10 TIPS FOR CREATING A SAFETY-FOCUSED WORK CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

> Anyone involved closely with workplace safety has heard presentations, webinars or people talking about the need to develop a "culture of safety" to reap long-term incident reduction benefits. It's a term that, despite being around since the Chernobyl disaster in the 80s, has become a bit of a buzzword more recently with safety professionals and modern business leaders. But what are the building blocks to creating this type of positive behavior within your teams? And, how do you ensure that your efforts focus on real improvements?

So, what is a safety culture?

In its simplest form, it is related to the principles or values an organization attaches to the prevention of worker injury, or to put it another way — how a company "thinks" about safety.

Adopting a safety culture can be achieved within any organization, of any size. But, it is not something which can be created, or completed, overnight. It is a journey of continuous improvement.

Nor does adopting a safety-focused culture mean you have to limit your ability to get work done or reduce productivity.

When implemented correctly, it can enhance what your organization does — and how it does it.

At JLG, safety is an important value. As we work to develop cutting-edge products, enhance the worksite of the future and expand into global markets, we also maintain a firm commitment to keep people safe at work — from JLG team members to the operators who use our equipment every day.

Here are 10 tips from our company to yours for creating a safety-focused work culture...
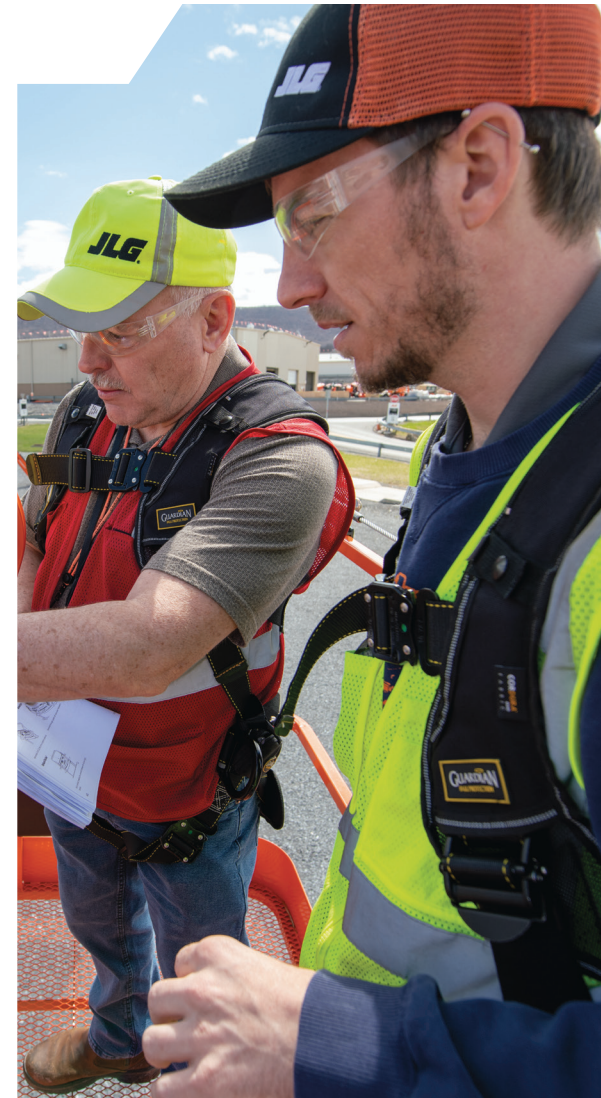
STORM SAFETY	TRIP HAZARDS
LONE WORKERS	HYDRATION
HEARING PROTECTION	
ERGONOMICS	MENTAL HEALTH
HEAT	PPE
WEARABLES	

> TIP #1: PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES OF ERGONOMICS

Whether you work seated or standing, follow these principles of ergonomics to make a big impact on how your body works and accomplish repeatable tasks with more efficiency, safety and comfort every day.

1. Work in a neutral position.

Whether you work sitting in a cab or standing and moving throughout the day, it's important to keep your body in a neutral posture.

· A healthy spine follows an S-curve, and it's important to maintain this curve while working to avoid strain on your back
· If you work in a seated position, good lumbar support is key
· Place one foot up on a footrest when standing still
· When you need to lift something, make sure you lift from your legs rather than from your back
· Try adjusting your equipment or work position to keep your muscles in a more relaxed position.

