

TOOLBOX TALK #1

GREAT SAFETY LEADERS

Ever wonder what it takes to be a great safety leader? Did you know that anyone can be a great leader when it comes to safety? We have identified seven practices that every leader needs to adopt to “walk the walk” when it comes to safety.

1. **Vision.** Leaders must have the ability to “see” what safety excellence looks like and the capacity to articulate it throughout the organization.
2. **Collaboration.** Effective leaders work well with employees, promote cooperation and collaboration, actively seek input from people on issues that affect them, and encourage others to implement their decisions to improve safety.
3. **Credibility.** Does the leader generate a high level of trust with his or her employees? This requires a willingness to admit mistakes and advocate the safety interests of everyone, from managers to the front line.
4. **Communication.** Safety leaders need to be talking about safety every time they speak. Everything they communicate must be within the context of safety.
5. **Action orientation.** Is the safety leader ready to tackle safety proactively rather than just react to incidents? Safety leaders need to show urgency even in the absence of incidents to show they’re serious about achieving results.
6. **Feedback and recognition.** Leaders need honest and accurate feedback on the effect of their behaviors to help them ensure consistency between their passion for people and the message employees receive based on their actions.
7. **Accountability.** An effective leader gives workers a fair appraisal of their safety efforts and results, clearly communicates individual roles in the safety effort, and fosters the sense that every person is responsible for safety throughout the organization.

All of these elements work together in a way that creates not only an exemplary safety culture and an environment where people *want* to work safely, but also a culture in which it’s sustainable. Leaders in world-class safety organizations can serve as role models in this effort. It all starts with a personal commitment to workers first, not last.