

# THE FRONT LINE SUPERVISOR



A SAFETY MANAGER'S FRIEND OR FOE

# DO THESE THINGS REALLY JUST HAPPEN?



# FACT OR FICTION

- ☞ Safety First!
- ☞ Safety Is Our Number One Priority!
- ☞ Safety Is The Most Important Thing!
- ☞ Safety Is Our Number One Concern!
- ☞ Nothing Is More Important Than Safety – Not Even Production!
- ☞ We Will Do Nothing If We Cannot Do It Safely!

# WHAT HAPPENS IF THOSE STATEMENTS ARE FACT?

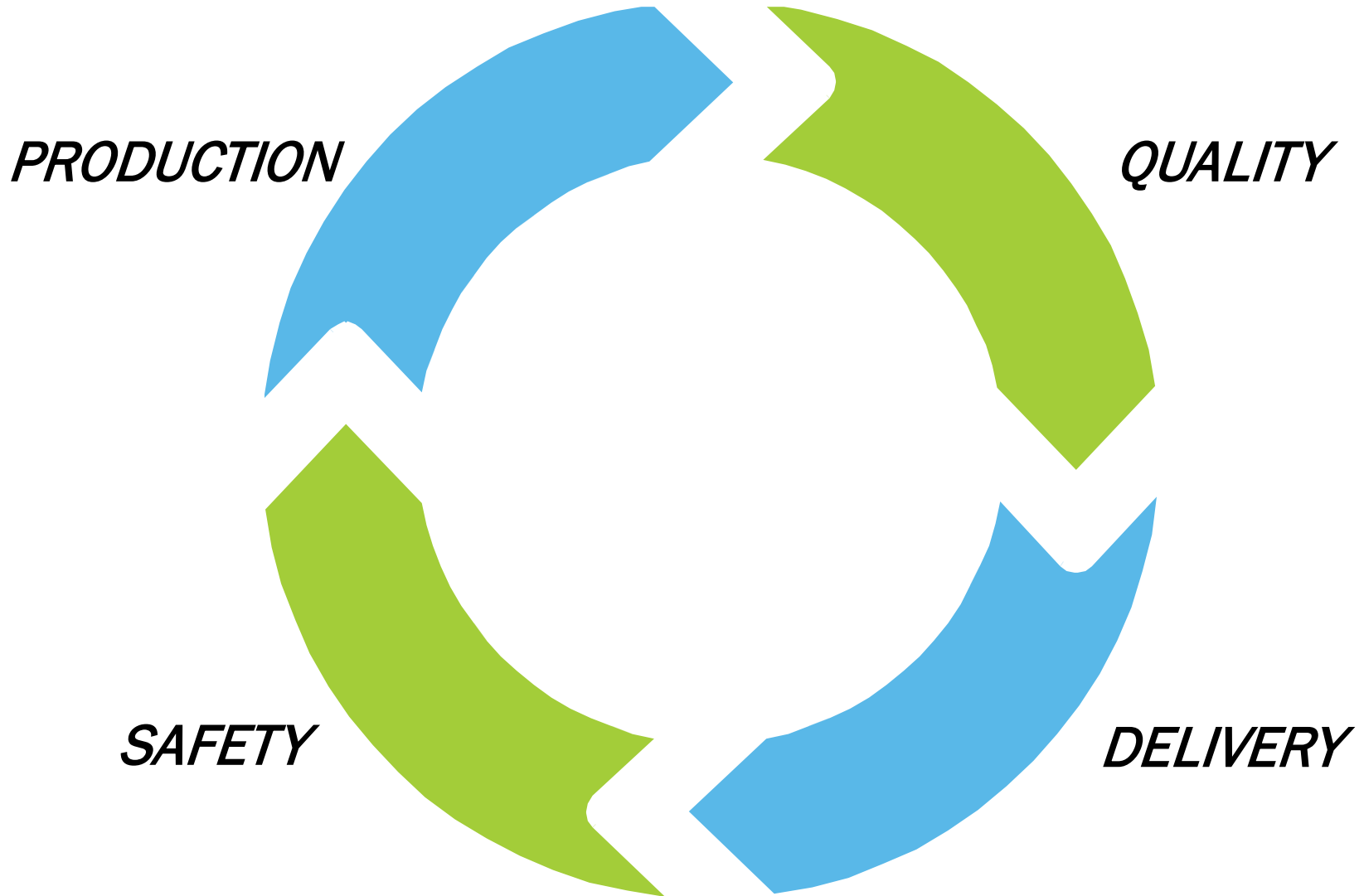
- ✓ When an injury or near miss occurs, ALL work stops until the root cause has been identified & corrective action has been implemented.
- ✓ Equipment is purchased based on its safety features (i.e. guards, ergonomic design, etc.) & not on its ability to produce a quality part within a set cycle time.
- ✓ 100% attendance at safety training classes is mandatory. Production is set up around the training class schedule.
- ✓ There is no constraint on the budget for safety. If it is needed, you buy it no matter how expensive. Essentially, EHS has an open check book.
- ✓ No person (temporaries included) is permitted to operate any machine or process without first being thoroughly trained on the potential hazards of the machine or process and how to protect themselves from injury.
- ✓ Supervisors are evaluated more on the safety metrics (i.e. incident rate) in his or her department than the quality and timeliness of the products coming from the department.

