

Abstract – Behaviour Based Safety



On its way out?

Explore the origins, and legacy, of the behavior based approach to safety. The first signs of Behavior Based Safety appeared in the late 1970s, but the concepts are far older than that. In the 1970s the gains in fatality reduction were beginning to flatten out. The focus was shifting more towards injury prevention. Companies were looking for new approaches.

Many companies flocked to BBS as a way to drastically improve safety performance (measured by the injury rate). Executives and managers saw it as the solution to poor safety performance. Proponents say that it works. Many agree successful implementation was difficult.

Years later most companies have some sort of observation program that can be linked to the concepts in BBS. In the 1990s some leaders began to question BBS and its benefits. Questions were raised about the effectiveness of the approach. Even psychologists could not agree on the merits of the approach.

Behavior Based Safety remains a controversial topic, but is it here to stay? We once more find ourselves at a point where traditional methods have reached the limit of their effectiveness. Fatalities rates have remained relatively flat since the 1990s. In some industries, they are rising. Injuries have proven a problematic measure.

Explore the intent and assumptions underlying BBS and look at what has been accomplished. Examine why many believe it is not effective. Review the changing perceptions of industry leaders. Finally, peer into the future. Is Behavior Based Safety on its way out?