



## Moving Beyond Behavior: 4 Steps to Building an Exposure Focus in Your Safety System

BAPP® Technology has been a major driver of workplace safety improvement since the 1980s. These improvements are validated by independent academic research from the Cambridge University Judge School of Business. Data analyzed from 2148 sites and 3.6 million observations provided evidence of 45% reduction in OSHA Recordable injuries in year three.

But even with all this success a highly effective implementation comes at a significant resource cost, time investment, and creates resistance. There is now an alternative, that delivers twice the results in half the time with a lower demand on the internal resources required.

Read this white paper to learn about this revolutionary new approach using new principles based on research, brain science and experience in BAPP®. Blending technology advances and improved sampling techniques is at the heart of this new process. The concept is to focus on improved exposure sampling & control rather than solely on safe and at risk behaviors.

## Move Beyond Behavior to Target Exposure

Workplace injuries are the outcome of unchecked exposure. Exposure includes the at-risk behaviors and conditions that pose a potential threat to workers engaged in daily tasks and production activities. It also includes leadership attitudes and decisions, and organizational policies and procedures, that create an operational environment that encourages people to ignore risk in order to get the job done.

In most cases, leaders are not aware they are fostering unsafe working conditions. They look at injury reports and feel encouraged by low numbers. Unfortunately, the absence of injury does not mean the presence of safety. Given time, unchecked exposure will lead to injury—and even catastrophic disaster.

There are several reasons why shifting your focus from behavior to exposure will improve outcomes. For example:

- **Being lucky isn't being safe.** Exposure is always present. People may work at-risk 99 times without a negative outcome, but the 100th time may not prove so fortunate. When employees are accustomed to working despite exposure they are at the whims of chance. Eventually even the luckiest will draw a bad hand.
- **Exposure is predictive.** When we target exposure, we get a picture of the potential for an event to occur. For example, observation data may show that line-of-fire exposure is particularly high in a given area of the workplace. This data alerts leaders and workers to risk ahead of injury and empowers them to take action before someone gets hurt.
- **It gets everyone on the same page.** Even the best BBS processes can drive a wedge between management and the front line. An exposure focus unifies the organization by focusing on exposure rather than the individual person. From executives to hourly workers, from incident analysis to safety briefings, when people are talking about exposure, the entire company is integrated behind a single vision.

## Step 1: Understand What Creates Exposure

An exposure focus gives us upstream information that helps us limit risk and remove barriers to safe work ahead of incidents. But what creates exposure? What are the triggers and organizational factors that put people in harms way? The answers may be surprising. The following sections discuss the ways organizations create exposure to injury.

### Operational and environmental conditions.

Inadequate maintenance of tools, equipment and machinery are a primary cause of exposure. A worn belt on a motor. A dull saw blade. A faulty wiring system. These are certainly well-understood, but what about the design of buildings themselves or the arrangement of equipment on the shop floor? Walkways adjacent to forklift access and electrical equipment in proximity to combustible material can pose considerable risk. Environmental conditions such as weather and the daily transition from day to night can also create an exposure for employees—not just at their place of work but travelling to it too.

### Policies and procedures.

Despite their intention to minimize risk, unclear or poorly written procedures can create a great deal of harm. When designing policies, leaders should ensure that employees are fully enabled to perform directions as stated. Provide the equipment, PPE, and leadership support they need to comply, and define terms precisely and thoroughly. Never trust that people will remember what to do or ascertain the meaning of vague directives. Without clear procedures, employees may become frustrated and take shortcuts that increase exposure.

### Behavior.

How people act naturally impacts exposure. Standing under a suspended load, working on a machine with a missing guard, these obviously increase the chance of injury. But it's vital that leaders understand why employees are doing these things. Are they just forgetful, or is there another reason? Perhaps safety barricades are unavailable. Maybe the maintenance structure is poorly monitored. Controlling exposure means ensuring that people have the tools (and support) they need to work safely.

## Step 2: Build a System that Combats Exposure

As noted above, exposure is created by several factors that coincide at the working interface—the place where people interact with equipment to do their job. An exposure-based safety system is one that understands, influences, and changes the working interface for greater risk control and safer outcomes. There are four phases of such a system: identify critical exposure, gather data, provide feedback, and leverage real-time data for immediate results.