# SILO APPROACH TO BUSINESS

This model requires Safety & Health to **COMPETE** with the other business functions instead of being integrated into the other business functions

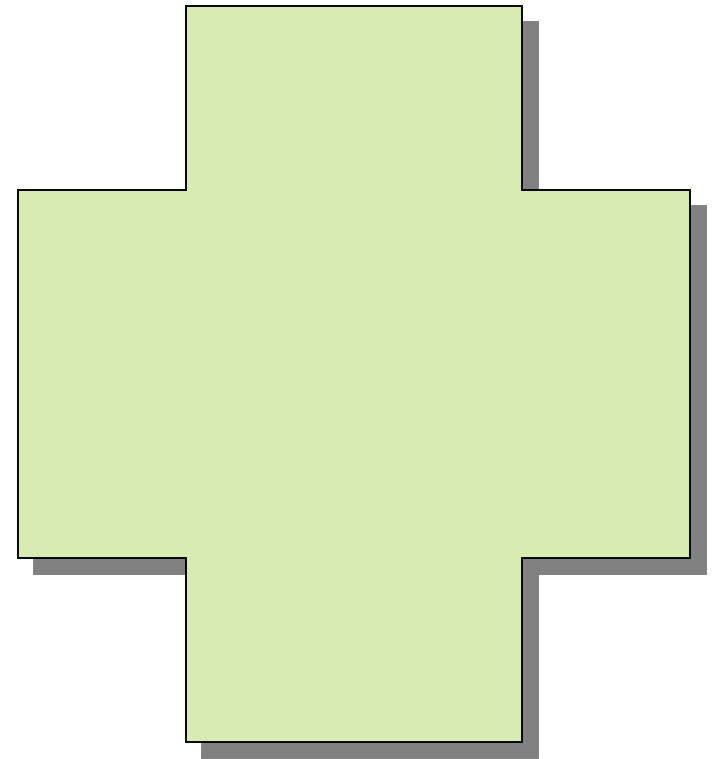


# REALITY = SAFETY MUST BE AS IMPORTANT



# SAFETY MUST BE AS IMPORTANT

- ∞ Safety must be integrated into each process at the supervisory level
- ∞ If supervisors perceive that safety is competing with the other business functions (i.e. quality) then it is easy to push aside
- ∞ To be fully integrated, supervisors must see that safety supports the other business functions
- ∞ Ideal Supervisor Perception
  - Safety in the process is necessary to accomplish and achieve the purpose of my department



# DOES EHS REALLY NEED SUPERVISORS?

- Strong impact on employee perceptions
- Developers of employee skill sets on the job
- Maximize your time
- Allow safety to be more places at one time
- Supervisor-employee level is where things get done & fixed or fail to get done or fixed





