

How Effective Leaders Enhance Worker Safety in the Public Sector

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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?

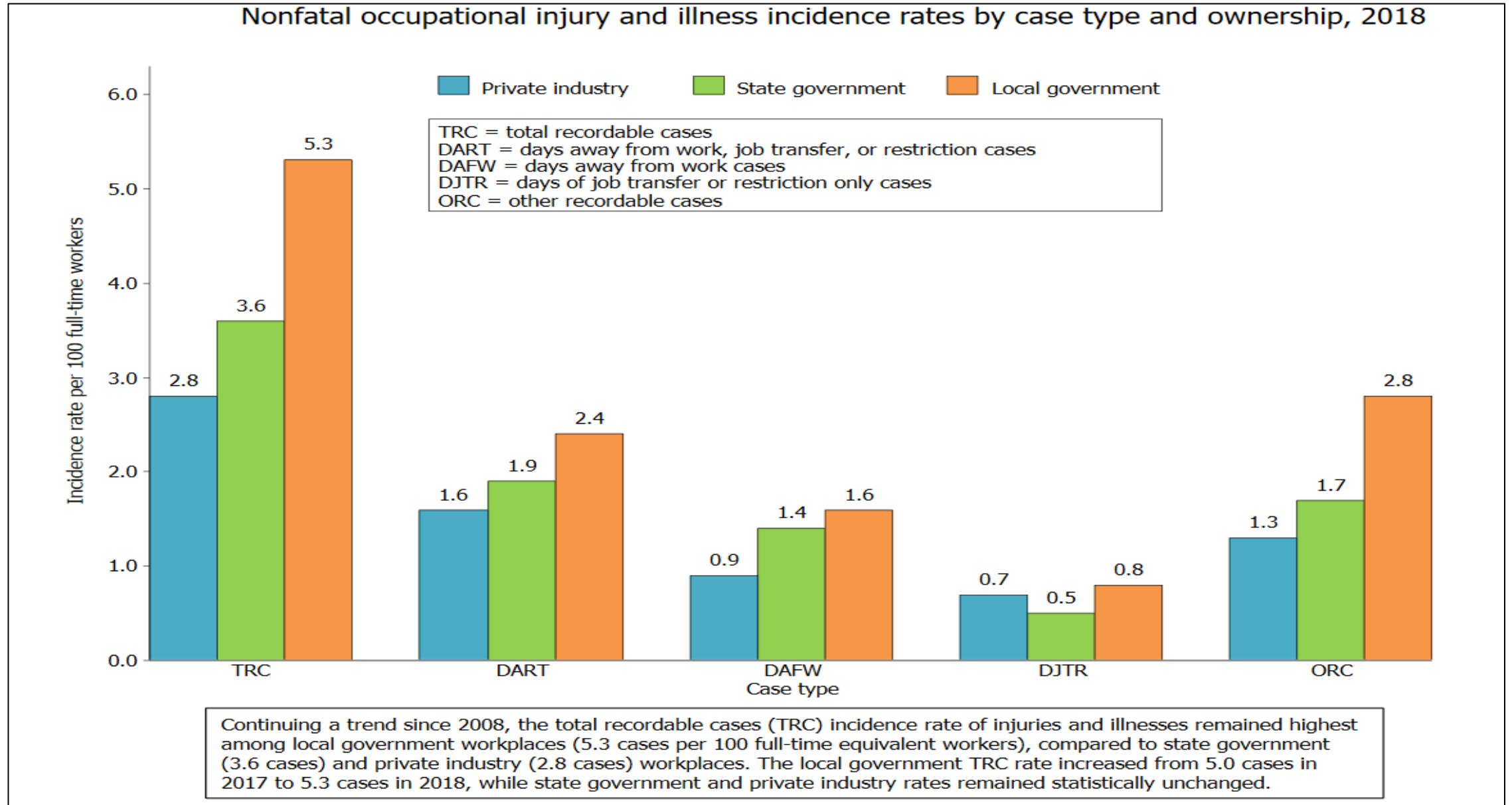
State/Local Government Experience

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

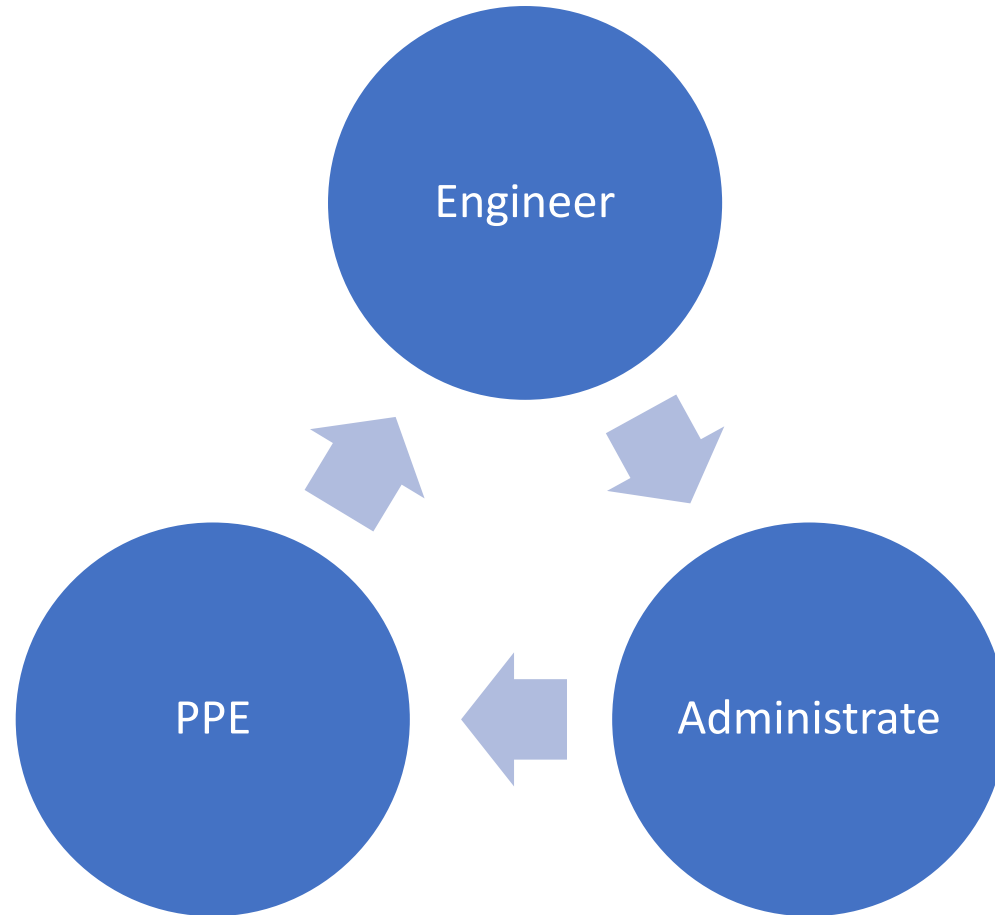
Direct and Indirect Costs



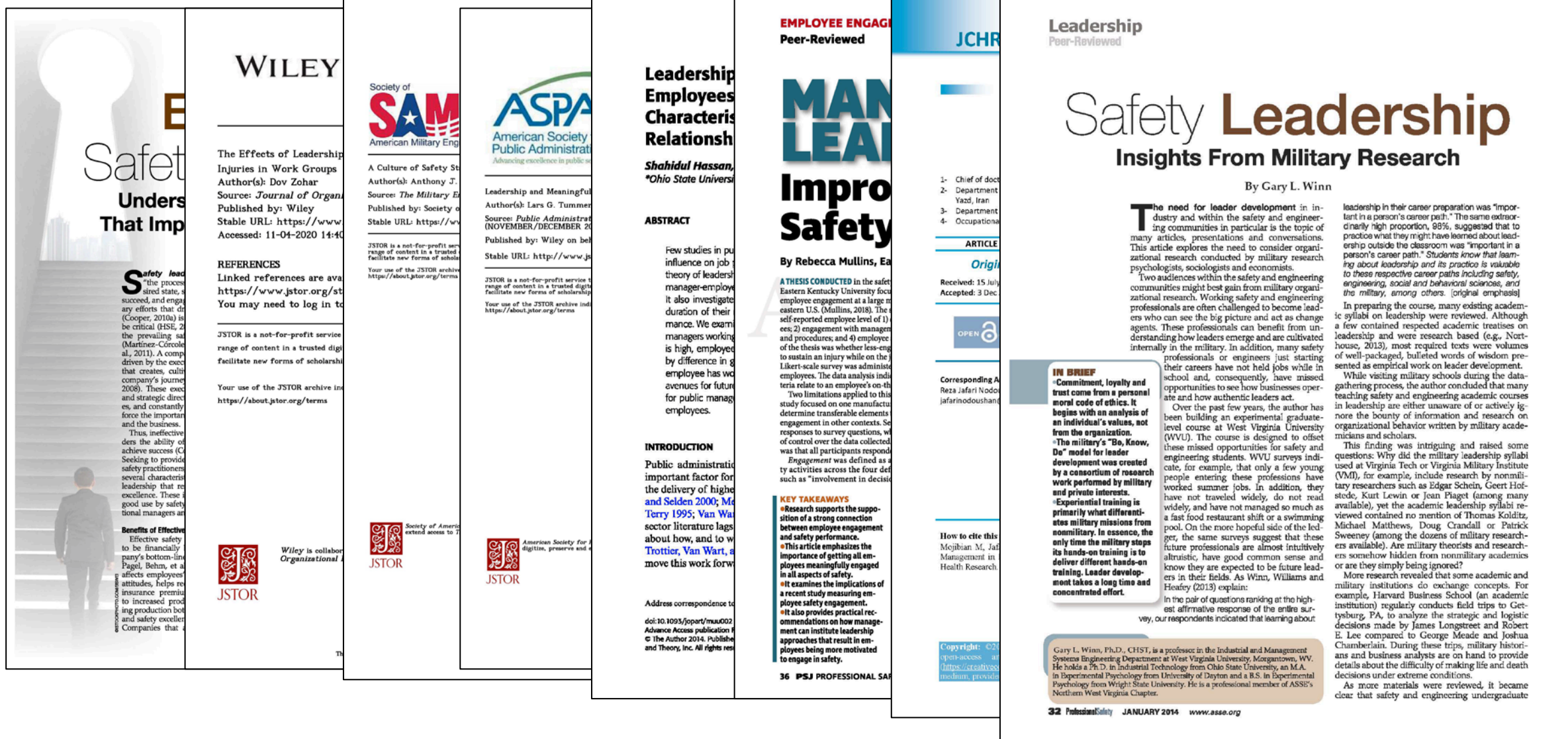
Private vs. State & Local Governments



The Big Picture on Safety Management



Leadership's Likely Impact on Worker Safety



Leadership'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

- Motivate employees to work safely through rule setting, monitoring, and consequences for non-compliance

Transformational

- Motivate employees to work safely through engagement, partnerships, and a true understanding of organizational ideals

Servant

- Motivate employees to work safely through culture changing events, promoting communications and partnerships with management and cooperation

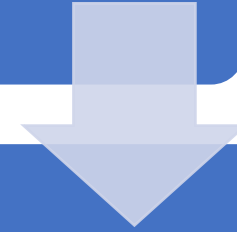
Studies on How Leadership Impacts Safety

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
- Transactional – *motivated employees to comply with rules and regulations*
- Transformational – *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 commitment
- 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 employ 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 **alignment of behaviors** 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.....

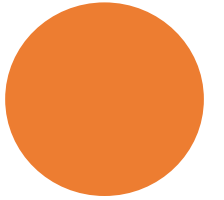
A clear understanding
of the CEO's high
expectations and
priorities for safety

Various management-
level staff are closely
associated with
translating safety
priorities to others

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