



# CULTURAL MATURITY MODEL

Every organization has a safety culture – defined simply as the “way we do things,” or perhaps “what happens when the boss isn’t around.” It’s the collective attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that influence decisions and how hazards are managed day to day and, ultimately, determine safety performance. With continuous improvement efforts, culture evolves.

There are five progressive levels along the safety culture maturity spectrum – Reactive, Observed, Collaborative, Accountable, Relentless – each with specific characteristics. Most organizations, at a given point in their safety journey, can be classified as one of the five descriptors. However, it is common to experience elements from multiple levels. Generally, as involvement, accountability and positive recognition in safety increase, cultural maturity advances.



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## THE LEVELS DEFINED



**REACTIVE** Organization reacts to regulations, conditions, events and losses. Individual involvement in safety is low and limited mostly to following policies and procedures mandated by regulatory entities (basic compliance).

- Management is visibly involved only when serious incidents or expenses occur.
- Safety Department is perceived as the primary owner of the safety system.
- Safety metrics are lagging (i.e. incident rates; lost-time frequency; workers' comp).
- Investigations are focused on blame and discipline.



**OBSERVED** All levels of the organization engage, observe and provide input, but focus is mostly compliance and incidents. This level is characterized by movement toward employee engagement, but accountability is weak and fear of retribution for reporting incidents persists.

- Employee perceptions are captured, but involvement is limited to committees focused on issue resolution.
- Safety strategy is focused on lagging indicators and managed by Safety Department.
- Some reluctance by employees to report incidents and near misses.
- Training includes on-the-job component, but mostly compliance-related.



**COLLABORATIVE** Management exhibits ownership of safety responsibilities. Strategic collaboration involves multiple levels, accountability for proactive safety processes takes shape and communication shifts to problem-solving.

- Management completes routine safety activities, some of which are defined by employee teams.
- Accountability and measurement is inconsistent and focused mostly on quantity of activities performed.
- Investigations include potential outcomes and utilize a fact-finding (not fault-finding) approach.
- Safety communication is focused on incident prevention




**ACCOUNTABLE** Specific, proactive safety accountabilities are developed, and employees at all levels begin to take ownership in the safety system. Management involvement in safety is visible, operations personnel lead execution of safety processes with support from Safety Department and communication about safety is mostly proactive and positive in nature.

- Supervisors insist on and recognize safe work, even when under production pressure.
- Employees create and champion safety processes / solutions.
- Leading metrics are consistently measured for both quantity and quality.
- Performance reviews and written job descriptions include specific safety activities measured for quantity and quality.



**RELENTLESS** Safety is in the organization's "DNA," as an integral part of the business operation. This is the best in class level at which safety is managed with the same rigor as production, quality and other values.

- Employee input is the foundation for continuous improvement initiatives.
- There is regular constructive feedback between employees, as well as positive recognition for safe work.
- Employees consistently resolve and report hazards, incidents and near misses.
- Safety leadership training equips supervisors and managers to foster a positive, proactive safety culture.
- Leading metrics define safety performance.



Progressing through the cultural maturity levels requires commitment, strategy and consistency. Transforming a culture can be a multi-year process. However, the first steps toward change can spark immediate benefits that should be noticed, celebrated and leveraged for continuous gains.

W. Edwards Deming once said, "Each system is perfectly designed to give you exactly what you are getting today." If you aren't getting the safety results you want, consider the system producing them.

An effective safety system incorporates technology, learning & training, communication, continuous improvement and leadership development to improve processes holistically. If you're interested in learning about a proven process that focuses on safety as a system to advance safety culture maturity, contact Caterpillar Safety Services.

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