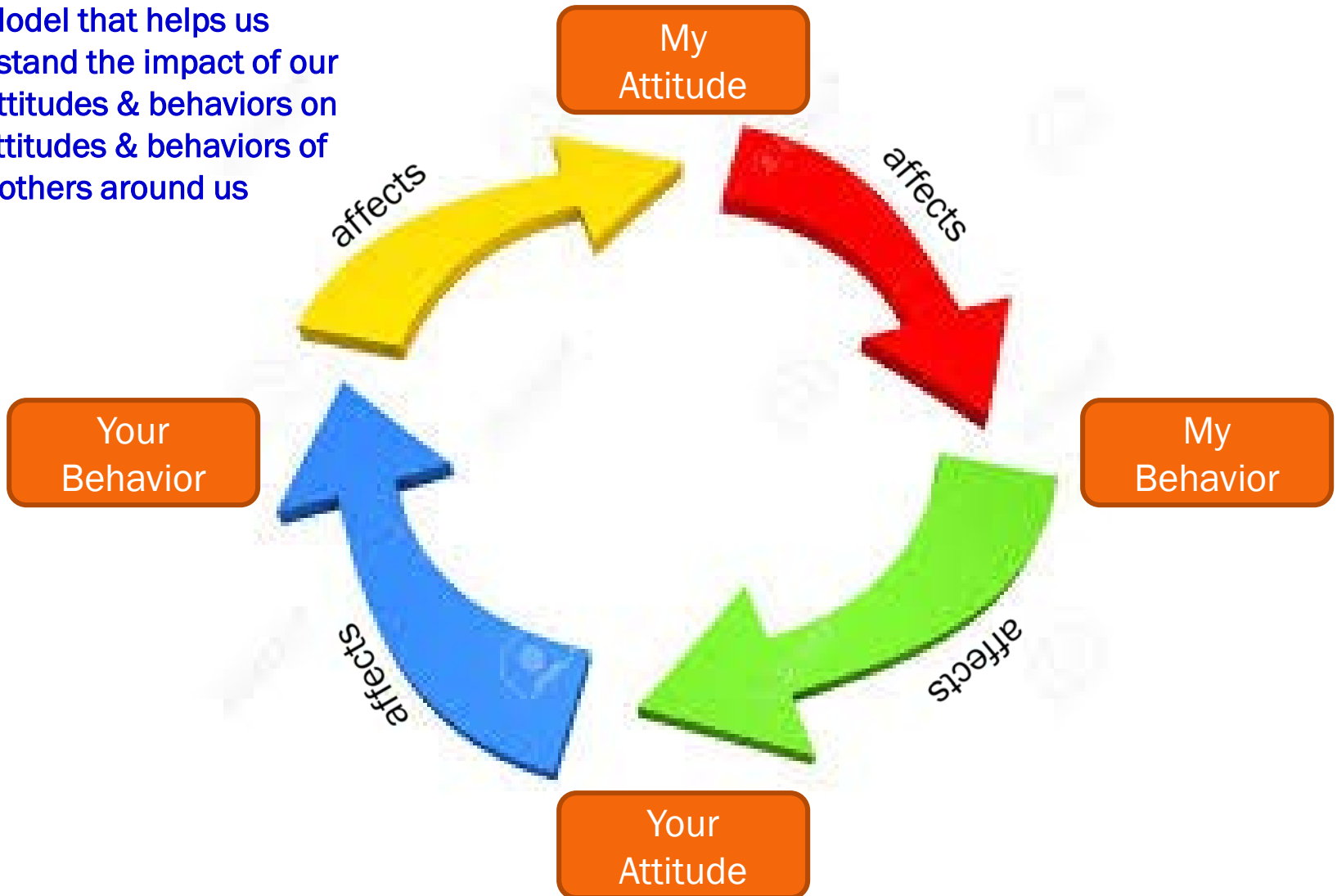
# EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS

- ⌘ Employee job priorities are set by supervisors
- ⌘ Employee perceptions of safety can be affected by supervisor's attitude & behavior toward safety
  - Is safety portrayed as getting in the way of achieving the priority?
- ⌘ CULTURE - Supervisors can instill safety as a priority or as a nuisance or hindrance to accomplishing their tasks
- ⌘ Imperative for supervisors to show safety as an integral part of achieving the priority (production)



