

PF Olsen sets standard for leadership in safety

PF OLSEN IS TAKING THE LEAD in walking the safety talk and is challenging its management team to tackle their own safety culture projects.

Since February this year, the company's health and safety manager Nic Steens has been running Leadership in Management seminars for PF Olsen's management team and principal contractors. The workshops build on last year's Safety Culture in Forestry pilot project, aimed at strengthening the workplace safety and productivity culture in forestry. That project was spearheaded by the Department of Labour, with support by the NZ Forest Owners Association, ACC, PF Olsen (represented by Mr Steens) and other leading forestry companies.

The main thrust of the project was that the safe way to do something is always the right way to do something – that the safe way is 'the way we do things around here'. The project identified 12 elements, or dimensions, where good practices are essential for a safe workplace: Work pressure, relationships, investigating and reporting, worker involvement, continuous learning, risk-taking, resources, rewards, training and competency, communication, safety systems and procedures and management's leadership commitment for safety. These have been grouped as the 'Safety Culture Tree' (see illustration).

It's that last element – leadership – that forms the roots of the tree, and so was what Mr Steens wanted to focus on. "Leaders are responsible for how their workers act and what practices they follow. We know that as an industry we needed to improve our leadership in management; that while our managers might have high expectations of workers' safe practices, they must also practice what they preach. Safety's something that must come from the top."

The PF Olsen Leadership in Management initiative will see Mr Steens holding workshops in all its branches from the Far North through to Southland. The workshop is entitled 'Leadership in Management



– Rate-Me Safety', and has already been delivered to over 135 managers and contractor principals, including some other forest owners who came along to see if the initiative has an application in their business.

"The Rate-Me Safety workshops were essentially an abridged version of the Safety Culture in Forestry seminars. The course begins by running through the 12 dimensions with examples of how each are manifested in our actual workplace culture. We also talk about how they can affect a company's performance, positively and negatively," says Mr Steens.

Each manager or contractor is then encouraged to think – honestly – about their own strengths and weaknesses in each area.

"I challenged them to pick one of the dimensions where they felt they could improve. They're given some ideas of what interventions might be, and a simple but effective action planning tool. The idea is that they use the month after the workshop to create an action plan and clarify their

goal. Then, after three months they will prepare a progress report. Then, after six months, they will have their project peer reviewed, and – we hope – decide to choose another dimension and start all over again.

"I developed a rating system to review each initiative's effectiveness. The 'Rate-Me Safety' scorecard gives the managers' peer group the opportunity to rate the project. It also helps us see what interventions work and what could be transferred to other parts of the business and the wider industry." The Rate-me Safety scorecard asks five questions that attract a score depending upon the answer 'No', '50/50', or 'Yes'.

Just as rewarding good behaviour is one of the 12 dimensions for a good work culture, Nic Steens also wanted to reward participation in the Leadership in Management initiative, so each manager or contractor who comes up with an initiative competes for a prize put up by ACC.

While not everyone who went to the workshops has, as yet, accepted Mr Steen's challenge, and some are clearly in the "ideas stage", he says he's pleased with the number that did – a number that included his own CEO, Peter Clark.

"As we know leadership in management is essential for a good safety culture, so, as CEO, the best thing I can do is demonstrate my commitment to safety," Mr Clark says. "So I am getting out to the worksites to talk to my crews about working safely. I also talk to them about the environment they work in, about the economic environment PF Olsen operates in, and about how important it is that each and every one of them looks after their mates. At the moment I'm visiting two or three crews a month, but I hope to start visiting more."

ACC's Forestry Injury Prevention Manager Don Ramsay says PF Olsen's continuing investment in building a safety culture among their workers is just what the initial project aimed to achieve. "Not only is PF Olsen doing a great thing in creating safer workplaces and a safer work culture

for their employees, but we hope other forestry companies can learn from them too. When the PF Olsen initiatives have been completed and rated, we hope we can use them as case studies for the wider industry to pick up on."

Three examples of other PF Olsen initiatives

1. GISBORNE: THE 'HOT LIST' AND 'SAFE DAY' BOARDS (AT FINAL RATE-ME SAFETY STAGE)

Safety Culture Dimension: Communication, relationships and worker involvement

To improve communication between management, contractors and their workers, and between crew members, a staff member at PF Olsen's Gisborne branch has come up with the 'hot list'. Because forestry workers don't usually carry pen and paper, it can be easy for important information or requirements to be forgotten, but the 'hot list' records management's requirements and presents them on a laminated A5 card. The supervisor explains the requirements and then leaves the card with the crew. In addition, the branch is focusing on improving the frequency of tool box meetings, which

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sometimes don't happen because crew "don't know what to talk about", meaning a planning and communication opportunity is lost. The Safe Day Board will provide a prompt for crews to address safety and productivity questions at their meeting. The Safe Day Board is similar to a whiteboard and can be folded in half for easy stowage.

2. ROTORUA: HEALTH XPRESS CHALLENGE (AT FINAL RATE-ME SAFETY STAGE)


Safety Culture Dimension: Training and competency

To help staff better understand the importance of health and fitness, and that poor physical fitness increases the risk of injury and illness and decreases productivity, most staff at the PF Olsen Rotorua branch

created a 12-week points-based health and fitness challenge, Health Xpress. Before the programme, the physical health of each member was assessed, then, during the 12 weeks, points were awarded for exercise, healthy eating and drinking water. Events were also held, including a 'PF O-lympics'. The challenge rounded off with a prize-giving and the option of staff having their fitness reassessed.

3. ROTORUA: ATV MAINTENANCE (IN INITIAL STAGES)

Safety Culture Dimension: Training and Competency and Continuous Learning

In Rotorua, no-one was taking responsibility for ensuring the shared ATV was properly maintained, despite the rule that each worker is to check over the ATV before use. To fix this issue, it has been decided that an ATV champion is to be appointed. This person will develop a check sheet that each person must fill out before using the vehicle, then they will buy load/unload ramps and develop a procedure for using them. They will also design and run a refresher course, showing each ATV user how to use the check sheets and the ramps. 



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