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September 4, 2020

Dear Fellow Contractors,

It takes vulnerability for a company to measure its safety climate. The measure is a “gut-check” from the field and try as they might, is not affected by any executive’s promotional spiel. Essentially, a front-line worker understands very quickly if a construction employer is providing a safe jobsite or not. They know if production is overriding safety, they know if they are being provided the right PPE, they know if their foreman cares about their well-being, they know if they are learning stuff at a training and they know if their concerns are being heard and addressed. They figure all this out, in terms of measurable safety climate, is one short week. The process of measuring safety climate extracts all those factors, and much more, to help highlight the areas where a safety program is robust and areas where shoring up is needed. Are the programs, mindset and philosophy really applied in the field in the way that a company hopes? The safety climate lab provides a snapshot in time from the worker’s perspective.

I can’t think of a better way to provide meaningful feedback to a safety program in the works. The survey is anonymous and the report from OHSU Safety Climate Lab is comprehensive. We made a huge effort to ask all our personnel to participate in the Safety climate survey; we even develop a QR code so that our field personnel could take the survey on tablets or their smart phones. Our team leaders and operational folks attended a virtual workshop of results (during COVID) the results of which surprised us. Our entire remote safety team attended another workshop where results and ideas for improvement were discussed with the OHSU Safety Climate Lab. Finally, our safety committee (and ~150 company guests) attended a summary presentation where both the positive highlights and the areas for improvement were covered.

Being able to suggest solutions or understand factors through discussions with the Safety Climate Lab team was extremely valuable. It was refreshing to hear from the objective observers at OHSU just how healthy our safety climate was, and it was inspiring to hear the actions and plans that the study generated at Fortis Construction.

Now, we’re interested in participating in the COVID Safety Climate studies to understand how COVID precautions have affected our connection to each other and the mindset on the job.

I’d recommend that any company, no matter what size and no matter what level of safety maturity, measure their safety climate with the OHSU team. They are the experts and they draw from a wealth of data that most of us don’t have access to. It will help your company. Be brave ...listen to the findings and take action.

Sincerely,

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