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Are there specific opportunities for safety improvement?

What data identifies the specific opportunities for safety improvement (S.O.S.I.)? Many companies don't need a *greater* focus on safety; they just need a focus in safety. U.S. Army General Creighton Abrams once said, "When eating an elephant, take one bite at a time." Improving safety performance, management systems and culture is a difficult, multiyear process. Data, even if inexact, must be collected to decide which specific opportunities for improvement yield the greatest return and provide the greatest sense of progress.

In many organizations, it is common to hear information on the types, body parts involved and, of course, severity. Though this information is important, major step-change improvement will not occur without additional details. The following are a few data types that world-class organizations gather and review, along with questions to help determine your starting point.

• Prevention data. What information are you collecting that tells you where best to focus your injury and incident prevention efforts? Are your injuries occurring in individuals of a certain age or tenure range, on one shift, time of day, month or week of year, or supervisor reported to? Are your events mostly preventable by improving behaviors, conditions or both? If behaviors, is ensuring consistency with rules, policies and procedures the best place to start, or is the problem discretionary behaviors? What insight has been collected to identify the influence or reasons for behaviors? If improving conditions and working environment would yield the greatest return, are you focusing on addressing hazards or risks? What information is available to prioritize which ones to improve?

• Management systems data. What are the elements, methodologies, programs and processes of your safety management systems, and how have they been implemented? How are you measuring if they are being followed and adding value? One client gathers data from Show-Me Management System Audits to determine precisely this. They use a five-step assessment: 1. Show-Me Implementation, 2. Show-Me Documentation, 3. Show-Me Understanding, 4. Show-Me Competency and 5. Show-Me Common Practice. How do you validate whether your management systems are contributing to the prevention of events and strengthening the culture versus creating constraints?

• Culture data. What data is available not only to describe or characterize your culture, but also to determine precisely what to focus on to create sustainable change over time? Simply put, culture is what is common among a group, and most companies have multiple cultures within — site by site, level by level and country-specific. What beliefs, behaviors, decisions, experiences and stories would be common if you had a culture of safety excellence? What would the climate and chemistry of safety excellence be? What would be observable that indicates progress is occurring? Where are you against this ideal? What do you know about your culture, where you are trying to go, and what's the exact place to start making improvement? How will you monitor the injury and incident prevention efforts are met with support rather than resistance from your culture?

• Emerging trends data. Once there is confidence in data to prevent events, grow the culture and ensure the efficacy of your management systems and overall strategy, what are you sure of and what are you not? What trends are emerging within the safety industry or your company's industry that would add further value? What are you starting to see within your own workforce and leadership levels that concern or surprise you with delight, or indicate a change in preferences or values? Once you regularly collect information of these types, S.O.S.I. will be clear. Moreover, once you have achieved zero injuries, you will not only know why, but you will also know where further value can be captured and delivered.

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