

# **A New Look at Safety Management**

Behavioural safety program of  
Weyerhaeuser NZ. Inc

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## **Abstract**

This paper outlines the process Weyerhaeuser New Zealand. Inc (WNZI) has used in introducing a US based Behavioural Based Safety Training (BBST) programme to its operation. The programme consists of a series of workshops involving all WNZI employees and participating supplier businesses. The idea behind the BBST programme is by raising awareness and obtaining input throughout all levels of an organisation improved workplace safety results. A major focus is the development of a common vision, as part of the process. Findings to date have been a noticeable change in culture throughout the organisation and a lowering of the barriers that previously existed between forest owner, supplier and their employee's.

## **Introduction**

Weyerhaeuser New Zealand. Inc is responsible for the management of The Nelson Forest Joint Venture, a 78,000ha

forest situated in Nelson/Marlborough. The estate is 49% owned by institutional investor's advised by UBS Brinson and 51% by Weyerhaeuser Company. The company employs 32 salaried staff who carry out the management and administration of the forest business. Forest operations including silviculture, forest mensuration, harvesting and transport are all contract operations made up of 19 suppliers, employing approximately 260 people.

## **Background**

Since the early 1990's the focus on safety within the Nelson JV forests has been on skills training, compliance inspection, auditing and incident investigation. Over that time, the Lost Time Injury Frequency rate has fallen from a high of 180 incidents per million hours worked in 1990 to a current level that bounces around between 20 and 30. When graphed this trend has had a distinct levelling off over the last three years that we have not been able to break through.

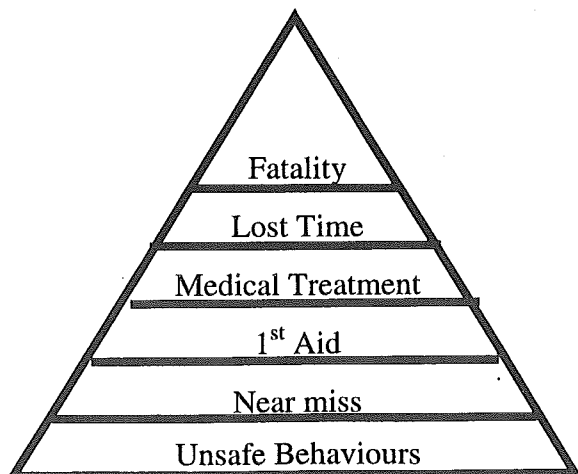
In 1998 as part of a benchmarking and best practice exercise with Weyerhaeuser US operations, we asked the Safety Manager for the US West Coast Timberlands operations to visit NZ. His brief was to give us advice on how we might improve our safety performance. His subsequent feedback on our process's and culture contained a recommendation to consider a Behavioural Based Safety Program that was being introduced into some of the timberland and solid wood processing sites

within Weyerhaeuser US. The name of the program is Optimising Employee Safeguards (OES). The organisation that has developed the OES programme and who is contracted to Weyerhaeuser for several years to deliver and train people in it is the TOPF organisation based in Pennsylvania USA.

I was subsequently sent to the US to learn and be trained in facilitating and delivering the programme. On my return, the programme was offered to WNZI's suppliers on a voluntary basis. Of the 19 suppliers WNZI deals with, 17 took up the offer.

### What is Behavioural Based Safety Training?

Behavioural Based Safety Training (BBST) has been around for approximately 15 years. Dupont are the recognised creators of the concept. The best way to explain it is to use the Safety Triangle of incident relationships that most people have seen or heard of:



The relationship within this triangle indicates that if a tier is eliminated, then the subsequent levels above are also eliminated. The objective of most BBST programs is to focus on the reduction of unsafe behaviours. The theory being that less unsafe behaviour will result in a correspondingly lower number of events above that level.

### What is OES

The OES process developed by the TOPF organisation is made up of a series of structured phases.

#### Phase 1

Is where on site assessments are initiated by way of a structured interview process to determine the level of safety awareness and safety culture in the organisation. People throughout the organisation are interviewed by an outside third party. All interviews are conducted on a confidential basis with a summary only of findings being passed onto management and employees.