### Identify critical exposure.

Each site within every organization performs specific tasks that are vital to the overall operation. These specific tasks have their own unique exposures that other activities do not. Organizations identify the exposures critical to each job and define precisely “what safe looks like.” Clear definitions, including visual aids and instruction to effected personnel, alert workers to performance risks and equip them with the knowledge to identify exposure and control it when it increases.

### Gather data.

Once critical exposures are identified, organizations can begin measuring the level of exposure in the workplace. There are three avenues of data collection:

- **Person-to-Person:** In this type of sampling, trained employees identify physical and environmental hazards, including exposures related to how employees interact with risk. Organizations leverage sampling to manage exposures, identify root causes and potential solutions, and address exposures out of the worker’s control.
- **Serious Injury-Focused Sampling:** Effective data collection reveals exposure “hotspots” (the most likely locations for future incidents) as well as severity potential (those locations susceptible to serious or fatal injury). Targeting exposures with serious-injury potential gives the organization a clear picture of the contributing factors to these high-risk situations and empowers leaders with the knowledge to prevent potentially fatal incidents.
- **Verification Sampling:** VA select group will conduct walk-throughs to identify exposure and controls. Data will be used to compare person to person samples and focused samples to confirm that exposures are being detected and the exposure situations are improving.

### Provide Feedback.

Data is only good if its actionable. Quality data provides leaders with information they can take to employees to effect meaningful change. With the data gathered in the previous steps, employees and leaders discuss successes and find ways to improve performance, learn from one another, and take steps to ensure that hazards are eliminated, and management is aware of its responsibilities in creating a safer working environment.

### Leverage Real-Time Data for Immediate Results.

The use of real-time data is critical to safety because it provides near-instantaneous information to leaders about newly identified hazards, changes in exposure, and site locations (or specific tasks) that are in a high state of risk. Getting actionable data in real time allows leaders to develop risk mitigation strategies for same-day execution.

## Step 3: Engage All Organizational Levels

Exposure isn’t solely a frontline issue. An organization’s safety enabling systems, sustaining systems, culture, and leadership all influence the level of exposure workers face every day. It is imperative that leaders involve all levels of the organization in safety and in controlling exposure. Working together to limit exposure, front-line workers and leaders builds an environment characterized by genuine care, collaboration, and shared success. Engaging every level in safety improvement is critical. The following sections provides the practical ways an exposure-based process can engage people at every level.

### Frontline Workers.

An exposure-based process offers real opportunity for workers to contribute to safety. By participating in sampling activities, workers gather data that identifies existing exposure and illuminates a safer path forward. Front-line worker involvement provides the organization with vital information to improve working conditions, develop collaboration and feedback between workers and supervisors, and improve relationships across all organizational levels.

### Supervisors and Team Leaders.

Supervisors are the face of an organization at the front lines and have a strong influence over the day-to-day activities that impact safety outcomes. By focusing on

the most critical exposures, supervisors improve personal leadership skills, help people work safely, and assist in sustaining safety transformation and driving lasting culture change.

### **Senior Leaders and Managers.**

Research proves that top-level engagement and enthusiasm is critical to a successful change effort. Site managers and senior leaders support the organizational shift from a focus on behavior to exposure through hands-on involvement, such as: serving as a member of a governance team, assisting in removing barriers, participating in validation sampling, and coaching site facilitators.

### **Planning, Implementation, and Support.**

Reorienting your organization's focus to exposure reduction requires a flexible, systemic, and comprehensive process, and a team of dedicated employees working in concert at

every stage of development. Committed personnel tasked with facilitating and guiding the process define the strategy and support the implementation through every stage of development, including observer training, data collection and analysis, and technology implementation.

## **Step 4: Eliminating Exposure Together**

There is no such thing as a zero-risk environment. Exposures will always exist. Organizations can, however, control exposures to a level that will ensure the safety and wellbeing of their people every day. At DEKRA, we know this isn't only possible but quickly attainable—even with limited resources. To learn more about our Exposure-Based Safety™ technology and all the other ways we are working to keep employees safe around the world, visit us at [www.dekrainsight.com](http://www.dekrainsight.com).