

“Promoting safe behaviour at work is a critical part of the management of health & safety, because behaviour turns systems and procedures into reality”.¹

80% of work related accidents may be due to employees’ behaviour or their acts or omissions. HSE research¹ concluded that proprietary and in-house behavioural safety processes improve safety when implemented effectively with some case studies showing an 85% improvement in accident rates.

Behaviour based safety programmes tend to focus on the observable and measurable behaviours critical to safety at a particular facility. They are often effective at improving behaviour such as wearing PPE or using the correct tool but may not be effective for low probability/ high consequence risks. They promote desired behaviours by introducing positive reinforcement and feedback for behaving safely.

Legal requirements

There is no legal requirement to instigate a behavioural safety programme but they can be an effective tool as part of your health and safety management system. Implementing one can assist with requirements of Health and Safety at Work Act and Management of Health and Safety Regulations, particularly with regard to monitoring performance and providing information and instruction to employees.

Guidance and useful information

- ‘Strategies to promote safe behaviour as part of a health and safety management system (Contract research report 430/2002). Download at www.hse.gov.uk/research/crr_hm/2002/crr02430.htm
- Reducing error and influencing behaviour HS(G)48
- HSE Website - www.hse.gov.uk/humanfactors
- Looking for higher standards – behavioural safety (IOSH). www.iosh.co.uk/books_and_resources/idoc.ashx?docid=5470fc57-968b-4813-91f8-df004ae3a0c6&version=-1

Best practice standards

Successful behavioural safety programmes:

✓	Require senior management commitment.
✓	Need sufficient resources and planning to ensure they fit in with your organisation’s culture and health and safety management system (HSMS).
✓	Should commence when your existing HSMS is mature and in line with good practice such as HS(G)65, “Successful Health and Safety Management” or BS8800 or OHSAS18001.
✓	Engage significant workforce participation e.g. through steering groups.
✓	Will train steering group members and “observers” in behavioural safety techniques and communication skills to provide feedback.
✓	Define the critical safety behaviours the programme will address i.e. the main drivers of your accident frequency.
✓	Set realistic goals and targets for improvement.
✓	Define frequency and number of observations, which are often recorded on checklists.
✓	Provide feedback to employees following observations.
✓	Use employee feedback and trend data from observations to modify and improve the working environment.
✓	Regularly review the objectives and critical safety behaviours of the programme.

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