



URS

CASE STUDY

URS Corporation

Achieving dramatic reductions in injuries through critical behavior analysis.

Organization

San Francisco-based URS Corporation operates in some 30 countries, providing fully integrated engineering, construction, and technical services to government entities, private clients, and Fortune 500 companies worldwide in critical industries. URS employs more than 45,000 people globally and is focused on four key market sectors: federal, infrastructure, power, and industrial and commercial.

Situation

In 2008, the URS power group was the prime partner providing construction, engineering, procurement, and startup services for a massive flue gas desulphurization system at Detroit Edison's four-unit power plant in Monroe, Michigan. Over the course of 2008, the URS work force reached 800 direct-hire employees and 300 subcontractors at the site. In July 2008, the site was averaging 1.2 recordable injuries per month.

While below state and national averages for construction sites, the rate was above the company's stated goal and certainly not at zero where they ultimately wanted to be. Site leaders were determined to improve performance. As a first step they appointed on-site craft workers as Craft Safety Representatives and provided basic hazard recognition training and instruction on stopping and coaching at-risk behavior. They began applying this knowledge to address hazards and hazardous behavior.

Scott Reeder, a vice president for the power group, was excited by the energy around safety performance improvement and sought ways to further advance and support the group's efforts. While at a leadership conference, he attended a BST presentation which described safety as a universal and ethical value that must be embraced by leadership. This resonated with Reeder, who then presented the BST model to the site as a means to further elevate performance.

Solution

In September of 2008, the site's BST consultant led a planning meeting with the site's leadership team. Using foundational assessment data to guide them, the team crafted a rollout plan specifically tailored to the site's needs. The solution would incorporate leadership coaching and BST's Behavioral Accident Prevention Process® (BAPP®) technology along with guidance from their dedicated BST consultant.

Site safety staff and other stakeholders would receive training from BST to become field-ready BAPP observers. Guided by BST, these observers extracted behavioral data from incident reports and developed definitions for each behavior (with site-specific examples). This produced a customized observation data capture sheet to record interaction details between observers and the individuals being observed.

BST's consultant provided individualized field coaching to each observer immediately after training. A combination of "shoulder to shoulder" field coaching and data coaching continued with each subsequent consultant visit to the site (approximately two coaching sessions per observer each month). Site leadership found the quality of the data entered into the observation data capture software (Rincon®) as well as the face-to-face observation interactions to be exceptional and were briefed on the implementation's progress on virtually every site visit.

With significant numbers of observations completed by January 2009, an Action Planning Team was established. This was a pivotal point in the process' success as it illustrated the power of the collected data to all involved. Formal "action plans" that stated issues and opportunities in behavioral terms were developed as an outcome, providing clarity on steps to remove the barriers to safe behavior.

All action plans were presented to the leadership team (Barrier Removal Team) for approval and support. This presentation of quantifiable observation data detailing safety issues, paired with proposed solutions by an experienced group of workers, proved to be a powerful exchange. In the course of the BAPP technology implementation, more than 5,700 observations were made at the site representing more than 11,000 individual contacts or feedback sessions.

At a Glance:

- URS Corporation operates in some 30 countries, providing fully integrated engineering, construction, and technical services.
- Implemented BAPP technology at a project for Detroit Edison in Monroe, Michigan covering 800 direct hire and 300 subcontractor employees.
- BAPP observers conducted more than 5,700 observations, representing more than 11,000 individual safety contacts.
- The project went from six recordable injuries in five months before implementation to one in eight months following.

Results

The Monroe site saw near immediate evidence of positive behavioral change. Over time, this change in climate led to a more deeply embedded cultural shift that continued to gain momentum with increases in safe behaviors and observations. Leaders pointed to field observations and coaching as the primary catalysts of their early success. Data helped them proactively address leading indicators and guide the focus for what to observe, while field coaching provided by trained observers fostered the foundational cultural change among the more than 1,000 construction workers on the project.

In the five months prior to implementing the program enhancements, the Monroe site experienced six recordable injuries. Through eight months after implementing the enhancements, the site had experienced only one recordable injury despite logging twice as many work hours during that time period.

When asked what he would do differently if given the opportunity to start anew, the response of Doug Conklin, URS manager of projects, was simple, "I would implement a behavioral observation process sooner." Similarly, the initial skepticism of safety manager, Dave McMichen has since been replaced by a strong advocacy for the efficacy of a behavioral-based observation approach in construction. "We proved as a pilot that a behavioral observation process can be effective on a fast paced heavy construction project," he said.