NetworkRail

Safe Organisation = Organisational Safety

everyone home safe every day

Hello everyone

I was travelling on the train into London and was reading again the Leadership section of our Health & Safety Management System.

Section 4 on Page 7 discusses the role of leadership in safety, and it caused me to reflect on the linkages as I see them. It's becoming increasingly clear to me how vital it is for the work place to be a safe place. I say 'safe' in this context in terms of safe to take the risk to speak as we see, and have our feelings and perspectives heard, without fear of reprisal.

Rob Cairns,
Regional Managing Director

That reprisal is not being sacked or penalised, but rather the reprisal taking the form of our comments not being heard, or being made to feel as though there is a bigger, different view which is more relevant than our own which is the one to be abided by. A safe organisation at its very heart must be one where people can have their viewpoints heard, as many of those opinions will be people's perceptions as to how future risks may reveal themselves.

For a very important reason, I myself often lead the charge on safety by talking through a lens of very itemised aspects such as fire extinguisher service dates, clean PPE, sun cream etc. However, being mindful of the leadership shadow we cast in relation to our safety culture is immensely important. I therefore believe it's 'and' not 'or', and we need to push hard on both the tactical aspects, and the leadership aspects. This short video, which despite being a bit aged now, had a profound effect on me in 2005 when I first watched it on a CDM course, as it revealed to me the importance of giving people permission to call out the small stuff, and reminding people of the courage you need to have to deal with your actions if you can't find the courage to lead on safety.

We committed in our regional Health and Safety Strategy that we would harden the link between a safe organisation and a diverse organisation. What that isn't, is a commitment to relentless surface campaigns for EDI awareness – but rather a deliberate move towards space being made for all viewpoints and a culture where viewpoints are upheld and respected, even if they are not agreed with or unable to be acted upon.

The organisation is feeling considerable pressure at the moment, and the change in government spells much activity for how our railway shall evolve and reform. The region faces its own pressures around a number of activities, including the Margam hearing and the regulatory action. It's during these times of pressure and change where hearing people's opinions can feel easy to deprioritise in favour of urgency – however I believe it's during these times of challenge where taking extra steps to make people feel included is more important than ever.

I also reflect on the immensely safe space that my boss creates for me and his team, and behind his relentless focus on passenger service, the kindness he brings to everything he does and how secure that makes us all individually feel. I reflect on how effective I am at passing that down and paying it on to my team and others.

I often receive feedback about how refreshing my safety messages are, which is nice to read – but I would welcome thoughts on how well we are doing in terms of creating those vitally safe spaces which are so important to creating the foundations for being a diverse and safe organisation.

Stay safe,

Rob

This update is provided by the Wales and Western Communications team. For any queries, please contact walesandwesterncomms@networkrail.co.uk