7	Employee feedback on safety issues and concerns is encouraged and appreciated
	8	Employees are comfortable providing input on safety matters without fear of reprisal
	8	Employee participation is recognized/rewarded
	9	Hazard identification in the workplace is a common practice
	10	Adequate time is provided to allow employees to be actively engaged in safety activities
	11	Expectations for employee engagement have been clearly communicated to all employees
	12	Employees willingly accept feedback on safety performance issues
	13	Employee involvement is a planned component of a continuous improvement process that is developed at all levels of the co-op.

5 - Exceeds, 4 - Satisfies All, 3 - Satisfies Most, 2 - Partially Satisfies, 1 - Fails to Satisfy Requirements