#### Phase 2

Is the training of staff, suppliers and their employees. Two different training workshops are held. The first, **Safety A Function of Responsibility (SAFOR)** is a three-hour workshop for all people in the organisation from the coal face to the CEO. It's purpose is to signal to every one that something is happening, and to raise peoples awareness and highlight their

responsibilities to themselves and their fellow workers. Some common language based around tools to help people raise their awareness are introduced at this point. People are also asked to signal work rules, policies or procedures they feel require change. These work rules, policies and procedures are subsequently reviewed by a team of employees from the company and suppliers. A consensus on the best form of the rule or policy to deliver improved compliance and a better safety outcome is developed and implemented across the organisation. Critical to the success of the program is giving away the authoritarian approach to safety "rules" and the development of a culture where everyone is working to the same safety vision. This has to be a transparent open process, which some managers may find uncomfortable.

The key to the success of the first part of the visible delivery is to make it entertaining and engaging for those attending. This is where the specialised training on the delivery of the program by the TOPF trainers is critical.

The second workshop **Leadership for Safety (LFS)** is designed for the leaders within the organisation. These can be people whose position requires leadership traits or they can be people who demonstrate leadership tendencies on the job. These tendencies can be either negative or positive toward the programme. The theory being that people with a negative approach to the programme initially can become the strongest advocates for change if they are given a chance to have their say. The workshop is two full days spent on strengthening

leadership and communication skills, building a common vision and gaining commitment to making a difference on the job. The culmination is a series of improvement projects, owned and lead by the attendees.

### Phase 3

This is the follow up of the SAFOR and LFS workshops with all the attendees of phase two. The objective being to re-energise the process and bring it back in front of people.

### Phase 4

Involves insuring success through acting on leadership actions that have come from phase two and three. At this point, if an empowered safety committee is not in place then one is set up. An observation and review process is developed and implemented at this point. The main objective being trained people observing and reviewing their peers in the workplace.

### Phase 5

Is a reinforcement program where topics from the SAFOR and LFS are discussed and talked about within each crew or business area. This is typically at the monthly safety meeting.

### Phase 6

Is ongoing coaching and consulting for the safety committee, observation and review group and to ensure continual improvement is occurring within the work site. This is achieved through the

continuation of some of the techniques introduced during the LFS and SAFOR workshops.

### **What makes BBST work?**

#### **Employee involvement and leadership**

The philosophy of the OES process is demonstrated most strongly in phase two of the process. In both the SAFOR and LFS workshops, employees are asked to highlight problem areas in rules, policies and actual work practices within their jobs. The same people are then taken through a process where they come up with the solutions to the issues and create a new rule or policy. Mix this “coal face” up process with good leadership direction and vision and the result is the development of a culture that appears throughout all levels of the organisation.

The success of this happening is critical on the level of leadership shown. The cliché “An organisation is only as good as it’s lowest level of leadership” describes well this importance. In other words, if the boss does not believe in the process then there is no way it will work.

#### **Thinking V’s behaviour**

The OES programme is different to many other BBST programmes in that the vehicle to initiate change is focused on people changing their thinking towards situations, which in turn results in a change of behaviour. The first principle behind this is that in order to demonstrate a

behaviour you have had to think about it at some point. The second principle is that if a person modifies their thinking about a situation, then that change is long lasting and can strengthen self-esteem. If on the other hand the behaviour is focused on and required to change then compliance will last as long as the behaviour is policed which can have a negative effect on self-esteem. Ever hugged a traffic cop for pulling you up and giving you a ticket? What happens to your speed when you approach a speed camera that you know is there, then what happens to your speed once successfully past it?

### **Does it work?**

WNZI is now 10 months into implementing the OES programme. At this point we have completed up to Phase 3 and are working through phase 4. To say the programme is having a long term positive effect on our injury rates would be premature. We can however reveal our findings to date. It is a mistake to think that implementing a BBST programme alone will reduce accidents. It is not a silver bullet. A BBST programme is a vehicle that an organisation can use to improve safety. By itself, it will fail without committed leadership and a desire to change away from traditional processes and thinking.

Prevalent throughout forest companies is the theme that the thinking and action’s of suppliers and their employees need to change to improve safety. Having been involved in the delivery of this process, I

have found the biggest resistance to change and letting go of traditional beliefs and behaviours is within the Forest Company, myself included. What we have found is that there are people amongst our supplier's employees who have the solutions to the issues out there. They just need to be listened to – properly.

More tangible differences we have noticed are people being more at ease to putting their hand up when an issue arises. An add on to this is the near miss reporting that has increased dramatically, without any request to do so. This does not mean more unsafe actions than before, it means that people are identifying situations where safety can be improved and doing something about it. In short, there is a noticeable change in culture. The real interesting aspect of this is that safety is the not the sole area that has benefited. Everything we do has.

