# How Effective Leaders Enhance Worker Safety in the Public Sector

Tim Karcz, California Joint Powers Insurance Authority

# Learning Objectives

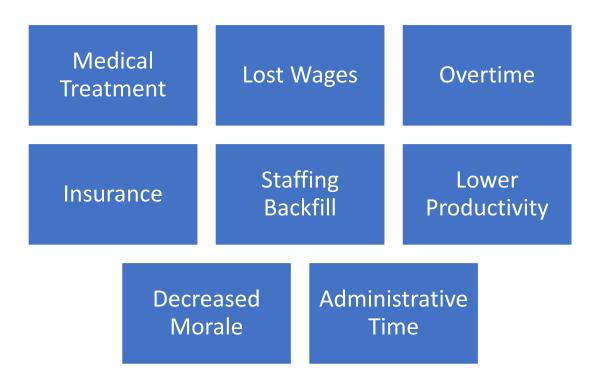
- Focus on the public sector
- Describe leadership's role in workplace safety
- Identify various leadership styles and their impact on worker safety
- Describe real-life examples of leadership's impact on safety

# Why Research This?

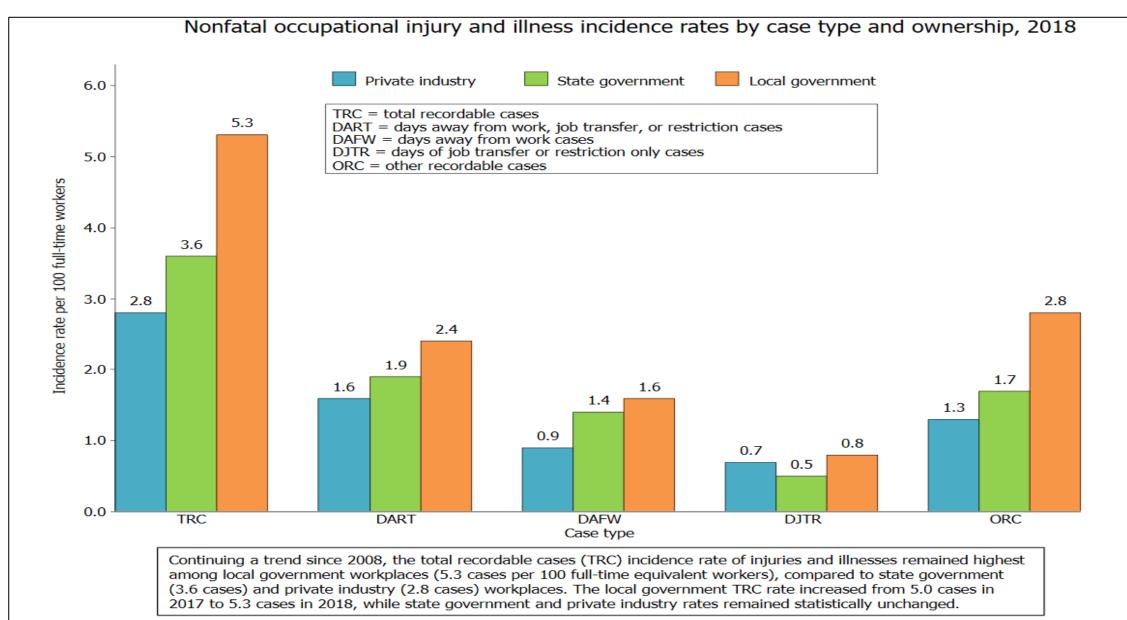
**State/Local Government Experience** 

- 1,949,440 work-related injuries
  - 2011-2018
  - National Safety Council, 2020

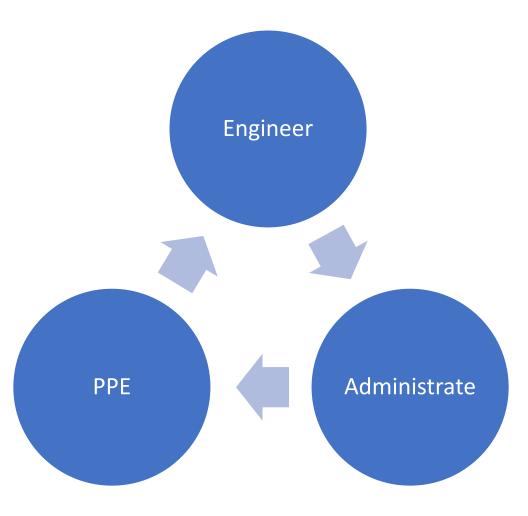
### **Direct and Indirect Costs**



# Private vs. State & Local Governments



# The Big Picture on Safety Management



# Leadership's Likely Impact on Worker Safety



Leadership JCHF **Peer-Reviewed** 

IN BRIEF

Do" model for leader

concentrated effort.

Yazd, Iran

ARTICLE

Oria



### **Insights From Military Research**

#### By Gary L. Winn

he need for leader development in industry and within the safety and engineering communities in particular is the topic of many articles, presentations and conversations. This article explores the need to consider organizational research conducted by military research psychologists, sociologists and economists.

