

# CATERPILLAR SAFETY SERVICES

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Coaching leaders - Training supervisors - Engaging employees



## PAVING THE WAY TO “GOAL ZERO”:

### Colas USA Begins a Journey to Safety Culture Excellence

Recently executives at Colas USA, a leader in infrastructure building and maintenance, learned a statistic that is reshaping the organization’s approach to safety improvement: only 10 percent of incidents are caused by unsafe conditions. Actions – driven by attitudes, behaviors and beliefs – are the root cause of 90 percent of incidents. And those actions are a product of the organization’s culture.

To take its safety performance to the next level, Colas USA, comprised of eight subsidiaries with companies spanning 25 North American states, is asking, “What if we put our ideas and energies into transforming our safety culture, the factors which lead to 90 percent of incidents? How far could we move the needle in safety performance?”

To answer those questions, and move ever closer to zero, Colas USA President Jean Vidal and the eight subsidiary presidents will engage the 5,000 Colas USA employees in a new approach to safety improvement.

“We are rejecting the idea that incidents are an inevitable part of doing business in the construction industry,” said Vidal. “We aren’t satisfied with being second best in any part of our business, least of all safety, so we are making the pathway to ‘Goal Zero’ clearer, more strategic, and we’ve started by recognizing that we as leaders have to change the way we think and act with regard to safety.”

### Insight for Improvement

During the spring kickoff season every employee at all eight Colas USA subsidiaries was invited to share feedback about the current safety culture via Caterpillar’s Safety Perception Survey. Additionally, some employees participated in interviews with a Caterpillar consultant, forums to discuss challenges and ideas for improvement. Understanding the current culture – identifying areas of strength and the greatest opportunities for growth – is a critical step in determining where to focus efforts.

“The reality is, every business has a limited amount of resources to focus on safety improvement, so it’s important that you spend

your time focusing on the issues that will deliver the most impact,” said David Crouch, Senior Safety Consultant with Caterpillar. “The survey data leaves no question about where work is needed and becomes the basis for your strategic improvement plan.”

Leadership teams at each subsidiary reviewed the Safety Perception Survey and interview results at Leadership Report-Out events and learned how to implement

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the Zero-Incident Performance (ZIP™) Process in their organizations. Safety Steering Teams have been formed at each company with the purpose of building strategic plans based on the survey and interview feedback. The steering teams are



*Colas USA leaders are taking a new approach to safety: cultural growth through employee-led process improvement.*

**Contact Us:** Phone: 1.866.963.3551 Outside US: +1 309.494.2751

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serving as the guiding coalitions of each company's individual journey, responsible for keeping the processes on track.

"One of the aspects of this approach that appeals to us is that it provides a framework for improvement, but also flexibility in how to use the process to achieve individual subsidiary goals," said Chris Kirby, Colas USA Director of Risk Management. "We wanted to provide a consistent methodology, but give each company autonomy in how to apply the tools."

## Engagement for Positive Change

After identifying the current culture and determining where to focus efforts, the grassroots work to positively influence the culture by error-proofing process began – led by Continuous Improvement (CI) Teams. At each subsidiary, CI Teams composed of hourly employees participate in four-day Rapid Improvement Workshops to build new or improved safety processes that clearly define roles and responsibilities for each level of the organization. Whereas management has historically developed and enforced policies and procedures, now problem-solving is in the hands of the employees closest to the job hazards.



*A Continuous Improvement (CI) Team at Branscome Inc. developed an improved process for daily huddles.*

David Huggett, lead man for a paving crew at Branscome Incorporated, a Colas USA company, volunteered to be the team leader of his company's first CI Team. Huggett admitted he came into the workshop with some skepticism about the sincerity of this employee-engagement approach to improvement, but by the second day found himself a changed man.

"I was actually shocked," Huggett said. "I've been here almost 20 years and before this I had never been asked to change anything except for a nozzle on a tack truck, so to get to change something and be a part of something that other people might view as good, it's pretty fulfilling."

Leaders will be held accountable for supporting the CI Team solutions, both by removing obstacles to progress and through personal action items that are measured.

"When leaders in this organization are given clear goals, specific tasks and performance measures, they succeed," said Vidal. "We have intelligent, motivated and performance-driven leaders in our companies, but what we've lacked is clear direction on how they can shift their management style from incident reaction to incident prevention."

## Continuous Process for Sustainable Results

The CI Team solutions are tested through pilot projects in specific areas of each company, then implemented throughout each organization, all within 90 days. Every solution includes a measurement system to gauge success and a process for recognizing progress. The CI Teams meet routinely during the implementation period to check progress, make necessary adjustments and ensure their plans are delivering intended results.

Once the first round of CI solutions are fully implemented, additional teams will be formed to address other areas for improvement. The process is a never-ending cycle that generates specific improvements all driving toward positive cultural change and Goal Zero.

"We'll find that each initiative builds leadership, communication and creates an environment in which safety is valued on the same level as productivity and quality," said Vidal. "And that's what makes an excellent safety culture." ■