

Talking Points for CRSP Safety Meeting Aug. 7, 2019

Good morning everyone. Thank you for having me here today.

I am excited to spend this morning with you discussing my first priority as WAPA's Administrator and CEO, which is safety, as well as join the celebration of an exceptional employee this afternoon.

Safety comes first at WAPA. Everything else is secondary. The business we are in is one of the top 10 most dangerous professions in the world. The hazards are numerous and often hidden or disguised.

We also work in an important business, but we must never let the urgency interfere with safety. The lights will come back on eventually; you will eventually make it through the traffic; you will complete all your tasks or get to them tomorrow. I prefer everyone arrive home safe every day.

[Feel free to replace below anecdote with something from the river trip.]

In June, I had the privilege to sit on the opening panel at Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers' 14th international Engineering, Safety, Maintenance and Overhead Lines conference.

As the name may tell you, safety was a core principle at this conference.

It hit home when the American Electric Power Vice President of Safety and Health shared a safety moment about three recent fatalities AEP has had in less than two years, all of which were caused by grounding mishaps.



That was stunning. I could not imagine facing those tragedies.

Our safety culture is the primary defense from similar situations occurring here, yet we can and will do more.

We all have to be the safety person at WAPA. We do not have only a safety department. We have a safety organization full of safety people. It is our collective responsibility to keep ourselves, our coworkers and the public safe.

Human Performance and Just Culture

I am incredibly proud of the work we do around safety. Our zero incident culture has kept our incident rates lower than industry standards and national averages.

We are maturing our zero incident culture into Human Performance and Just Culture.

Human Performance and Just Culture differ from zero incident by looking beyond the event to see what other factors could have led to the undesirable outcome.

- Less punitive or shaming.
- More focus on information sharing and changing procedures and processes.
- Recognizes people are fallible and even the best make mistakes.
- Situations that lead to errors are predictable, manageable and preventable.
- Individual behavior is influenced by organizational values and processes.
- Pitfalls and risky situations can be created by weak, unclear or incomplete processes, and we should not punish people for tripping over those faults.



- Achieving high levels of performance is based largely on the encouragement and reinforcement received from leaders, peers and subordinates.
- Understanding the reasons why mistakes occur and applying the lessons learned from past events can prevent future events.

These principles help establish a culture focused on learning and solving issues before they become a problem and learning from past problems to avoid future ones.

Understanding and applying human performance and just culture best practices is the key to WAPA taking the next steps to greater reliability, competency, safety and personal and professional growth.

Stop Work Authority

Another step we have taken is Stop Work Authority. You have likely seen information about Stop Work Authority, perhaps the green stop sign on your screen saver.

Stop Work Authority is critical to our safety culture. It is the real-time defense of people who could be in a hazardous situation.

If any employee witnesses an action or activity they feel is unsafe, they have authority – from me – to stop that work without fear of retaliation, retribution, harassment or embarrassment.

You would think stopping a potential accident would be common sense, a behavior we would all pursue to protect ourselves and coworkers. But that is not always the case. An employee could fear negative consequences like the ones I listed, or not want to be disruptive and inconvenient to the work.



I am here to tell you that it is ok to disrupt work if you believe there is a hazardous situation. People will be inconvenienced; they will get over it when they consider the alternatives.

Let me share a real-world example. Some months ago in Colorado, law enforcement received a tip that a woman obsessed with the Columbine High School shooting was in Colorado. She had purchased a rifle. Law enforcement was unable to locate her.

In response, several school districts and day cares closed for a day. As a rough estimate, 2 million children suddenly had no plans on a weekday, affecting 4 million parents.

Some of those parents worked at WAPA. That was inconvenient. I am ok with it. The possible alternative was far worse.

Closer to WAPA, we can see this when doing bucket work. The person coordinating the work on the ground may sometimes lose communication capability with the person in the bucket.

It is likely both are experts in what needs to be done; it is likely nothing will happen. However, it is not a sure thing, and it is not worth the risk.

Stop work, regroup, fix the issue and begin again. Take the time to fix the issue and ensure we can all take care of one another.

If you are that employee on the receiving end of a stop work order, be gracious. Recognize this person is protecting themselves, you and your coworkers.



When Stop Work Authority is used, that is a near-miss incident. We are doing an outstanding job as an organization in reporting near misses, and I encourage you to continue doing so if Stop Work Authority is exercised.

Near-miss reporting shares information across the organization so other groups can be aware of the potential risk and take actions to mitigate those risks before they arise. It is the epitome of human performance and just culture, preventing risky situations before they occur.

A safety organization is a learning organization, and near-miss reporting is an integral part of being a learning organization.

Near-miss example

As a good illustration of how near misses can reduce recurrences of risk situations, an employee transporting new backhoe discovered upon arrival at the duty station that a lug nut on one of the truck's left rear dual tires had come loose. As a result, five of eight lug nut studs had broken.

What we learned from that near-miss was that not all types of equipment are being entered into Maximo for maintenance before being assigned to new asset owners. This meant some equipment maintenance and inspections were not up to date, meaning potential mechanical issues like this were being missed.

This is a lesson that has far-reaching consequences beyond a single truck. It will change the way we enter equipment in Maximo across WAPA to better track, maintain and inspect our equipment. These changes will not only prevent lug nut damage, but a whole list of preventive equipment malfunctions and damage that is not necessary.



This near-miss is also, by the way, a great example of human performance and just culture. The driver was not at fault and had done everything right. The process was broken. Fixing the process prevents future incidents that could damage equipment or cause injuries.

Conclusion

All these topics I have discussed demonstrate how safety is interwoven in the foundational ways we do business. Safety is not a program or a department; it is a way of life. It is a culture that we embrace at WAPA and incorporate into every facet of our work. Safety is a never-ending journey along the Critical Pathway of Business, Technology and Organizational Excellence.

The Safety Office at WAPA is here to give you the tools, training and advice to live this culture and to live by our core value to do what is right and safe.

It is all of our responsibility to live our safety culture and ensure we make it home safely each day.