# BETARI BOX MODEL

Model that helps us understand the impact of our own attitudes & behaviors on the attitudes & behaviors of others around us



# DEVELOPERS OF EMPLOYEE JOB SKILLS

- ∞ Job skills vs. SAFE job skills
  - Safe job skills must be taught, developed, & enforced
- ∞ Supervisors are critical to ensuring safety becomes an integral part of the job
- ∞ Supervisors have a significant impact on what safety skills & techniques are taught & developed
  - Lifting technique
  - LOTO



# MAXIMIZE YOUR TIME

- ∞ Supervisors actively engaged in safety will save EHS time
  - Enforcing rules
  - Accident investigations
  - Training
  
- ∞ Spend saved time on proactive initiatives designed to further safety & help supervisors
  - New equipment reviews
  
- ∞ Never give the impression you are pawning your work off on them
  - Accident investigations = they know their process better than you



**IRONY = POLICING SAFETY IS JUST STEALING YOUR TIME**

# SAFETY MORE PLACES AT ONE TIME

- ☞ Reality is EHS cannot be everywhere so we need help
- ☞ Implementation of safety is more likely if there are more eyes watching & ears listening
  - Eyes & ears of safety
- ☞ Helps eliminate covert operations
  - Activities re-scheduled when EHS is not there
- ☞ Resources
  - Remember – Nothing is free
  - Relationships are two-way streets



# SUPERVISOR — EMPLOYEE LEVEL

- ∞ Where the rubber meets the road
- ∞ Safe processes & procedures are implemented or fail to be implemented at this level
- ∞ Unsafe conditions or actions develop & are corrected or allowed to continue at this level
- ∞ Tone set for your safety culture



# DO SUPERVISORS REALLY NEED SAFETY?

∞ Drivers of supervisory actions typically include:

- Production, quality, & delivery
- Cost
- Human element – right thing to do

∞ Safety can provide an avenue for:

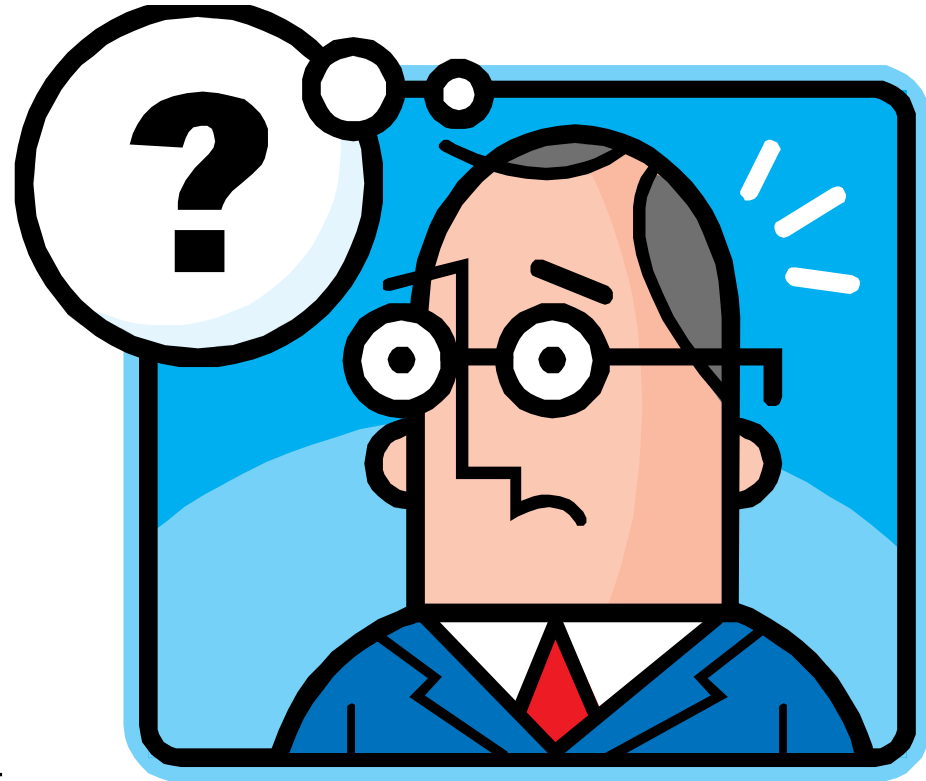
- Improved & more consistent production & quality
  - Decrease in turnover
- Reduction in operating costs
  - WC costs
  - OT costs
- Instilling employee commitment
  - Two way street



