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## “3 seconds to point me to the nearest emergency exit!”

**Workers’ perception of risk performs a core role at the work environment on safety and health matters, affecting both individual and collective behaviors. This sensitivity can determine the way workers handle daily activities and respond to hazardous situations.**

### Navigating the spectrum of Risk Perception at work

The safety and health culture promoted by the organizations has a significant influence on the perception of risk from the workforce as due to the promotion of Top-Bottom-Top communication and investing – time, money, people – in learning safety and health concepts, tend to have workers more aware of the surrounding risks. On the other hand,



organizations that do the opposite of the above also rest on the opposite outcome regarding risk perception of the workforce.

Therefore, a valuable risk perception management also involves a beforehand stage identification of potential flaws in existing safety and health management systems which requires a proactive approach in assessing risks and implementing control measures.

The significance of training programs not only provide information on safety procedures, but also incorporate vital elements to improve understanding of the surroundings as risk perception is intrinsically allied to the individual experiences of the workforce. Usually, those who have faced dangerous situations or witnessed incidents in the workplace may develop a sharpened awareness of the nearby risks.

Lack of awareness about surrounding risks can result sometimes in ignorance of the need to hold to safe practices at work.

Therefore, ongoing education and effective communication are essential to ensure the expected outcome: risks under control.

Stress, physical and mental fatigue and other emotional factors (a disease in the family, going through a divorce process, ...) can negatively impact workers' ability to assess and act in the presence of risks effectively. Therefore, organizations must consider not only the physical, but also the emotional and psychological aspects when addressing the perception of risk in the workplace.

For this, technology can and should also play a role in managing risk perception. Advanced monitoring systems, virtual reality, and other innovative technologies (AI systems growing fast as these thoughts are written) can be used to simulate work environments, providing workers with practical experiences that contribute to a more acute perception of risks and safety controls.

When workers have an accurate perception of the risks associated with their work activities, they are more likely to adopt safe behaviors and follow safety protocols.

From a good few principles – Principle of Safety Leadership, Principle of Resistance to Safety Change, among others – that are addressed in health and safety, the Principle of Safety Recognition,

*“Safety motivation increases as people are given recognition for their contribution to the safety effort”*

represents an interesting baseline towards worker's behavior change. Positive safety practices should be elevated and appraised, if possible, in public stages and it should be an ongoing process to create a positive habit among the workplaces. Based in Bird and Germain (1996)

*“The need for sincere recognition is among the most basic powerful psychological hungers which most people have. When that is not met in legitimate ways (positive behavior reinforcement), people will stop trying as hard or attempt to get recognition through unacceptable means (horseplay, rule violations, showing off, etc.).” (p. 46)*



In short, risk perception is not a static concept – it's blended with everyday life at the workplace – it evolves in the spectrum of time, experience, and transformations in the working conditions. This requires a dynamic and responsive approach, integrating worker's feedback and adjusting policies and procedures as needed. By recognizing the influence of organizational culture, individual experience, effective communication, worker engagement, emotional well-being and the role of technology, organizations can develop comprehensive strategies to improve risk perception and, consequently, create safer and healthier workplaces.

Fonti:

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