

Coaching for Safety

In the fields of sports and the performing arts, people have coaches to inspire them beyond where they normally stop. In our organization we are in the "Sport of Business." In our work the managers and supervisors are the coaches, the work crews the teams, and the employees our most valuable players.

Coaching is fundamental to exceptional performance

- Effective coaching can be taught and learned; it is not an innate or mysterious ability that some are just fortunate enough to be born with.
- Effective coaching instruction requires instruction, practice, and feedback.
- Effective coaching is a means of communication, which alters the actions of individual teams and performance.
- "Coaching" is not "telling," "giving directions," "convincing" and "manipulating."

SAFETY COACH

The five letters of the word **COACH** is one tool that we can use to help us remember the basic ingredients of the most effective coaching, whether coaching the members of a winning athletic team or the individuals working to Shape an Accident Free Environment. This instructional acronym is very important, because it not only contains the components of an effective coaching process, but it lists them in the sequence in which they should occur:

C for *Care* caring is the basic underlying motivation for safety coaching. Safety coaches truly care about the health and safety of their co-workers, and they act on such caring. In other words, they "actively care."

O for *Observe* observe systematically, with an eye for supporting safe behaviour and correcting unsafe behaviour. Behaviour that illustrates going beyond "the call of duty" for the safety of another person should be especially noted for supportive coaching. This is the sort of behaviour that contributes significantly to safety improvements and can be increased through rewarding feedback.

A for *Analyse* safety coaches appreciate the ABC principle (Activator, Behaviour, Consequence) in interpreting their observations. They understand there are usually observable reasons for behaviors occurring, whether safe or at-risk.

Effective coaching requires basic communication skills. People need to understand that anyone can put themselves at-risk without even realizing it, and performance can only improve with behaviour-specific feedback. Even corrective feedback for unsafe behaviour is appreciated when it is given appropriately, regardless of the work status of the feedback sender. Whether supportive or corrective, feedback should be specific (with regard to a particular behaviour) and timely (occurring immediately after the target behaviour); and it should be given in a private, one-on-one situation.

H for *Help* The word "help" summarizes the essential mission of a safety coach. In other words, the purpose of safety coaching is to help an individual prevent injury by supporting safe work practices and correcting unsafe work practices.



TEAM WORK

Shaping Accident Free Environments