**EHS professionals many times do not do a good job “selling” safety & its benefits to supervisors**

# WHY DO SUPERVISOR'S FAIL TO MANAGE SAFETY?

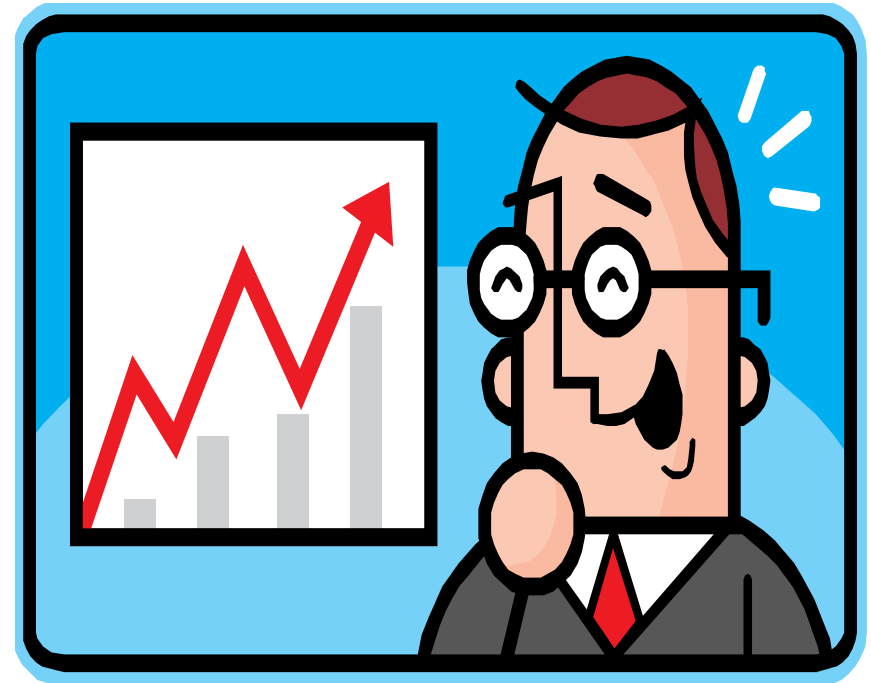
- ⌘ Not a metric
- ⌘ Don't understand the concept(s)
- ⌘ Production, production, production – Not a priority
- ⌘ “I'm too busy” syndrome
- ⌘ Believe it is someone else's responsibility – don't recognize it as their responsibility





# METRICS

- ☞ What gets measured gets done
  - Supervisor accountability for safety process being implemented in their department(s)
  
- ☞ Develop departmental safety metrics that can be used to provide a “scorecard” for supervisors
  - Supervisors’ annual performance appraisal should include safety performance
  
- ☞ Charge injury & illness costs back to the supervisor’s department to get attention & accountability



## Example Metrics may include:

- Training timeliness
- Safety audit results
- Timeliness of corrective action
- Number of at-risk behaviors
- Employee safety contacts

# UNDERSTANDING

In a laboratory, Eric and Carter apply a

$$F_{\text{grav}} = 4.5 \text{ m} \cdot 9.8 \text{ m/s}^2 = 44.296 \text{ N}$$

accelerate it across a horizontal surface at

$$F_{\text{net}} = 1.28 \text{ m/s}^2 \cdot 4.5 \text{ kg} = 5.786 \text{ N}$$

Determine the force acting upon the cart.

# DON'T UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT(S)

- ∞ Lack of understanding prevents a supervisor from managing safety in the department
  - LOTO
  - PPE
  
- ∞ Supervisors should be trained in a manner that allows them to be the safety expert for his/her area
  - Well versed on safety risks & control measures
  - Identify & correct hazards before injury
  
- ∞ Focus on departmental specifics not generalities to maximize time & effectiveness
  - Power presses vs. Confined spaces



Would you confront someone on the applicability of LOTO if you did not have a good understanding when it is required?

