

## **Workshop: Safety II – Learning from what goes right**

### **Facilitated by: Daniel Hummerdal, Safety Innovation Leader, Thiess**

#### **What is Safety II?**

Safety II is based on the idea that performance, both good and bad, is systematically connected to the operational and organisational environment people work in. From this perspective it is not enough to look separately at compliance or standards, or to simply try and stay away from failures. Instead, the focus should be on identifying the aspects that help and hinder performance.

Traditionally, safety improvements have been based on conforming to standards and best practices, while inquiries into work conditions have been about compliance, looking for deviations and 'who did what wrong'. Consequently, many organisations and professionals have gained knowledge about the safety requirements for layouts, procedures, behaviours, training, etc. However, this assessment and enforcement of what *should* happen and what *should* be may make it difficult to understand and address the underlying need that contributes to a 'deviation' in the first place.

Understanding performance has a different focus from the traditional approach to safety and a different set of questions to explore. The primary goal of Safety II is to elicit information that can help with understanding when control of a task is challenged/made difficult, and what can be done to increase capacity to maintain control.

Attendees at the 2015 Construction Safety Showcase were asked to consider:

- what tools, resources and strategies do people rely on to succeed?
- what conditions and constraints make this difficult?

This required participants to think about what people actually experience at work rather than what they should experience. The focus was on balancing changes in workplace demands, resources and people's behaviours. This helped identify where there were systematic weaknesses and where to invest time, resources and manpower to help people be more productive, processes more effective, the workplace more enjoyable, and projects more profitable.

#### **How to use the questions**

The questions below should be used as a natural part of a conversation with staff and not to set the agenda. It is recommended to pick two or three questions from each area (strategies, tools and resources, conditions and constraints) and ask any other questions you need in order to understand what work is like for each person (rather than asking all of the questions at once).

Many of the questions overlap and may lead from tools to strategies to constraints. When this happens it is a good idea to pursue what the person has chosen to discuss, and come back to the thing that interests you at a later stage. The questions generally work better

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when a particular task is discussed. Starting with a generic question may generate some information but the responses tend to be abstract.

### When to use the questions

These questions can be used anytime to initiate a discussion about safety in your workplace, for example during safety walks, safety observations or conversations, incident investigations or a interactive group exercise during a toolbox talk.

### Tools and resources

- What are people most dependent on to do their job successfully?
- What tools would make your job easier?
- Do you have the confidence to say you do not have the tools and resources to do this task?
- What other tools might be helpful? What have you seen/done on other sites?
- How can I help you find a better tool or resource?
- Has anyone explained what tools and resources are available? Do you have enough? Are they of the right kind? How accessible are the tools?
- Do you ever have to customise your tools to fit the job?
- What do you do if you can't get the tool you need?
- Do you feel comfortable using this tool?
- Is this tool sometimes difficult to use?
- What tools or resources do you enjoy using?

### Strategies

- Can you explain the method of this task and how you learned it?
- What can you tell someone who is about to do this task for the first time?
- How does this way of doing things impact on others?
- What would happen if everybody did it this way?
- How would others do this if nobody was watching?
- How would you do this if no procedure existed?
- If you could design your own method, what would it look like?
- If you were new to this job, how could you be taught about this method?
- What would make it easier for you to understand this method?
- How would you describe the gap between the training you received on this task, and performing the task? How did you overcome this gap?
- What solutions have you come up with that have worked well?
- Have you shared your solutions with your colleagues and supervisor?
- What does a good worker do? What does good look like?
- What mistakes would a junior employee be likely to make?
- What mistakes are an experienced employee more likely to make?
- What is important when doing this task? What other goals are simultaneously important to consider? When was the last time you did this and it went well?
- What changes have occurred here that were helpful?

### Conditions and constraints

- Have you been set up for success?
- Is there anything in your environment we can change that would help?
- If you had \$50 000 (for example), how would you invest them to make this a better place to work?
- What are the worst possible conditions to perform this task? When has that happened?
- What frustrates you about this work area?
- What was something you enjoyed about coming to work this week?

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- What makes your job easy? What makes your job hard? Tell me about a situation when your work was difficult.
- What makes different environments unique? What works well/does not?
- Where are the bottlenecks?
- Where is the next incident going to happen?
- What disrupts people and processes?
- What do people have to 'tolerate' around here? What have they done to make this easier?
- When and where do you have to be extra vigilant?
- How has the work environment changed here, and how has it impacted your work?

### **What about answers**

If people do not have access to good enough solutions to meet demands, they normally come up with their own solutions. People develop their own solutions because they want to be successful, and they want the project to be successful, and they normally use solutions that they find to be good/safe enough given what is available to them. If a solution that you find needs more development, make sure you stay appreciative, suggest that you work together to make the solution even better.