

Safety management flashcard



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Construction sites are characterized by the omnipresence of hazards, with its necessity for machines and equipment, crowding of workers and outdoor or elevated operations (Rawlinson, 2004). Compared to any other industry, the construction industry experiences the most number of deaths and injuries amounting to about 1200-1300 deaths and 500, 000 injuries per year (Hinze, n. d.). While only about 7% of industrial workers are employed in construction, 18% of deaths and 15% of all injuries happen in construction (Hinze, n. d.

). However, only a few firms consider safety management as part of their objectives because of the usually conflicting nature of safety and schedule, and profitability (Rawlinson, 2004; Hakkinen, 1995). Such concerns may be true only in terms of interim objectives. Application of safety management may actually be beneficial for the construction industry in the long run.

As a matter of fact, it was found out that the safest managers turned to be the best performers in terms of cost effectiveness and schedule (Levitt and Samelson, 1993). What is the relation between management safety and construction project schedule? Hinze (1996) sheds light with his distraction theory. Hinze's Distraction theory (1996) correlates jobsite hazards with distraction. Job hazards tend to shift the focus of workers from the task at hand to the source of risk as they try to avoid what perceived injury it may produce. This would not pose a problem if avoidance occurs before or after the tasks.

The dilemma is that avoidance happens contemporaneously with the task. The attention that would have been directed on the performance of the job

becomes divided to include a simultaneous worrying and avoidance of perceived risks. This brings about lower productivity and further increase in the likelihood of injury, which in turn would cause another cycle of mental distraction and decreased task achievement. It is the summation of task achievements by each worker that determines whether a construction project will or will not be consistent with the construction project schedule. In short, a decline in one worker's productivity must be balanced by a proportionate increase in the productivity of another worker or a subsequent increase in the productivity of that worker himself.

But in this case, since the dilemma arises from environmental hazards, a lack or even a perceived lack of security in ones' person or life; all workers are equally exposed to such distraction at all times. This reduces the probability that the workers' individual productivity will balance one another to comply with the construction project schedule. That the reduction in productivity only affects one stage of the project is immaterial as a delay at any one point in the schedule jeopardizes the entire schedule, unless such circumstances are foreseen, incorporated and considered in making the schedule (Rowlinson, 2004). Hence, by applying measures to remove the cause of mental distraction, that is by securing the safety of each worker, the deviation between the proposed and actual work schedule can be reduced.

The interruption of work schedule is considered as the second most serious impact of site accidents in construction sites (Rowlinson, 2004). The problem on the accidents, as frequent as it happens in the construction business may be reduced or even eliminated completely, to cause less interruption in the work schedule due to reduced manpower caused by absenteeism and high

turnover rate . In addition, there would be less probability of rework and thus, an extension of schedule because quality can be more seriously monitored if workers are focused on their tasks instead of being worried about the risks of accident. The theory that providing for management safety conflicts with businesses' value of profitability is nothing but a myth.

Applying management safety in construction improves the workers' sense of security. By preventing shifts and division of attention, the workers tend to focus on their tasks, increasing their productivity, and reducing inconsistencies with the construction project schedule.

The realization of such relationship between the application of management safety procedures and the construction project schedule is a mark of competitiveness as quality, safety and stability of work schedule are the focal indicators of the construction business's health and aggressiveness. In that sense, stubborn disregard of management safety in favor of profitability not only risks the persons and lives of workers but is also inconsistent with the businesses' value for profitability. Works Cited Hakkinen K. (1995). A learning-by-doing strategy to improve top management involvement in safety. *Safety Science*, 20, 299-304.

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