# PRODUCTION, PRODUCTION, PRODUCTION

- ∞ Narrow focus many times associated with their boss or metrics
  
- ∞ Failure to correlate that healthy employees produce better
  - Temporary vs. experienced operator
  - Light duty vs. full duty
  
- ∞ EHS must sell how good safety benefits their priority (production)
  - **Consistent production, quality, & efficiency**
  - **Increase in morale**
    - Employees feel safe at work
  - **Reduction in costs**
    - OT & WC costs
    - Administrative time



**Production vs. Safe Production**

# “I’M TOO BUSY” SYNDROME

- ∞ Crutch used to avoid dealing with a problem directly or in the correct way
- ∞ Failure to see the big picture
  - Glove warning vs. injury
- ∞ Rarely, if ever, hear this when associated with production, quality, or delivery
  - Indication safety is not as important
- ∞ Poor time management may need to be overcome when you hear this
  - Be creative – Help identify other resources
    - Maintenance
    - Safety committee members



# NOT MY RESPONSIBILITY

- ☞ Worst statement a safety professional can hear is “This is Eric. He is responsible for safety.”
- ☞ Safety professionals need to establish themselves as an internal consultant
  - Resource, educator, & subject matter expert
- ☞ Supervisors must identify themselves as implementers & managers of the safety process in their area
- ☞ **Safety professionals should be responsible for establishing the process & supervisors should be responsible for implementing the process within their department**



# THE BACKYARD THEORY



# THE THOUGHT BEHIND THE THEORY

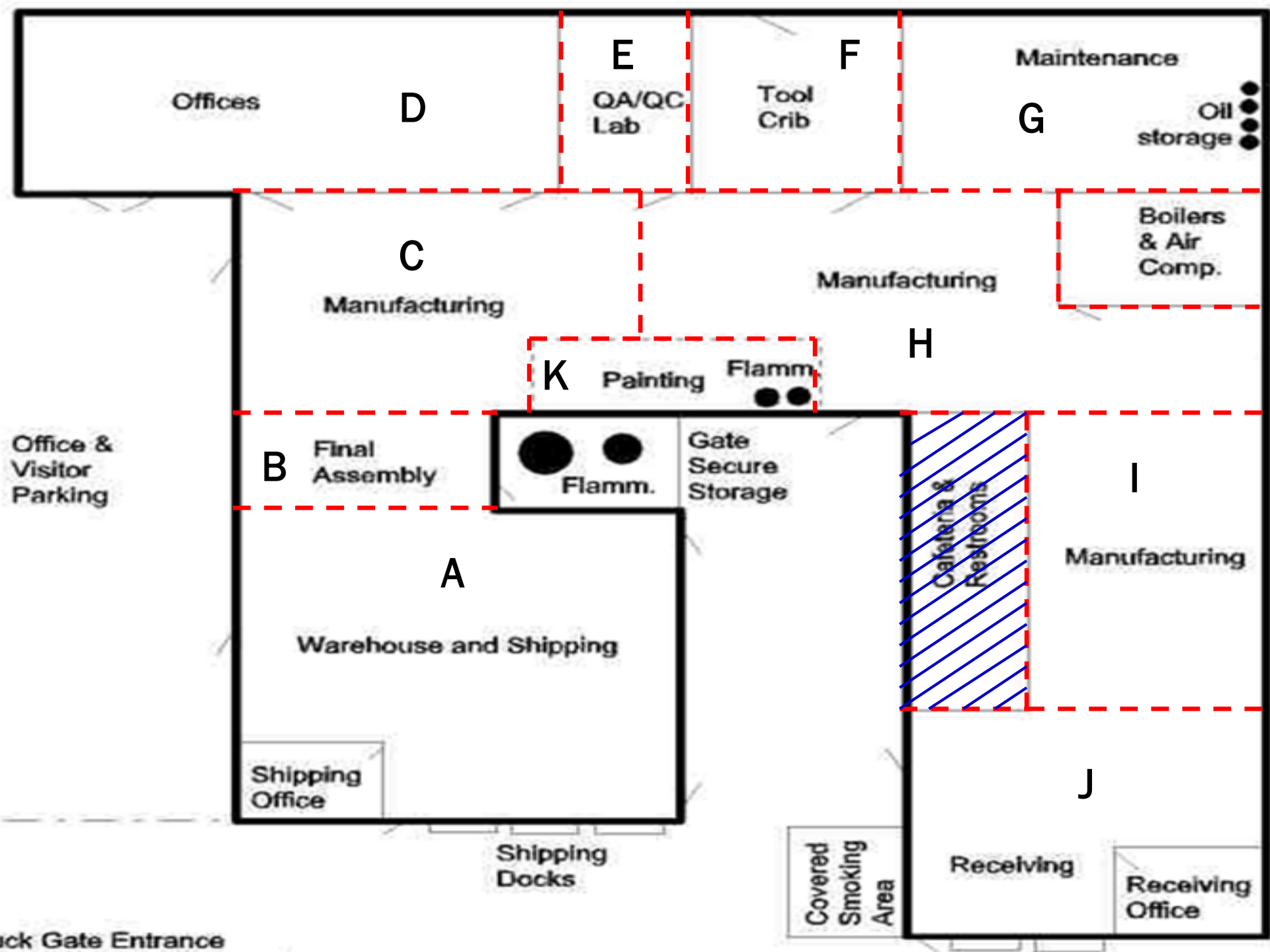
- ∞ If your neighbor is target shooting toward your yard where your child is playing, what do you do?
- ∞ Your teenager hosts a party in the backyard and the neighbor calls the cops to complain about the noise. Who is responsible?
- ∞ Your dog digs out from under the fence in your backyard and kills the neighbor's cat. Who is responsible?





