

Making it safely

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RICS? new series of facilities management case studies includes a demonstration of how two manufacturers have successfully promoted health and safety

Creating the right culture is key to ensuring that health and safety is effective, and senior management has a vital role to play in this. When employees do not feel that health and safety leadership is clearly demonstrated in their organisation, this can be a huge barrier to fully implementing health and safety processes.

Creating the right culture is key to ensuring that health and safety is effective

[Workplace Law?s 2013 study](#) showed that currently both clients and suppliers allocate the highest proportion of their facilities management (FM) training budgets to health and safety ? with both spending over a third of their money in this area.

This is borne out by both companies featured in this study ? award-winning manufacturers that understand the importance of flawless health and safety procedures, in terms of both their reputation and their financial performance, and who instil their brand values ? consistent, reliable and safe products ? into their working culture.

However, it is not about spending money to tick boxes at Cobham Antenna Systems, manufacturer of communication, navigation and GPS equipment for land, air and maritime platforms across civil and defence environments:

"Some 99% of the activities we have undertaken to improve safety haven?t needed any reference to specific legislation in terms of compliance, because we're above that base line safety threshold." says Mick Cooper, Safety, Health and Environmental (SHE) Manager. "Our application of the Cobham SHE management standards create a far higher level of compliance than that prescribed in law."

The hazards present at Cobham's Marlow headquarters include potential exposure (albeit minimal) to chemical agents, forklift truck use, using machinery, working at height and working from large naval vessels in dry and wet docks alongside the other activity expected of a busy dockyard.

Given the potential problems, Cobham's facilities team uses incentives for its staff to promote the health and safety message, understanding that to hit home it needs to personally affect people. The monthly Cobham SHE Excellence awards sees one employee

selected for a prize of ?25 in shopping vouchers.

Motivating employees to be more safety-aware has reaped dividends for the company, whose 'Zero harm' initiative was introduced to create a demonstrable reduction in injury incidence. Reporting of near-miss incidents has increased significantly. The site has seen a reduction in injuries from 16 in 2011, to 9 in 2012; in 2013 the company recorded just 2 minor incidents (see Figure 1).

The 'Zero harm' initiative's reduction in injury

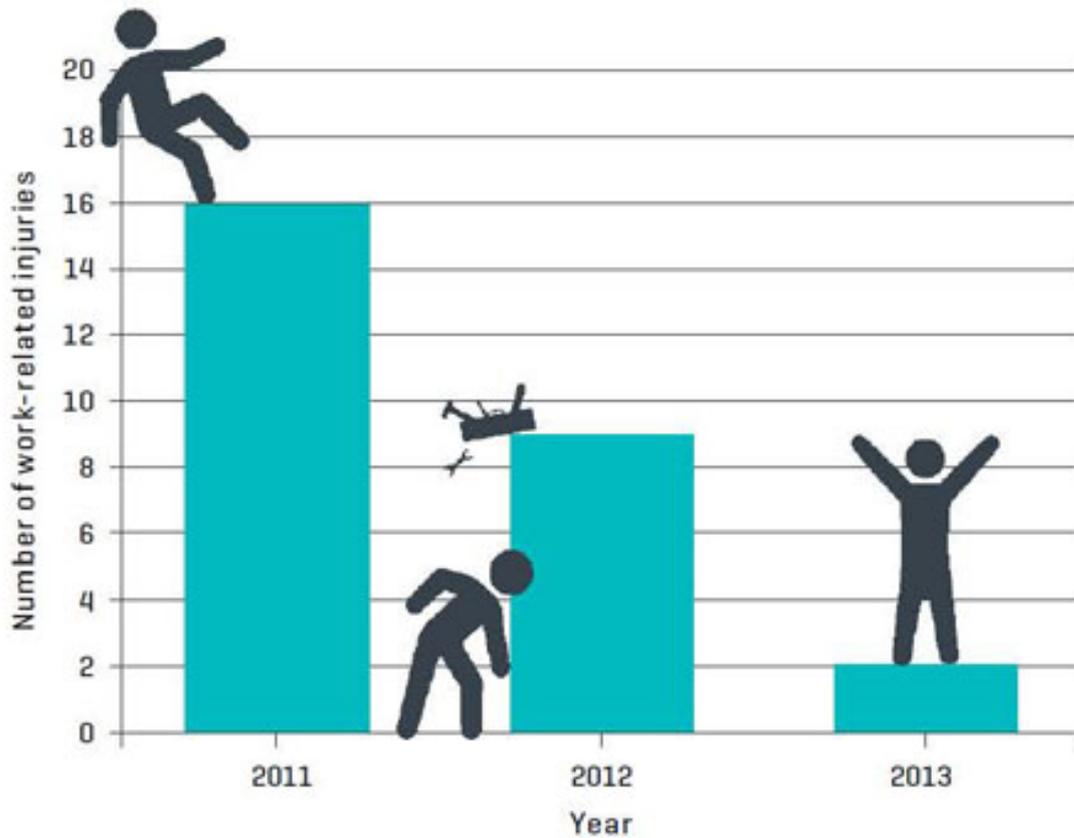


Figure 1: The 'Zero Harm' initiative

Cooper's close working relationship with Cameron Urquhart, the Group's Head of FM, is the key link holding this process together, he claims:

"Without this working relationship between the SHE and facilities managers we would not achieve the results seen here. There is a real need to ensure there is a strong link between these two personalities and at Marlow it is second to none. Without this close cooperation it would have been far more difficult to achieve our outcomes, if not impossible."

