

# Safety Matters

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## July is National Safety Month

National Safety Month. This campaign, sponsored by the National Safety Council (NSC), highlights efforts to prevent injuries and deaths inside and outside the workplace. It also helps provide employee learning opportunities, allows employers to share their safety pride, and allows employees to pledge that they will work safely.

**National Safety Month highlights research and prevention efforts in a themed area throughout each week of July.**

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 5,500 workplace fatalities and over 2.8 million job-related injuries occurred in the last year alone. These findings emphasize how vital it is to promote workplace safety. Each week during National Safety Month, focuses on different safety topics. Here is an outline of 2024 topics:

- **Safety Engagement (July 1-8)**—For employees to prioritize workplace safety, they need to be engaged. Employers can foster greater safety engagement through interactive training, regular toolbox talks, plenty of on-site safety signage, and written resources like workplace safety manuals and flyers. Additionally, employers should conduct routine occupational safety audits and reward employees who demonstrate a commitment to injury prevention.
- **Roadway Safety (July 9-15)**—When employees operate personal vehicles for work-related activities, various safety risks can arise. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, motor vehicle traffic crashes contribute to more than 40,000 fatalities each year. As such, it is important for employers to educate these employees on roadway safety.

Specifically, drivers should inspect their vehicles before heading to work and after each long-distance journey, avoid all distractions when behind the wheel, and comply with all traffic laws to help mitigate risks.

- **Risk Reduction (July 16-22)**—While all workplaces share some common safety hazards, specific risks vary based on the nature of the operations. That is why employers must perform in-depth risk assessments and analyze their unique safety exposures. In doing so, they can implement more effective occupational safety measures and better protect their employees on the job. Additionally, employers should encourage their employees to participate in risk reduction by reporting all unaddressed workplace safety issues.
- **Slips, Trips, and Falls (July 23-30)**—Slips, trips and falls are common injuries across industry lines, and they can be fatal. The National Institutes of Health reported that falls are the second-leading cause of unintentional, injury-related deaths. Given this, employers must identify and mitigate workplace risks that could cause slips, trips and falls. Further, employees should receive regular training on slip, trip, and fall prevention.

By educating their employees on such topics, the State of Delaware can create healthier and safer work environments.

### July's Riddles

(answers on page three)

1. Who has to work on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July?
2. What can you put in a bucket to make it weigh less?
3. I have a straight back and sharp teeth. What am I?
4. The more you take, the more you leave behind. What am I?
5. What did the Colonists wear to the Boston Tea Party?

# Safety Focused

## Behavior-Based Safety Explained

Safety must be a priority for every organization, regardless of size or industry. By maintaining a safe work environment, organizations can minimize the risk of costly on-site accidents and employee injuries, thereby boosting staff morale and maximizing productivity.

Although there are several approaches to workplace safety, behavior-based safety (BBS) is one of the most common. Based on American engineer William Edwards Deming's tenets of continuous improvement and originating in the 1970s, BBS refers to a proactive safety approach that empowers employees to prioritize safe behaviors on the job using routine observations. These observations help employees understand the consequences of unsafe behaviors and reinforce desired behaviors, increasing their commitment to safe work practices and deterring possible accidents.

Adopting the BBS approach can benefit organizations in various ways, including promoting a strong safety culture and reducing occupational injury rates. This article provides more information on BBS, why it's valuable, ways for organizations to implement effective BBS programs and common mistakes to avoid.

### Overview of Behavior-Based Safety (BBS)

The BBS approach centers around observing employee behavior and its impact using the antecedents, behaviors, and consequences (ABC) model. This model helps organizations identify the underlying causes of unsafe behaviors and determine effective intervention strategies.



The three main elements of the ABC model are:

- **Antecedents**—Factors leading to certain behaviors. For example, if a supervisor tells an employee to hurry up and complete a task involving heavy machinery, the employee might skip putting on the required personal protective equipment (PPE). Furthermore, if the employee has performed this task without PPE in the past, they may falsely believe such equipment is unnecessary. In this case, both the supervisor's instructions and the employee's past experience serve as antecedents.
- **Behaviors**—Observable actions an individual takes, such as things they do or say. In the example above, the employee operating heavy machinery without proper PPE would be considered a behavior.
- **Consequences**—What occurs after an individual engages in certain behaviors? These consequences can be divided into two categories: reinforcers and punishers. Reinforcers reward behavior, while punishers call for improvement. Consequences greatly influence whether employees' behavior will be repeated. For example, in the prior example, if the supervisor praises the employee for finishing the task quickly without PPE, it reinforces the unsafe behavior and increases the likelihood of it being repeated. Alternatively, if the supervisor emphasizes the importance of PPE, it deters the unsafe behavior from occurring in the future.



# Safety Focused cont.

## Why Behavior-Based Safety (BBS) Is Valuable

The BBS approach is valuable for several reasons. First, it requires observations across all levels of an organization, making safety a collective responsibility. This promotes collaboration, trust, and teamwork throughout an organization, contributing to a stronger culture.

In addition, the BBS approach encourages employees to always keep safety top of mind by critically thinking about the impact of their behaviors.



This mindset delivers long-term results and fosters continuous improvement. Overall, this approach can help organizations minimize accidents and related injuries.

## Implementing an Effective BBS Program

To implement a successful BBS program, organizations need to ensure the program is well-communicated to all employees, regardless of skills, experience or department, and can be integrated into existing workplace safety initiatives and compliance efforts. Clear communication will help prevent confusion among employees regarding safety expectations and maximize program engagement.



Key components of a BBS program include:

- **Observations**—Establishing sufficient observation protocols is critical to identifying the causes of unsafe behaviors on-site and finding ways to remedy them. Scheduling dedicated observation periods in advance helps prevent employees from viewing observations negatively or perceiving them as a “trap.” Further, observers, or those in charge of conducting observations, should always be trusted, respected, and well-trained employees.

Above all, behaviors selected for observation must be those that:

- Can be easily seen or heard
- Will be interpreted the same way by others
- Are within employees’ control
- Can be described in a positive light (e.g., focusing on what could have been done instead of what shouldn’t be done)

Overall, it is evident that the BBS approach can provide a wide range of benefits to organizations, helping them make safety a top priority and limit workplace accidents and injuries. By implementing effective BBS programs and avoiding common program mistakes, organizations can achieve long-term results and establish a lasting safety culture.

### July's Answers

1. FIRE WORKS!
2. A Hole
3. A Saw
4. Foot steps
5. Tea-Shirts