2. Decrease the need for excessive force.

Pushing, pulling and lifting heavy items can strain your joints, creating the potential for fatigue or injury.

· Find tools to lighten the load you need to move. For example, use a cart or hoist to move heavy items
· Make changes to your workflow to lessen the distance you need to travel or the number of items you need to transport

3. Keep materials within easy reach. Extend your arms and outline a semicircle in front of you. This is your reach envelope, and items you use frequently should be inside this semicircle at your workstation.

To accommodate your reach envelope,

· Rearrange your area so you're no longer reaching for frequently used items
· Adjust your seat and armrests can also bring machine controls within reach to reduce fatigue
· When reaching into boxes or bins, tilt the box or place it on a lower surface before reaching inside

4. Work at the proper height. Having a work surface that's too high or too low can strain the back, neck and shoulders.

· Routine work should be done at elbow height whether you're sitting or standing
· If you work with heavy tools, adjust your position to work lower than elbow height when possible

5. Reduce unnecessary motion. Manual repetition can cause overuse injuries. Think about the motions you repeat throughout the day and find ways to reduce excessive motion.

· Look for tools to help or find ways to take manual motion out of the task
· Change your position or the layout of your work area to help you work more ergonomically

6. Minimize fatigue caused by static load.

Some ways you may be able to combat the fatigue caused by static load are:

· Change the orientation of your work area
· Reposition your body
· Add extenders to your tools

At your job, there may be tasks that require you to hold the same position for an extended period, which is known as static load. Static load can affect all parts of the body, such as the legs when standing for a long time or the shoulders when you need to hold your arms overhead for longer than a few seconds. These types of task can make your muscles tired and may eventually cause lasting discomfort even after the task is finished.

WORK AT
PROPER
HEIGHT.
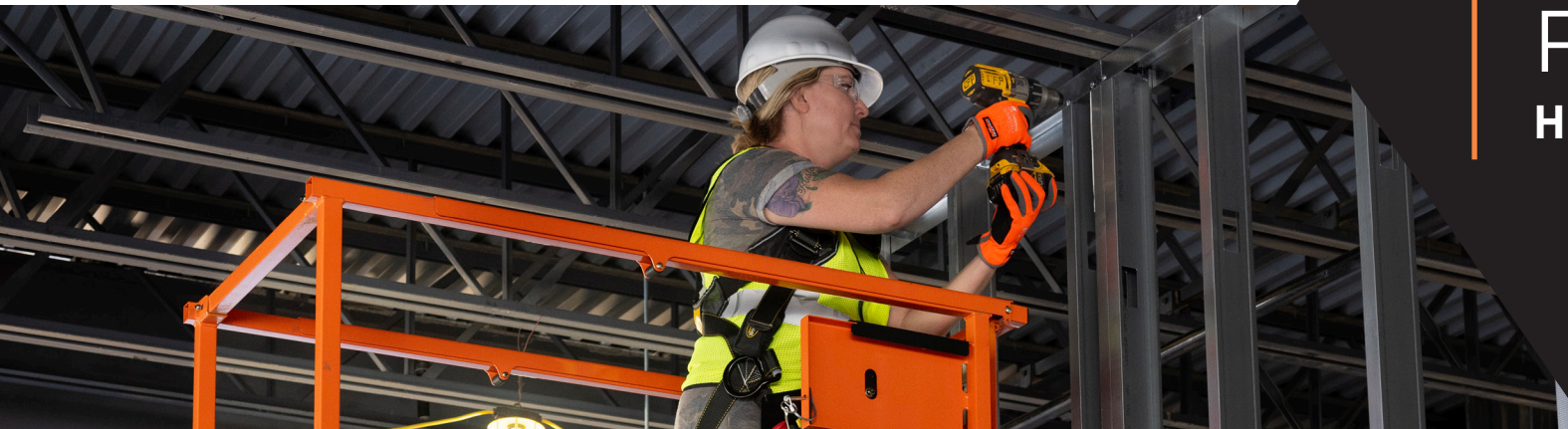
7. **Minimize contact stress. Contact stress occurs when a tool or surface routinely comes into contact with the same area of your body. Sometimes called pressure points, these areas of contact can cause discomfort.**

To help reduce contact stress:

· Add padding, wear gloves or choose tools with a cushioned grip
· Invest in anti-fatigue mats for standing surfaces

8. Leave adequate clearance. This principle is very simple — you need to have enough room for your head, knees and feet. Visibility also comes into play here.

