

Prior to the accident

1. Know your audience.

You need to determine who are your employees, both on and off your campus, and what are they actually doing? There are over 1600 Job Codes and associated Ranges (levels) in the CSU System. Chico State uses 726 of them. What do these people actually do? It's harder to define than you think. Do all the same Codes and Ranges do the same thing? No! Look at MPPs and ISTs. MPPs in HR have different training needs than MPPs in Facilities or EHS. You need to dig in and start documenting who is who, and how are they similar and/or different? Two plumbers doing the same task, but one is a supervising plumber and the other is not. Two different training needs. Where do they work? On campus, off campus, in an office, in lab, on a farm, on a ship, on the top of a mountain at a telecom site.

2. Determine what training is needed.

Every employee needs some Cal/OSHA training. At Chico State, we call training which is assigned to everyone "EHS's Big 4" (5 with COVID). It includes IIPP, Emergency Action Plan, Fire Prevention Plan, and Introduction to Emergency Management. After that, each job code/classification and maybe position needs to be evaluated as to their individual training needs. So far, our training matrix includes 86 groups of employees mostly by job code and/or job code plus the department (DeptID), with 44 trainings potentially assigned by EHS. It is ever growing, never shrinking, and never finished.

3. Evaluate what protections are in place.

Written plans. What written programs are in place? The IIPP is the cornerstone program, but there are at least a dozen others which supplement the IIPP. Who is responsible for which programs and/or portions of the programs in the written plans? **Training.** Who is managing training? The LMS (CSULearn) is great, but it is not the end-all-be-all. Who is tracking training? If it is not in the LMS who is making sure it is complete and it is current? **Inspections.** Are periodic inspections being done? Cal/OSHA requires employers to conduct periodic inspections. Learn who is responsible for correcting issues which are identified. Assuming or assigning corrective actions to the wrong person can be a setback and lose time.

4. Be available.

EHS staff must be flexible and reactive to the needs of the campus. As much as we don't like it sometimes, we have to be reactive. Things come up which may or may not be urgent for EHS, but if someone else perceives them to be urgent and EHS does not respond, then EHS doesn't care. In addition, by making yourself available and approachable, you build more relationships. Since the University is not set up where Safety is the "law", a lot of how EHS gets things done is by leveraging the relationships and trust we develop on campus.

After the Accident

5. Be even, balanced, and neutral during the accident investigation.

Many times, the people involved in an accident or injury report are embarrassed or worried they will be in trouble, or both. EHS in the CSU is not set or positioned to be punitive toward employees who are not following the rules so it is important to put people at ease that they are not in trouble. Often, the embarrassment is harder to get past and get employees to open up about what happened. But, either way, if people are not at ease they often won't share what happened to the level we need them to. EHS needs to be neutral to identify issues and work on corrections. We are not on anyone's side.

6. Keep asking questions.
Often to find out what happened, you need to keep asking why. But continuing to ask why is harder than it seems because it can be perceived as you are trying to find fault or blame if the employee thinks you are not satisfied with their answer. You have to work on the balance of uncovering the cause of the accident, but not “finding someone to blame”. Don’t forget to ask the supervisor or manager questions as well. Often, they can shed light on the cause or influences which lead to the accident. Plus, it includes them in the safety process! They need the reminder or reinforcement. Again, try to be balanced, neutral, looking to see if there is an issue which can be corrected.
7. Be clear with corrective action.
When there is corrective action(s) which are identified be as specific and clear as you can and to what needs correcting. With being specific, you do have to be careful that someone will walk past some issue you failed to identify to fix the one you did, but being too vague can cause someone to have to “fix it again” which can be very frustrating to them because “you didn’t know what you talking about”.

Follow-up

8. Ensure corrections are prioritized and completed.
Don’t assume that things get corrected. If something was allowed, missed, ignored, not recognized in the first place, don’t assume that just because EHS said it needs to be corrected it will be corrected. Follow-up. In addition, often fixes are not simple. They can take time, money, and effort all of which are being competed for by other factors (of course none as important or fun as safety). So, is there something being done in the meantime? Is this being communicated to the impacted employees and/or departments? If not, nothing is being done (and the University doesn’t care about safety).
9. Get EHS staff in front of high-risk groups.
Despite what some people seem to think, EHS cannot be, and is not, everywhere all the times looking at everything. As mentioned, a lot of what EHS can and does get done is based on the relationships which are developed with our campus partners. We often meet with our custodians, trades, and even our grounds keepers to let them know who we are, let us get to know them, and to tell them we need them. We need them to help us identify issues. This also helps them buy in to being a part of the safety team. If they are part of the safety team, they are more inclined to buy into to their own safety, if not that of the larger campus community. I have told these groups many times “I’m not the one responsible for their safety. I’m responsible for their safety program. This is because you can undo anything I do as soon as I’m out of sight.”
10. Support the managers.
Don’t assume managers know their responsibilities related to safety. Many of them have worked in the trades for a long time and know a lot about the technical aspects of the job. But many don’t really know their responsibilities related to safety when in a management position. We have developed a “Welcome Packet” for our Facilities Managers. The Welcome Packet only highlights the basics as outlined in our written programs, and it is six pages long! There is a lot for them to do in addition to their daily operational activities. Also, give them your phone number and get their numbers. Contacting them with issues immediately can keep issues small – and that goes both ways.