

# Total Worker Health® Case Study



**WHO:** The City of Portland Water Bureau and Portland Bureau of Transportation

**WHAT:** Municipal city workers who are primarily in the field have stressful, demanding, and safety-sensitive jobs. They also experience work-life stress, as do so many workers. There was concern by the Director of Safety that such work-life stress could interfere with both safety and well-being at work.

**WHEN:** Oregon Healthy Workforce Center partnered with the City of Portland from 2011 to 2013 in the Safety and Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Study.

**PROBLEM:** We began with a needs assessment evaluating the level of work-life stress, perceived health, and supervisor skills to support employees. It became clear that there was a need to improve team leaders' skills and team engagement. This included training supervisors and team leads on skills to be better leaders that included safety communication skills, ways to support work-life balance, and skills in how to improve the effectiveness of their teams. This was a Total Worker Health® (TWH) approach because it focused on training supervisors on healthy leadership skills, recognizing how to reduce work-life stress by providing support, and in turn how this impacted safety, health, and well-being of workers.

**TWH SOLUTION:** Implemented a TWH needs assessment survey to assess worker levels of work-life stress, safety concerns, and supervisor leadership skills. This showed a relationship between work-life stress and safety outcomes which led to the development of the Safety and Health Improvement Program (SHIP) that consisted of both supervisor training and team effectiveness process improvement. The SHIP TWH toolkit to support employee's work-life balance, reduce stress, and improve safety is now available through the Oregon Healthy Workforce Center.

## Program Components

### Goal

To promote employee health, safety, work-life balance, and team effectiveness. Each component of Safety Health and Improvement Program (SHIP) was based on previous research which demonstrated its effectiveness for reducing stress, and improving safety, well-being, health, and work-life balance.

### Leadership Support and Commitment

- Top Administrator and Safety Director from both Bureaus embraced the initiative to partner with the OHWC to develop the Safety and Health Improvement Program (SHIP) toolkit that includes an organizational approach to improve safety, health and well-being through supervisor online training and behavior tracking, as well as team effectiveness discussions and follow-up with work teams.
- Engaged work-life consultants for assistance in developing the Team Effectiveness Process (TEP) portion.
- Conducted focus groups and needs assessment survey to understand existing levels of work-life stress and safety which led to the development of supervisor training focused on role modeling and building skills in communication, supportive supervisor and team effectiveness to improve support for employee work-life balance, safety practices and well-being.

### 1-hour Computer-Based Training

- This training has four training objectives.
- Showing you how leadership can improve the organizational climate for work-life balance and safety.
- Providing insight on how to be supportive of employee work-life balance.
- Highlighting how to provide supervisor support for workplace safety.
- Detailing the importance of team effectiveness and goal setting.

### Evaluation - SHIP has led to outcomes such as:

- Lower blood pressure in employees
- Improved health and safety practices for employees
- Reduced stress and work-life conflict for employees
- Increased team effectiveness, especially among low functioning teams
- Lower psychological distress and less concerns about forest safety for employees
- Lower organizational commitment and higher work-to-family conflict for supervisors