



Have your employees outsourced safety?

What are your employees responsible for regarding safety, and how do you hold them accountable? Is safety something they rely on the company or safety professional for, or are there specific actions they are held accountable for and hold each other accountable for on a regular basis? You can't delegate or outsource safety if it is to become an individual or culturally shared value. For values to be created, specific behaviors must be observable on a consistent basis to make it so. What safety behaviors are observable by and of your employees?

What responses would you receive if you were to poll your workforce asking the following two questions? 1. What are your most important responsibilities to prevent injuries? 2. What are your most important responsibilities to contribute to our safety culture? Do you know the answers to these questions yourself? If the leaders don't know what the answers should be, you can bet the followers won't either.

There will always be two components of safety: the place where work is carried out and what people do within it. With the latter, there are two additional aspects: what people

have to do and what they could do at their discretion. Throughout most of the developed world, governments (as they should) hold employers accountable for providing a safe work environment. Accountability tends to be reactive and increases following unfortunate events. Progress in safety should always *begin* with engineering risks out, but it can't end there.

There are also rules, policies and procedures that benefit the prevention of injuries and contribute to a basic culture of safety. These must be enforced frequently, timely and with an expected balance of consequences. This is the mandatory side of safety and typically represents the bare minimum required. Consider this: Can your employees obey your rules, follow your policies and procedures, and wear their personal protective equipment and still become injured? Absolutely. Excellence in safety never occurs strictly from a do-as-you're-told culture. Discretionary effort is needed.

What are your most important responsibilities to prevent injuries? If the answer to this question is "to follow the rules," look at your injuries and risk exposure. Is the cause

of injuries largely due to lack of obedience? Are there other actions workers could take at their discretion that would benefit them both on and off the job? Behaviors can never be the root cause of an injury, but they do offer control points for preventing them. Specifically which ones would help prevent the largest amount of injuries within your organization?

What are your most important responsibilities to contribute to your safety culture? Many of ProAct Safety's clients are led through in-detail discussions to define the desired culture, determine ways to close the gaps, and create precise ways to measure progress and sustainability. Until you have completed the step of defining where you need to be culturally, the answers to these questions might be well-intended but also misfocused. W. Edwards Deming reminds us, "It is not enough to do your best; you must know what to do, and then do your best."

"Everyone is responsible for safety" is a common phrase with minimum influence because it lacks substance. Give it meaning. Everyone must know their specific safety roles, responsibilities and results expected of them. Accountability should focus more on

performance than results and should be more of a positive experience than negative.

Most people go to work with the goal of leaving uninjured and would likely see value in improving the culture they are a part of. For this all to occur, focus and clarity are needed. Don't allow anyone in your organization to outsource safety. Make sure they know what to do and that they are regularly doing it.

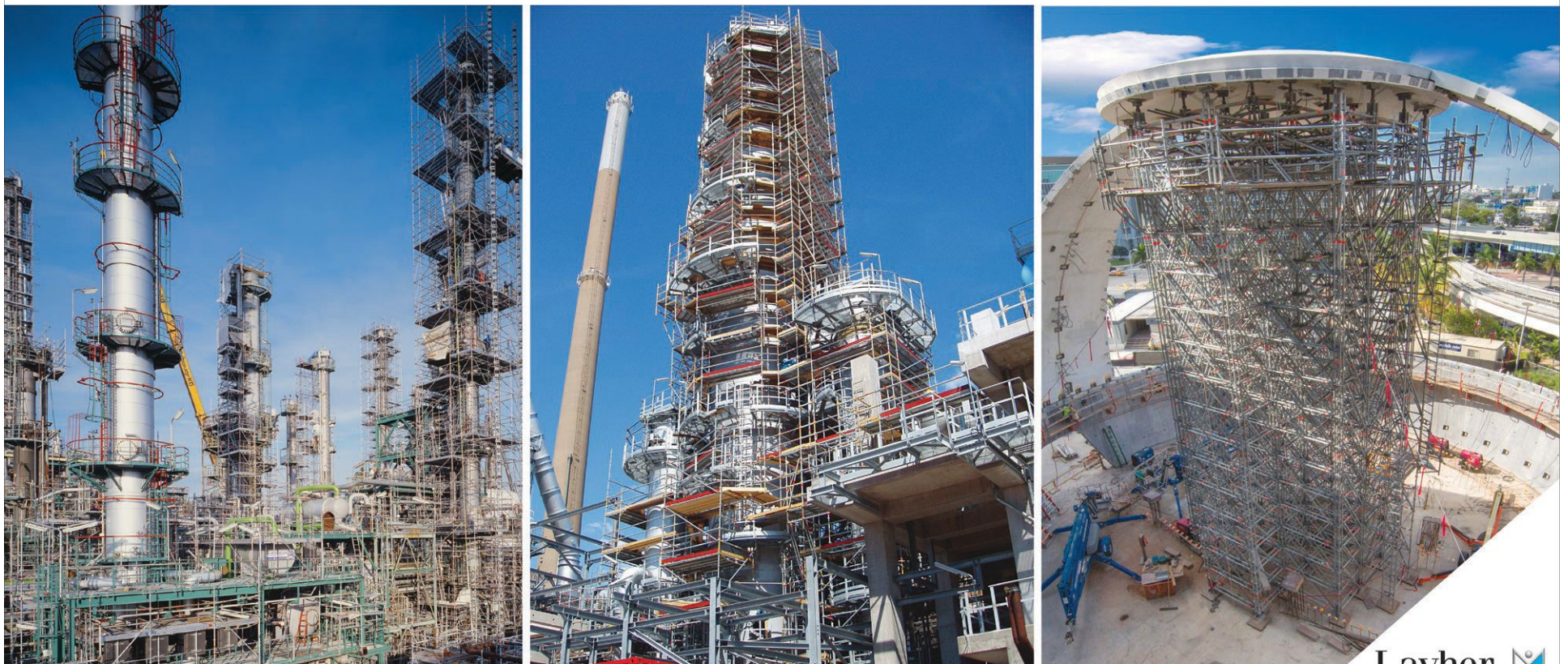
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