

## **Dealing with Employees Safety Behavior Problems**

### **By Gary Hanson**

Safety unfortunately is not always an employee's top individual priority. They take their safety for granted or they think accidents happen to other employees. Many times, during the day they may let outside factors influence their decision-making process. They may feel pressure to complete a particular task therefore they get in a hurry. They may take short cuts to speed up a process or we may be thinking of some other more exciting activity. They simply may not recognize the potential serious risk of a particular task and make the wrong decision.

Add to this all the issues that may influence an employee's state of mind before they come to work. Some employees may have financial problems, concerns about their marriage, kids that are sick or struggling in school or being bullied. There may be problems with their neighbors or an employee may have gotten up late and was stuck in a mile-long traffic jam.

Then there is the simple fact that some employees have a general negative attitude, are not happy with their job, or have a personality conflict with other employees or their supervisor.

All of those influence employee safety behavior. These could cause an employee to be injured or injure someone else. (Also, fatigue, anger, frustration, distraction, and the use of drugs and/or alcohol all put an employee at serious risk of injury).

Managers and supervisors need to be aware of these factors and the tell-tale signs that may be observable. I recommend that if there are any employees that appear to exhibit any of these signs that either the manager or supervisor sit down with that employee to determine the causes and see if there is something that can be done to help eliminate these. Sometimes just listening or talking with an employee may help. Some positive counseling can go a long way in helping employees resolve these behavior problems.

Sometimes unfortunately an employee may be in such a state that they are not fit for duty or may be at risk to themselves, other employees, or the general public. In those situations, I recommend that you call a family member to see if they can come and drive the employee home. In some cases, you may even want to offer a cab ride. The employee may refuse this, if so document that you offered this to the employee.

If there is a concern that an employee may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol you may want to have that employee take a drug or alcohol test. If you do, don't let the employee drive themselves. Take the employee and bring them back. Then call their family to have someone take them home. Don't let them drive if you suspect they may be under the influence. If they refuse to go for the test that could be terms for dismissal.

Pay attention to the signs that an employee may be at risk and counsel the employee on these when necessary. If counseling isn't feasible or the behavior is such that an employee is likely to be at risk for a serious injury or cause a serious injury to other employees then that employee may not be a suitable candidate for continued employment.

### **Remember Safety Has to be Proactive Not Reactive.**

If you have any safety problems or need help with your safety program, please call me on my cell at 1-330-495-3437 or at my office at 1-330-854-4577.