# A SUPERVISOR'S BACKYARD AT WORK

- ∞ Supervisor's department should be his/her back yard
- ∞ Supervisors should be accountable & responsible for what happens or does not happen in their department from a safety standpoint
- ∞ Supervisors should have responsibility & authority for ensuring the safety of all employees, visitors, & contractors in their "yard"
  - Should not matter who the employee reports to once they enter a supervisor's yard
- ∞ EHS must support a supervisor when he or she takes responsibility
- ∞ Implementation & Enforcement
  - Rules are mandatory & must be followed
  - Guidelines are voluntary & may be followed
  - Lack of enforcement turns a mandatory rule into a discretionary guideline



# BUILDING BLOCKS OF SAFETY RELATIONSHIPS

- ∞ Be understanding & make yourself human
  - We have all done something unsafe at some point
  - Don't expect them to know safety like you do – prepare to coach
  
- ∞ Establish a “mutual aid” agreement & communicate
  - Mutual interest & benefit to providing a safe work environment
  - Safety is teamwork – You need each other
  
- ∞ Agree to disagree but you must **Trust** & **Respect** each other
  
- ∞ Supervisors are your customers
  - EHS should provide what is needed to successfully implement the safety process



# CUSTOMER FOCUSED

- ∞ Re-evaluate the purpose of the EHS function:
  - Who is my customer?
  - What do my customers' need?
  - What measurable value are you bringing to the "health" of the department?
  
- ∞ Use data (i.e. behavior observations) to identify & analyze your customers' needs & risks
  - Leading & lagging indicators
  
- ∞ Tailor your safety initiatives to each of your customers' needs so they can meet their objectives
  - Risk focused (i.e. Laceration initiative)
  
- ∞ Not being customer focused can make safety a competitor for some supervisors' time & efforts



# DEVELOPING THE RELATIONSHIP

- ∞ Make time to leave your office & interact with supervisors on their turf
- ∞ Make their concerns a priority
  - Follow-up = credibility
- ∞ Engage rather than dictate
  - Never identify a problem & walk away (“**Problem Dumping**”) – help fix it
  - Ask for their suggestions & include them in the decision making process
- ∞ Trust them with relevant duties
  - Training, enforcement, investigations, etc.
- ∞ Make safety palatable for them
  - What is the best time to schedule training for your department?
- ∞ Provide feedback which helps them improve
  - “I understand a guard is in place but this is why it is insufficient.....”
- ∞ It’s not all about the message – delivery counts
  - “Is this the safest way to do that?”
  - “I’m concerned with the way your employee is performing that task.”

