



665 Rodi Road Suite 305
Pittsburgh, PA 15235
Phone: 412.244.0440
Fax: 412.244.9090
www.HMAmembers.org

Safety Culture starts at the Top

A learning session entitled, "**The Critical Role of Leadership in Promoting Safety**," kicked off the final day of HMA's National Conference and Expo in Fort Worth. Making the presentation was aviator, author, aviation/aerospace consultant, and current Member of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the Honorable Robert L. Sumwalt. His bottom line takeaway - **A Safety culture starts at the top of every organization.**

How strong is your Safety Culture?

Most accidents are multicausal - a tragic combination of human error, inadequate maintenance, lack of a safety culture, organizational issues, inadequate oversight. Merely making safety a "priority" item is not the answer to managing the risks of organizational accidents. What's required is a **safety culture**, an organizational mindset supported by action.

"Safety culture is the core values and behaviors resulting from a collective commitment by leaders and individuals to emphasize safety over competing goals, to ensure protection of people and the environment." It starts at the top and permeates the entire organization. Company leaders, front line employees and everyone in between, must share and practice the same safety values and goals.

Leading by Example

Influential leaders are to ensure that their organizations have '**safety as a core value**' and then most importantly, that they are doing everything possible to live those values. Lip service will not work. Rather, set the example every day, because "the safety behaviors and attitudes of individuals are influenced by their perceptions and expectations about safety in their work environment, and they pattern their safety behavior to meet demonstrated priorities of organizational leaders, regardless of stated policies."

As a Leader - Are you living your Values?

In a successful organization, everything you do is run through the filter of your core values to make sure you are being true to them.

- Successful organizations are led by owners and managers who ensure that their values are aligned and lived throughout the organization.
- They lead by example and truly care about the safety and health of their employees and customers.
- This commitment to values and caring greatly increases the potential to perform well, financially.

Bottom Line: A Safety culture starts at the top of every organization. There must always be a leadership obsession for Safety and its continuous improvement. Be vigilant. A lack of accidents does not mean that you are 'safe.'