

Carl's Safety Opine Number 1: April 13, 2020

Ultimately the Decision to Return to Work is the Employee's

Let me be clear before you stop reading this message... The President may decide to return businesses to normal operations soon. The nation will return to a level of normalcy and then state governors will decide to what level and the process will flow down through local government leadership to the owners of companies. But after the final decision has been made to reopen using specific mitigation practices, employees will judge for themselves if they believe enough has been done for them to return to work. The key to each employee's decision being a quality one is to communicate what has been decided and done and how the decisions were made.

I have been advising organizations since 1992 to help leaders make the correct decisions. In my work I have seen senior leadership make good decisions and communicate down the chain of leadership only to find that the message never got to the worker level. Submitting your plan to an independent consultant may help you to get the best mitigation tactics in place and communicate why these are the best first steps to getting employees back to work. The longer you wait to get back to work the greater the negative impact.

One thing to keep in mind is that before your personnel return to work it is the organization's responsibility to communicate the "New Hazard" in the workplace. Further, it must be communicated what is required of the employee and what might result if they fail to comply. Fear may not be admitted by the employees, but it will be recognizable by anger towards your decisions. Educate your employees on the goals, strategies, and finally the current tactics to be used by the organization. To be successful, the organization must be open to the questions and suggestions of the employees.

Be sure that your decision follows the simple steps that I teach in my Hazard Recognition and Control Workshop:

1. Recognize the Hazard

It is critical to stay focused on the hazard at hand. During this phase it is easy to become scattered and lose focus of the level of threat.

2. Evaluate the Hazard

What is the level of risk? Giving this a value is important so that you can measure the expected results. Keep in mind other hazards can spin-off, additional hazards that can create greater threats to lives.

3. Control the Hazard

As you evaluate the hazard be careful not to jump too quickly to a control before evaluating possible new hazards created by the control tactic chosen to reduce risk. A control may increase the risk by creating unintended consequences and put efforts further back eventually.

I will be scheduling phone calls and Zoom meetings to discuss mitigation processes with clients as organizations make their plans to get back to work. If you would like to discuss this topic one-on-one with me, I'll be glad to offer a complimentary meeting over the phone or Zoom. Reach out to me at carl@safetyinstitute.com.

The goal I always share with my clients is that Nobody Gets Hurt. This can be accomplished by focusing on creating an environment of accountability, responsibility, and trust where it is difficult to get hurt.

Thanks for your attention and be safe,

Carl Potter, CSP
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