Measuring attitudes

Given the varying attitudes and opinions likely to be held by different hierarchies within an organisation, it is slightly surprising that more companies do not measure their employees' attitudes to risk in order to help them plan the best approach towards education and training.

Workplace Law's 2013 research suggests that only 50% of high-performing clients, and 60% of suppliers, measure their staff's attitudes towards risk, although the figure still demonstrates a noticeable appreciation of the importance of attitude in health and safety.

Specialist steel supplier Mabey Bridge won the Best Achievement in Manufacturing award at the SHP IOSH ([Safety and Health Practitioner /Institution of Occupational Safety and Health](#)) Awards 2013, predominantly for its [ThinkSafe initiative](#) , which focuses on establishing an interdependent health and safety culture built on shared beliefs. This includes challenging unsafe practices, taking responsibility for safety, and ensuring immediate corrective action is taken.

All 590 employees were enrolled on an initial engagement session and asked to complete a personal commitment card and a safety climate survey. Following this, 15 employees volunteered as members of the ThinkSafe steering group and later led the observational audit. Within 6 months, more than 250 observations were completed, enabling the company to tailor change campaigns to existing practices.

Some of the key safety issues identified as needing addressing included preventing slip and trip injuries, ensuring that staff wore the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), making sure equipment was safe for use, improving communication of any potential hazards, and safeguarding people who work at height.

A series of initiatives to address these challenges included:

- Housekeeping: An 'immediate corrective action and start of shift inspection programme' has ensured that work areas are kept free from slip/trip hazards. This is also supported by a 5S lean management tool which has reduced clutter within the workplace.
- PPE compliance: A 'Just and Fair' programme clearly outlined the consequences for non-compliant behaviour. The steering group also undertook several PPE reviews to ensure standards were compatible and appropriate for the specific tasks being undertaken.
- Control of equipment: Pre-use inspection and defect report logs were used to ensure equipment was safe before use.
- Incident reporting: Raising awareness of near miss and hazard reporting has improved the corporate risk knowledge throughout the business.
- Work at height: The interdependent nature of the programme empowered the teams to design, manufacture and risk assess their own access solutions.

As a result of these measures, the corporate accident frequency rate declined from 1.3 lost time accidents per 100,000 man-hours in 2009 to 0.07 in 2013, while near-miss reporting increased from an average of 7 per month in 2010 to an average of 70 per month in 2013.

Training included a leadership course for managers, engagement events for all employees, a course on safety observations for volunteers, and a train-the-trainer course for members of the steering group.

Supply chain drivers

Of course, the above measures are all very well when they can be monitored and checked.

Staff behaviour can be analysed, bad practice rooted out, and a good health and safety culture established. However, in the manufacturing industry in particular, contractors are used widely to fulfil large contracts. How can a company ensure its rigorous health and safety systems are adhered to by third parties?

At Cobham, contractor control has been reviewed and significantly improved over the past 4 years, Cooper explains: "We now expect nothing less than the same visible demonstration of SHE value as shown by our own people. Now, no contractor fails to display the same control parameters evident in the activity of our own people at Marlow and that ethos has repaid both parties tenfold. They are there to get the job done as efficiently as possible, with the minimum resources required to achieve it and within scope of customer expectation."

As might be expected from an award-winning organisation, Mabey Bridge conforms to ISO 9001, 14001 and 18001 safety management system, which is externally audited. It takes the same approach to its supply chain.

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Such standards are becoming more commonplace throughout the industry, and are a sign that good health and safety practices are on the increase. Cobham has gone a stage further and works to its own safety management system, alongside its certified OHSAS 18001 and ISO 14001 management systems. The Cobham Machine Management Standard has been implemented across the full group, and has proved to be extremely effective. The standards provide 4 status levels and no business unit is allowed to operate below level 1 (level zero being non-compliant). The majority of business units are operating at level 2 or 3.

Having the FM team involved in setting operational and strategic objectives and ensuring they are tracked and subsequently achieved, works well within Cobham as demonstrated by its low injury incidence. Corporate responsibility and sustainability is held in high esteem and everyone from the General Manager down talks of SHE as an integral part of every role, process and task.

Good safety practices are demonstrated and openly encouraged throughout the site and corporate responsibility and safety is considered an essential ingredient and core value of the business.

Lessons learnt

Cobham has seen a gradual decline in injury levels over the past 4 years from 21 to 16, 9 and 4r during 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively. The business has had no reportable injury for more than 3 years and the injuries it has experienced during that period have been minor; including slips and trips, a splash of solvent in the eye and a minor manual handling strain. This is because the team at Marlow are all focused on working safely and employees and management alike are keen to report anything likely to lead to harm to prevent this from happening. An employee SHE culture survey for 3 consecutive years has seen a healthy improvement in positive response.

The 2013 SHP IOSH judges were particularly impressed by how Mabey Bridge's campaign was implemented, with leadership buy-in at the top and a programme for managers to help

champion messages across the business. It is this last point that is most important ? establishing a thorough health and safety culture from the top down, demonstrating managerial commitment to good working practices.

Further information

- [Facilities management case studies, talent management, strategic FM, data management and sustainability](#)
- Related competencies include: [Health and safety](#)