

# CATERPILLAR SAFETY SERVICES

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Coaching leaders - Training supervisors - Engaging employees



## EXPEDITION TO EXCELLENCE: Blaschak Coal

*A tip from a Cat® dealer set Blaschak Coal on a journey to zero-incident performance by connecting the Pennsylvania mining company with Caterpillar Safety Services. Blaschak's leaders are committed, its employees are engaged and the entire team is involved in continuous improvement efforts to elevate a good safety program to excellence.*

### Raising the Bar

The Blaschak Coal Corporation, with three anthracite mines and two processing facilities located in northeastern Pennsylvania's coal country, has a good safety record compared with its industry peers. Blaschak's incident rates and workers' compensation claims are lower than the industry standard, results of a workforce that follows policies and procedures. To simply be better than the industry standard, however, doesn't satisfy CEO Greg Driscoll.

*"I want a workforce that's engaged in safety, not just one that follows orders," Driscoll said. "You get into accidents accidentally. You have to be safe on purpose."*

Blaschak Coal has been using Cat equipment for more than 30 years, so when Driscoll learned from his local dealer, Cleveland Bros., that Caterpillar also provides safety culture solutions, he seized the opportunity to elevate his good safety culture to excellence.

*"We looked over the Safety Services offerings and determined they were the tools to take us to the next level of performance not only in safety, but in overall business," Driscoll said.*

Caterpillar's Zero-Incident Performance (ZIP™) Process leverages the same improvement strategy world-class organizations already employ to strengthen production, quality and other areas critical to success. The process begins with a visible commitment from leadership, and then empowers employees to build an improvement plan that gives everyone in the organization ownership for safety.

### Building Momentum

To get Blaschak's leaders ready to drive the aggressive journey to zero-incident performance, Caterpillar delivered a Leadership Roundtable event to the entire management team, from top leaders down to site managers. Driscoll felt it was important to include Blaschak's next generation managers on the leadership team as a way to ensure the culture change process would endure over time. With firsthand experience in the mines, they are also an important conduit between top leadership and hourly workers.

*"I've been doing this work my whole life, so I know the operating challenges," said Dale Lindenmuth, a mine superintendent. "Greg (Driscoll) relies on me to provide solutions that I know will actually work, and steer the group away from the ones that won't."*

The one-day event revealed the many impacts safety performance has on a business, the role culture plays in shaping performance and a road map for improvement, all with the ultimate goal of establishing a shared vision for the course ahead.

*"The Leadership Roundtable offered us the ability to have a conversation, out loud, that business success is about more than operating performance," Driscoll said. "I was really impressed with the guys' willingness to speak up, and that signaled to me that we will be able to succeed at this."*

All attendees later participated in a S.T.A.R.T.™ Workshop, a one-day skills training event that gave supervisors an understanding of their unique role in the improvement process. They left with practical tools for engaging employees in developing and fulfilling accountabilities for safety.

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*“That was an opportunity to reinforce the continuity of this journey for our supervisors,” Driscoll said, “A more practical approach focused on how to prevent incidents and a perfect precursor to the next step in the process, continuous improvement team work.”*



## Charting the course

In order to determine the challenges to focus on first, each leadership team member and employees in every work site were interviewed by a Caterpillar safety culture expert who asked questions about the current safety culture throughout Blaschak.

*“The work site visits were an important signal to employees that we are making an investment in understanding and raising the bar in safety,” Driscoll said. “I was pleased with their enthusiasm, as we will lean on them to determine where the bar should be set.”*

One of the concerns shared by management and employees was proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Mine site operators and mechanics find it difficult to wear particular models of glasses, reflective vests, hard hats and gloves while performing some of their routine tasks. Without written policies with regard to PPE, inconvenience or discomfort, and sometimes a learned apathy to regulations, led some employees to accept the risk of not wearing PPE at all.

Driscoll called on his workforce to eschew the risky cultural norms that have developed in favor of creative solutions that make proper PPE use a way of life at Blaschak. Thus began the work of Blaschak’s first continuous improvement team, CI Team 1, a group of hourly employees who developed PPE guidelines that would be workable for their peers and supported by management, all the while creating a safer work environment for everyone.

## Engagement in action

CI Team 1 members participated in a four-day Rapid Improvement Workshop (RIW), in which they learned that most incidents are caused by at-risk behaviors, which are a result of the organizational culture.

*“You get used to doing things one way, day after day, for years and you don’t realize it’s a problem until you see someone else doing it. Then you say that isn’t right; we have to do something about that,”* said Jim Larkin, who has been working as a mechanics helper at Blaschak for nearly two decades.

The first day of the RIW was spent learning many of the safety management principles contained in the LRT and S.T.A.R.T. Workshop. The following days were spent discussing specific challenges to proper PPE use, coming up with solutions and, ultimately, developing an accountability system that assigned responsibilities at all levels of the organization.

At the end of the workshop, the team reported its improvement plan to Driscoll and the rest of the leadership team. Feeling empowered by their own success in developing a robust plan in just a few days, the CI Team 1 members were outspoken champions of their solutions.

*“On day one we were told we’d have to give a presentation on the final day and I thought, ‘Oh, boy, what did I get myself into?’”* said Bob Pedron Jr., an equipment operator. *“But we were well prepared and I’ve never been a public speaker, but I was happy to talk about our work.”*

Engagement and ownership of the process by hourly workers is one of the key criteria to sustainable improvement. The greatest RIW takeaway for Larkin marks another critical element Blaschak has mastered: visible support from leadership. *“It’s clear that Greg Driscoll’s number one concern is you going home the way you came in – with ten fingers and ten toes,”* Larkin said.

Following the RIW, members of CI Team 1 visited their respective work sites to communicate the new process underway and deliver training to every employee. Once the process is officially rolled out company wide, Blaschak will assemble CI Team 2 to address the next area for improvement, building an ever stronger company culture by integrating safety into every part of business. ■

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