

IMPROVING OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

BY BROOK BROOKSHIRE

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A SAFETY PROGRAM THAT IS WORKING WELL?
YOU MAKE IT BETTER.

Safety is critical to who we are at S&B. As CEO, my most important job is to ensure that every employee returns home the same way they arrived at work—safe. That requires integrating work practices, controls and behavior to proactively identify, manage and avoid risks.

S&B's safety record is one of the best in the industry. Our incident rates remained consistently low, but not zero. We are not holding true to our value system if we accept a low incident rate as good enough. This tells us that we must do more to make the next step change in safe work to protect our S&B family members.

As we evaluated our safety performance and opportunities to drive material improvement in both our safety statistics and our people-focused culture, we made the decision to adopt the science-based approach known as Human and Organizational Performance, or HOP, as part of our leadership philosophy at S&B.

No one shows up to work with the expectation of being hurt, or with the intent to damage property, and they generally want to do a good job. One of the fundamentals of HOP is that error is normal. Our responsibility as leaders is to minimize the impact of error, particularly those errors that have the potential for significant impact. Rather than attempting to fix the worker, we now focus on operational learning and deliberately improving the system that creates the context for our decisions and actions.

All of us, including myself, make mistakes and blaming people fixes nothing. This perspective led us to critically reevaluate our zero tolerance Life Saving Rules. We interviewed employees across the company about our Life Saving Rules and discovered that, despite our best intentions, they were seen as job-taking rules that didn't discriminate between intentional violation and unintentional human error.

After reviewing a 5-year incident history, we learned that 80 percent of Life Saving Rule deviation events were reported by safety professionals and 20 percent were reported by supervisors. None of these events were ever reported by other craft professionals. The punitive nature of our Life Saving Rules drove reporting underground. We were losing opportunities to deliberately learn and improve around life critical work particularly on the low frequency, high potential severity events that are most impactful on our colleagues.

We made the decision to end our mandatory termination policy and replace the punitive Life Saving Rules with Life Saving Commitments. It was our craft employees and supervision who developed these Life Saving Commitments as a simple, easy-to-use set of tools to guide our work. Since the implementation of HOP, we have experienced a 33% reduction in the number of significant near misses, and the severity rates of actual and potential events have been reduced by 35%.

I also wanted to bring a personal aspect to the Life Saving Commitments. We asked employees, "Who are you making these commitments for?" Most of their responses were "my family" or "my children." When you have a personal attachment, it gives you a sense of ownership to these commitments. Employees are living these commitments for more than just themselves. It stopped being, "I have to follow the rules or I'll get fired," to "I'm making this commitment for myself, my teammates, and my family."

At S&B, safety is our most important value. Our employees are our family. We are optimistic that our engagement with human organizational performance will bring about the step change necessary to achieve zero incidents and fulfill our most important commitment to our colleagues.



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S&B Family of Companies