Two audiences within the safety and engineering communities might best gain from military organizational research. Working safety and engineering professionals are often challenged to become leaders who can see the big picture and act as change agents. These professionals can benefit from understanding how leaders emerge and are cultivated internally in the military. In addition, many safety professionals or engineers just starting

their careers have not held jobs while in school and, consequently, have missed Commitment, lovalty and opportunities to see how businesses opertrust come from a personal ate and how authentic leaders act. moral code of ethics. It Over the past few years, the author has begins with an analysis of been building an experimental graduatean individual's values, not level course at West Vinginia University

from the organization. (WVU). The course is designed to offset The military's "Be, Know, these missed opportunities for safety and engineering students. WVU surveys indidevelopment was created cate, for example, that only a few young by a consortium of research people entering these professions have work performed by military worked summer jobs. In addition, they and private interests. have not traveled widely, do not read Experiential training is widely, and have not managed so much as primarily what differentia fast food restaurant shift or a swimming ates military missions from pool. On the more hopeful side of the lednonmilitary. In essence, the ger, the same surveys suggest that these only time the military stops future professionals are almost intuitively its hands-on training is to altruistic, have good common sense and deliver different hands-on know they are expected to be future leadtraining. Leader developers in their fields. As Winn, Williams and ment takes a long time and Heafey (2013) explain:

> In the pair of questions ranking at the highest affirmative response of the entire survey, our respondents indicated that learning about

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leadership in their career preparation was "important in a person's career path." The same extraordinarily high proportion, 98%, suggested that to practice what they might have learned about leadership outside the classroom was "important in a person's career path." Students know that learning about leadership and its practice is valuable to these respective career paths including safety, engineering, social and behavioral sciences, and the military, among others. [original emphasis]

In preparing the course, many existing academic syllabi on leadership were reviewed. Although a few contained respected academic treatises on leadership and were research based (e.g., Northouse, 2013), most required texts were volumes of well-packaged, bulleted words of wisdom presented as empirical work on leader development. While visiting military schools during the datagathering process, the author concluded that many teaching safety and engineering academic courses in leadership are either unaware of or actively ignore the bounty of information and research on

organizational behavior written by military academicians and scholars. This finding was intriguing and raised some questions: Why did the military leadership syllabi used at Virginia Tech or Virginia Military Institute (VMI), for example, include research by nonmilitary researchers such as Edgar Schein, Geert Hofstede, Kurt Lewin or Jean Piaget (among many available), yet the academic leadership syllabi reviewed contained no mention of Thomas Kolditz, Michael Matthews, Doug Crandall or Patrick Sweeney (among the dozens of military researchers available). Are military theorists and researchers somehow hidden from nonmilitary academics or are they simply being ignored?

More research revealed that some academic and military institutions do exchange concepts. For example, Harvard Business School (an academic institution) regularly conducts field trips to Gettysburg, PA, to analyze the strategic and logistic decisions made by James Longstreet and Robert E. Lee compared to George Meade and Joshua Chamberlain. During these trips, military historians and business analysts are on hand to provide details about the difficulty of making life and death decisions under extreme conditions.

As more materials were reviewed, it became clear that safety and engineering undergraduate

# Leadership's Likely Impact on Worker Safety

Scholars repeatedly emphasize the role of organizational leadership in a safety program.

Leadership has long been considered an antecedent for the delivery of high quality and efficient services in government **(Hassan, Hatmaker, 2014)** 

Safety performance can be tied to individuals, leaders, and the organization working together through systematic programs, processes, and training to achieve safe job performance (Kowalski, Summers, 2019)

# Leadership's Likely Impact on Worker Safety

Scholars repeatedly emphasize the role of organizational leadership in a safety program.

For the systematic approach to safety to be effective, the alignment of behaviors of the organization, leaders, and individuals is needed **(Kowalski, Summers, 2019)** 

Ineffective leadership, specifically when it comes to safety, hinders an organization's ability to achieve success **(Cooper, 2015)** 

# Jorge's take

- Leadership in the City Manager's Office
- Role of leadership at all levels of the organization
- Leadership from a Risk Manager's Perspective
- Safety is not a meeting, an email or a tailgate discussion, it is in everything you do. Employees take notice



# A Quick and Funny Video on Leadership

Leadership-cartoon - YouTube

Can we surmise from this video that leadership can also reduce workplace injuries?



# Your Leadership Style

- What's your leadership style?
- What style do you believe is used in your workplace?
  - Regardless of if they are effective or not.



# Transactional

 Focuses on obtaining results by conforming to an existing structure and system of rewards and penalties

- Transactional leaders consider their agents as responsible for their own work, and utilize monitoring and consequence management systems to ensure adherence
  - Cooper, 2015

# Applying Transactional Leadership to Safety

- Consequence-based management is not new to the field of Occupational Safety & Health (think OSHA....)
- A persistent belief in the safety industry is that unsafe behaviors are the primary cause of injuries (Gantt, 2017)
  - Organized and practical approaches for rewarding and punishing certain safety-related behaviors
- As a result, tools have been developed to address unsafe behaviors
  - Training initiatives and other behavior-based safety solutions

### Transformational

• Endeavors to evoke change in workers' value systems to align them with organizational goals

- Transformational leaders shape and transform company culture by knowing where they want to go and doing everything possible to make it happen
  - Cooper, 2015

# Applying Transformational Leadership to Safety

- Achieve collective safety goals by creating an environment necessary for success and participation.
  - Generate higher levels of commitment by motivating public employees to be more heavily invested in the goals and objectives of a safety program
- A Transformational leader would endeavor to motivate employees to place their own safety and that of others onto their own shoulders.
- Encouraging active participation in safety-promoting activities.