Follow these guidelines no matter where you're working or what equipment you're using:

· If you work in a seated position, adjust your seat to give yourself adequate legroom.
· Remove overhead obstructions to avoid bumping your head
· Have a clear view of what's going on around you

9. Move and stretch throughout the day. Staying in one position too long — whether sitting or standing — isn't healthy for the human body. Take breaks to exercise or stretch your muscles.

· If you sit for a long time, pause what you're doing once in awhile and walk around.
· If you're on your feet all day, wear supportive footwear and use your breaks to rest.
· If your job is physically demanding on certain parts of your body, stretch before jumping into strenuous tasks

10. Keep your environment comfortable. Work environments vary greatly depending on your industry and role, but some common items you may want to pay attention to are lighting, temperature, vibration and noise:

· Look for ways to reduce glare or provide better lighting in low-light areas
· Keep work areas at a comfortable temperature when possible
· Dress appropriately for the weather
· If tools create excessive noise or vibration, have hearing protection and consider ways to dampen the impact

2

> **TIP #2: BE SAFE DURING STORMS**

If you are outdoors and hear thunder, you are in danger of lightning. Protect yourself and your team by seeking shelter and waiting for the storm to pass.

With summer work in full swing, follow these tips from the U.S. Department of Labor:

· Wait 30 minutes from the last sound of thunder before returning to work
· Start your day by reviewing NOAA weather reports to prepare for potential hazards
· Know your shelter locations – enclosed buildings with electrical wiring and plumbing
· Train your team on lightning safety and encourage them to adhere to safety guidelines

WAIT 30 MINUTES
FROM
THE LAST SOUND OF THUNDER

> **TIP #3: PREVENT TRIP HAZARDS**

According to OSHA, the majority of workplace accidents stem from slips, trips and falls. The best way to avoid these type of incidents is:

· Clear away muck and grime from work areas and clean off equipment
· Declutter workspaces by putting away tools, materials and personal items

> TIP #4: PRIORITIZE MENTAL HEALTH

The construction industry has made great strides to support the physical safety of workers on a job site through detailed standards and protocols. However, safety begins with employee well-being and prioritizing mental health, especially because construction workers suffer from a substance abuse rate that's nearly twice the national average. The industry is also plagued by a suicide rate of more than 3.5 times the national average.

It's important to raise awareness of mental health concerns among construction workers and support for those impacted by mental illness:

· Build a culture that supports psychological safety
· Reinforce the concept of a respectful workplace
· Have zero tolerance for harassment, discrimination or bullying

HAVE A
ZERO
TOLERANCE FOR
HARASSMENT

> TIP #5: PROTECT LONE WORKERS

Lone workers perform their tasks alone, usually distanced from organizational resources and other team members. However, they might not always work in a remote, off-site location. The lone worker category can also apply to employees who are physically separated from others by working alone in an isolated area on-site.

From workplace accidents to heat illness to animal attacks, people who work alone are at increased risk for injury and delays in medical care.

To protect long works, work with your safety and legal team to ensure compliance with all necessary OSHA regulations, relevant state or local guidelines and industry-specific guidance.

HOW CAN YOU HELP KEEP LONE WORKERS SAFE—AND STAY COMPLIANT?

CONDUCT
REGULAR
RISK ASSESSMENTS

REMOVE OR
MITIGATE
IDENTIFIED HAZARDS

DEVELOPE CLEAR,
CONCISE
WORKER POLICIES

TRAIN LONE
WORKERS ON
BEST SAFETY PRACTICES

USE
TECHNOLOGY
TO REDUCE RISK

> **TIP #6: REDUCE RISKS FROM HEAT**

Soaring outdoor temperatures put you and your staff at a higher risk for heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Avoiding the dangers of heat-related illness is a joint effort where everyone involved must do their part to protect themselves and their coworkers.

