

Getting down to specifics

by TONY DOWNEY

HARDLY A DAY goes by in our industry when we don't engage in planning to some extent. We create business plans, marketing plans, project execution plans, recovery plans, emergency plans and, yes, safety plans. Many work hours are dedicated to developing, testing and refining them. But how often are these plans actually implemented on the jobsite?

Expecting that a "one-size-fits-all" safety manual is going to be an effective tool on each and every work site is a myth, plain and simple.

The key principle of the planning process is to develop a road map of sorts — to help us know where we are going and how we will get there. It's an essential part of any successful company. But when a project stumbles or struggles and we do a "deep dive" into the root cause of the problem, we often find that the road map — either in whole or in part — wasn't being followed. Unfortunately, this can happen in the realm of safety. All companies have corporate safety manuals that contain guidance documents, safe work procedures, corporate policies, work rules, check lists, incident reporting requirements, forms and many other worthwhile tools. However, expecting that a "one-size-fits-all" safety manual is going to be an effective tool on each and every work site is a myth, plain and simple.

The best tool for ensuring safety is a Site Specific Safety Plan. This type of plan describes in detail the steps that will be followed at a particular work site to safeguard the life and physical welfare of



every employee working on the project. Just like no two projects are the same, no two safety plans should be the same. A good Site Specific Safety Plan must address the specific needs of each unique project or task.

A Site Specific Plan can begin with a Statement of Commitment from the Site Management Team to perform every task safely. It should also include language related to the expectation of safe work performance by each employee on the project.

Additional items that can enhance a strong Site Specific Safety Plan include:

- A personal message from the Senior Site Management Team member. This is a very effective tool and should not only be included in the plan, but also shared at Orientation Training Sessions and posted on the job site.
- Task-specific Safety Training to include any necessary requirements of the work scope.
- Human Performance Tools such as peer checking and behavior observations.
- Pre-Task Safety Planning tools such as a Job Safety Analysis or Job Hazard Analysis.

- Risk Assessment tools and documents
- Hazard Assessment Tools and documents
- Measurement tools, checklists
- Safe Work Recognition Processes
- Incident Reporting and Investigation Processes
- Emergency Evacuation Processes and Procedures
- Site Safety Committee Process
- Necessary Personal Protective Equipment
- Additional Safety Equipment and Tools

Here's the bottom line: if no one expects a safety plan to be vigilantly followed on the jobsite, it's not worth the paper it's printed on. That's why it's so important to measure the effectiveness, quality and completeness of your Site Specific Safety Plans. What gets measured gets done. Quality plans will lead to quality work performance that is on schedule, within budget and, most importantly, free from injuries. ■



Tony Downey is the director of safety for Day & Zimmermann NPS, Inc. and chairman of TAUC Safety and Health Committee. Day & Zimmermann is a TAUC Governing Member.