# Servant

 Endeavor to work closely with workers on safety-related issues, building expectations and responsibility into the fabric of the relationship

- Using tools like coaching, open communication, and resource development, servant leaders seek cooperation and dialogue for improving relationships and thus aligning behaviors for improving safety performance
  - Cooper, 2015

# Applying Servant Leadership to Safety

- Servant leaders strive for a culture that is imbedded with safety; they aim for authority rather than power through interactive processes.
  - Primarily done through relationship building and sharing responsibility
- Leaders are actively involved in cooperative activities promoting safety, like safety committees and training.
- Actively promote and receive ideas of the workforce on how to improve safety

# Examine these Leadership styles to......

Transactional	<ul> <li>Motivate employees to work safely through rule setting, monitoring, and consequences for non- compliance</li> </ul>
Transformational	<ul> <li>Motivate employees to work safely through engagement, partnerships, and a true understanding of organizational ideals</li> </ul>
Servant	<ul> <li>Motivate employees to work safely through culture changing events, promoting communications and partnerships with management and cooperation</li> </ul>

# Studies on How Leadership Impacts Safety

Sharon Clarke in 2012 developed a safety leadership model that incorporated Transactional and Transformational leadership styles.

• Both were shown to be effective in certain aspects of safety management

- <u>Transactional</u> *motivated employees to comply with rules and regulations*
- <u>Transformational</u> *Encouraged active participation in safety activities*

**Most Notably**: When considering safety program management, different leadership styles have a different effect on compliance and participation.

Safety Performance is Management-Sponsored and Leadership-Driven

By the collective behaviors of the organization – Executives to the Workers

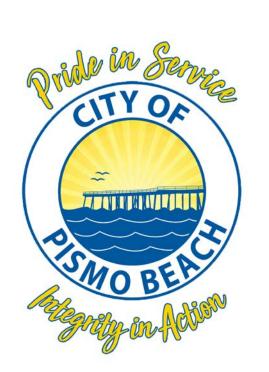
> Shared Perceptions from the group are promoted when a consistent pattern of action regarding safety is displayed

# Jorge's take

- We need all three leadership styles. It's about application and committment
- Public Works- an example in action!
  - Transactional- Tailgate Meetings, Compliance, Safety Inspections, Documentation
  - Transformational- Managers providing training, vision and direction.
  - Servant- PW Director creates the environment where "Pismo Beach is the greatest place you will ever work". Beach Cleanup Events
- Employee Training Is Tailored to Employees Role



## CEO/City Manager Role/Executives



- Employee Culture Matters
- Reinforced through action
- Employee Quarterly Lunches- If not just about meeting a safety goal, it is a reminder to employees.

# Which is the Best Style to Use?

- There is no "one" best leadership styles. Leaders need to employee different styles to address a differing and changing workforce.
- The best leaders use multiple styles.
- The best leaders know their audience working style and adapt
  - Authenticity and Sincerity come into play

# How Effective Leaders Enhance Worker Safety

For the systematic approach to safety to be effective, the <u>alignment of behaviors</u> of the organization, leaders, and individuals is needed (Kowalski, Summers, 2019)





# Safety Starts at the Top

 The Chief Executive Officer indirectly influences safety through the shaping of collective experiences and injury reduction efforts of organizational actors

# This suggests that.....

A clear understanding of the CEO's high expectations and priorities for safety Various managementlevel staff are closely associated with translating safety

Employee/Supervisor exchanges can be a primary determinant of employee behavior

# Increase Employee Involvement

 Studies have been conducted on the correlation of an employee's engagement with organizational leadership and the likelihood of that employee experiencing a work-related injury



# Communication is Critical



Well-Structured communication strategies that are understood and well-practiced.

# Establish and Maintain Good Relationships

 Start by understanding where you stand with the general population Appendix A

**Employee Safety Perception Survey** 

- 1. New hires are trained quickly and are expected to work safely and follow the rules.
- 2. Shortcuts or compromises are not taken.
- 3. Management works hand in hand with staff to ensure safe working conditions.
- 4. Staff is spoken to when they do not follow good safety practices.
- 5. Worker safety is a big priority with management.
- 6. I can freely report safety violations.

Source: (Janicak, Zreiqat, 2019)

# Think About Leadership at Every Level











# Summary

- A primary component of management is leadership
- Studies have shown that leaders are both directly and indirectly involved in an organization's safety program
  - Powerful and high-status individuals can significantly influence the behaviors of others
  - They do this from the executive level down through implementing safety protocols and setting the tone on expectations and safety culture
- Leadership development is critical