

Engage in Safety

Have you ever witnessed an activity that didn't seem right or appeared to be unsafe? If so, what actions did you take? Did you choose to do nothing? Was your action to report the event you witnessed to someone else, maybe to a supervisor or a safety person? Or did you step up to the plate and engage?

Whenever we are witness to unsafe conditions or unsafe behaviors, we typically can make one of three choices:

1. **Do nothing or ignore** – this leads to reinforcing the unsafe condition or unsafe behavior.
2. **Report the problem to someone else** – better than choosing to ignore, but the problem may or may not be corrected. If corrected, it may come too late.
3. **Personal Engagement** – correction occurs immediately and will have a greater influence on the individual not to repeat. Your actions **DO** speak louder than words and may rub off on others to do the same. Some are apprehensive to get involved or may believe it is someone else's responsibility to correct an unsafe behavior or observation. A person's experience, knowledge, and even character can influence whether they engage.

As safety leaders we need to view these unsafe conditions and unsafe behaviors as opportunities for us to make a difference. Here are a few tips for these opportunities:

- Communication should be immediate and related to the action not the person
- Feedback should focus on what to do, not simply what not to do
- Communication should be clear and specific – avoid saying generalities such as “that's unsafe”
- If you are unfamiliar with the task, find out. Ask questions of the person doing the task.
- Be respectful

Making the safe decision is the right decision. Sometimes the safe decision may not be immediately favorable. Ultimately, keeping our team members safe is what matters most. Remember, if you are not confronting unsafe conditions/behavior, you are reinforcing it. If you are going to challenge others to become safety leaders, you must first challenge yourself. Step up to the plate and be courageous.