To help reduce risk, follow these precautions:

· Stay indoors as much as possible and limit exposure to the sun
· Use cooling fans to promote air movement
· Stay hydrated by drinking one cup of water every 15 to 20 minutes
· Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing
· Avoid consuming alcohol, caffeinated drinks and heavy meals before sun exposure
· Monitor yourself and coworkers for signs and symptoms of heat-related illness

STAY
HYDRATED

> TIP #7: STAY HYDRATED

With summer temperatures spiking across the country, dehydration can exacerbate the physical challenge of working in high temperatures. Potentially life-threatening in extreme cases, even minor cases of dehydration can disrupt focus and impede performance.

· Encourage your teams to drink water and other hydrating beverages regularly
· Swap out high-sugar drinks, like sodas or sports drinks, for clear, zero-calorie liquids
· Be mindful of the body's signals that it is thirsty, like dry mouth or throat
· Check the color of your urine throughout the day to ensure it is clear or light-colored

BE MINDFULL OF THE
BODY'S
SIGNALS

> **TIP #8: USE PPE**

Wearing the right personal protective equipment (PPE) for the job serves two purposes: It protects workers and helps employers comply with relevant safety standards and OSHA requirements.

Follow the three Cs to boost proper PPE usage on the job:

1) COMFORTABLE

PPE must be comfortable. When equipment is uncomfortable, workers are less likely to wear it. Or worse, they may make modifications that create risks rather than prevent them. When PPE is too loose, too tight or made from scratchy or stiff material, it can hinder a worker's movement and productivity. The best way to determine whether PPE will be comfortable is:

· Conduct a wear test at your facility.
· Try out PPE from several manufacturers and collect feedback from workers on which manufacturers' equipment they prefer
· Work with a manufacturer who allows you to customize their equipment
· Offer various sizes for workers to choose from, including sizes specifically for women.
· When choosing materials, look for PPE that is wicking, breathable and lightweight to regulate air temperature in both hot and cold environments

2) CONVENIENT

When PPE is both easy to access and wear, workers are more likely to comply with your organization's PPE requirements.

· Store all PPE in a convenient place where workers can access it as part of their daily routine.
· Specify exactly what PPE is required for certain jobs
· Encourage workers to wear only the appropriate PPE items

3) COMPREHENSIVE

Sometimes, workers don't wear proper PPE because they simply forget what is required for the job at hand. Fewer PPE items are easier for workers to remember, especially when extensive PPE is necessary to keep them safe.

· Look for multipurpose PPE, consider options that address multiple hazards at once (example: industrial safety gloves that are also fire retardant)
· Upgrade outdated equipment to keep workers as safe as possible

> **TIP #9: WEAR HEARING PROTECTION**

Hearing loss is one of the most common issues that affects workers. Fortunately, it's easily preventable once you identify areas of your worksite with high levels of sound.

How to know when you need hearing protection on the job:

· Use a sound level meter or a noise dosimeter to check noise levels
· Try standing a few feet away from a coworker and speaking normally. If you can't be heard without raising your voice, the environment is loud enough to require ear protection

> TIP #10: TRY OUT WEARABLES

We live in an age of data. What if we could leverage the power of data to keep workers safer on the job? That's where wearables come in. Proactive monitoring can help to prevent dangerous situations and allow work to be performed with less risk, as well as reducing a worker's risk of injury or stress.

And, because wearables are small — a wristband or chest band, for example — they aren't intrusive, making them more likely to be used.

Benefits of wearable sensors in construction is that they can help because they can:

· Monitor vital signs like heart rate, skin temperature, oxygen levels and even electrical activity on the skin
· Alert the worker if a potentially dangerous level was recorded
· Sense the environment around the worker and sound a safety alarm if a situation becomes dangerous

MONITOR
VITAL
SIGNS

STRATEGIES FOR A "SAFETY FIRST" CULTURE

The journey to a true safety culture is a marathon, not a sprint. Safety and health programs don't fall into the "set it and forget it" category. Not only are new regulations being released all the time, but new employees will join your team.

Thus, it's important to adopt a continuous improvement mindset when it comes to a safety-focused work culture. Hold frequent safety meetings, retrain more tenured employees as you train new hires and consider doing a full safety and health program audit each year.

Also, encourage employees to share their concerns with you. These concerns can most likely be turned into safety topics that will resonate with your entire team.

EXPLORE MORE SAFETY ARTICLES AND INSIGHTS ON DIRECTACCESS AND SUBSCRIBE TO STAY INFORMED AND RECEIVE REGULAR UPDATES!

STAY UPDATED