# ENSURING A SUPERVISOR'S SAFETY SUCCESS

- ∞ Provide customer focused tools
  - Trainings
  - Knowledge (i.e. EHS data)
- ∞ Don't allow stagnation
  - Continuously improve safety skills (hazard identification, training, etc.)
- ∞ Time management
  - Maximize quality safety time
  - Help them include employees in the safety process & them save time
- ∞ Communicate clearly with all organization levels
  - Managers know what you are asking of their supervisors
- ∞ Be willing to get involved
  - Upper management pressure
  - Employee complaints



# DIFFICULT SUPERVISORS

## NOT EVERYONE WILL DRINK THE KOOL AID

- ☞ Fact of Life = Not everyone will buy in & support your plan
- ☞ Part of the EHS job is meeting resistance and working through it
- ☞ You are doing a disservice to yourself & employees depending on you to champion safety if you fail to establish a **WORKING** relationship with all supervisors
- ☞ Remember - they don't have to like you but they must **TRUST & RESPECT** you or what you are trying to do if you hope to have a positive working relationship

# DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SUPERVISORS

| TECHNIQUE                                      | CONSIDERATION  |
|--|--|
| Identify their motivation                      | Is he opposed to safety training or is the schedule creating OT issues for him?                          |
| Stop talking & listen                          | Know your opposition - gather information you can use to get the person on your side                     |
| Be a problem solver & be willing to compromise | Once you understand their opposition, offer solutions, be flexible, and work with them to get a solution |
| Document, document, document                   | Create a paper trail. Send confirmation emails - "Per our recent discussion, ...."                       |
| Establish common ground                        | Identify something you can agree on and build from there   |



# DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SUPERVISORS (cont)

| TECHNIQUE  | CONSIDERATION   |
|--|---|
| <p>Separate from the issue, be soft on the person, but firm on the issue</p>   | <p>“I understand you are very busy and I am asking a lot of you to close all sixty audit findings out in two weeks. If we don't get them completed, someone will be injured. Let's sit down with Maintenance and see which ones they can help you with so we can get a completion schedule developed.”</p>          |
| <p>Pick your battles - identify &amp; manage triggers then remain even keeled</p> <p>Continue to provide good support with a smile – don't let them affect your work</p> | <p>Understand what sets them off, prepare for explosions, &amp; don't engage in unproductive arguments</p> <p>They are still your customer – keep providing good service – spite or holding a grudge will not improve the relationship</p> <p>Prioritize – is it really worth it? Save your energy if it is not</p> |

# DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SUPERVISORS (cont)

| TECHNIQUE                          | CONSIDERATION  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Position yourself on higher ground | <p>Use facts, data, citations, interpretation letters, common sense, etc. to establish a “higher ground”</p> <p>“I understand you believe LOTO is stupid and just slows down production. Please just send me an email to remind me that you have no intention of enforcing the use of it in case someone gets hurt. Please cc: the VP of Operations so we are all on the same page.”</p> <p>“I understand that you think wearing gloves on this job will slow down your employees down. Unfortunately, we had five recordable injuries on this job last quarter. Didn’t those injuries also slow you &amp; cost you time &amp; money?”</p> |

# RELATIONSHIP INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

- ∞ Developing positive relationships with supervisors is an investment in safety success
- ∞ Failure will result in poor returns on your safety investment capital
- ∞ Like many investments, relationships take time to mature – be patient
- ∞ Don't panic - measure value on underlying operating performance of safety (leading indicators) & not stock price (lagging indicators)
- ∞ Keep your eyes open at all times for the next good opportunity to invest
- ∞ Allocate your investment capital to the opportunity offering the greatest return
  - Difficult supervisor vs. Helpful supervisor

Investment



# QUESTIONS

**Eric D. Harper, CSP, CHMM**  
**EHS Technology Group LLC**  
**Manager, Process Safety**  
**(937) 510-6523**  
**[eharper@ehstech.com](mailto:eharper@ehstech.com)**

