

Move From a
Safety Program to
A Safety Culture

Introduction

Each day as you head into the office to oversee the safety operations of your agricultural facility, you probably think about all the possible safety issues and hazards that could affect your invaluable employees.

Of course productivity is important on your farm, but not at the expense of your employees' safety. Inevitably, this dual burden rests almost exclusively on your shoulders. However, even though you know all the laws, regulations, compliance issues and statutes created and enacted to keep your workers safe, you understand you need to create and nurture an atmosphere which fosters a collective consciousness that lives and breathes all the tenets of safety. Meaning you have to create a safety culture that enhances awareness of the inherent dangers in any business setting, but more importantly, you have to help your staff become familiar with the specific risks in agriculture.



Program vs. Culture

What do you think of when you hear the term *safety culture*? Do you think that having a safety program or providing safety training for your farm facility is the same thing as having a safety culture?

Unfortunately, safety training alone is not a safety program. Furthermore, just because you have a safety program, which includes training, that doesn't always equate to a safety culture.

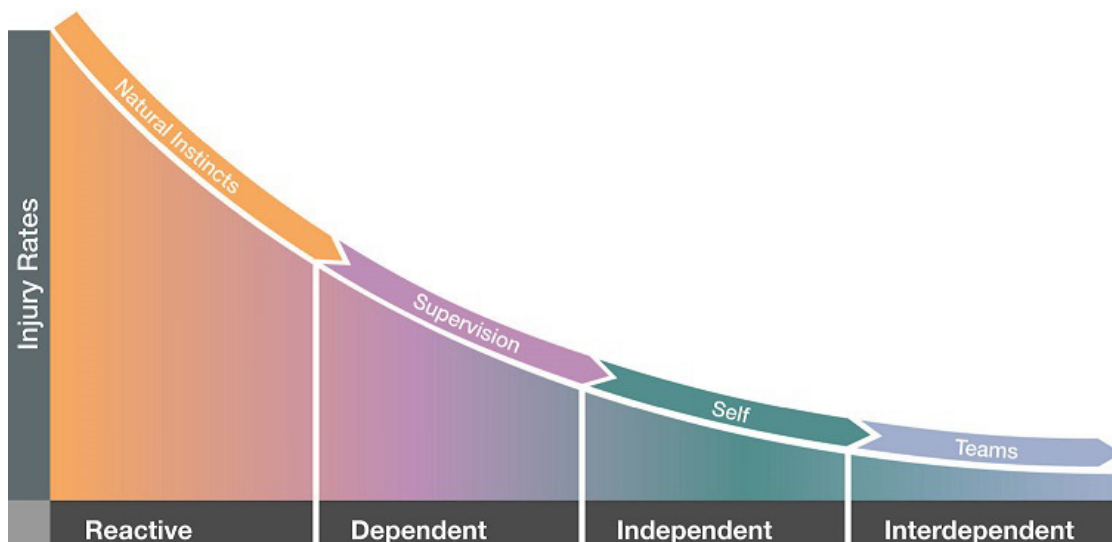
However, as your farm's safety coordinator, the more you learn about safety culture, the more you will want to adopt this innovative and stimulating philosophy for your farm to keep your employees, your managers and everyone who visits your facility safe from potential hazards.



The DuPont Bradley Curve & Safety Culture

Founded in 1802, DuPont continues operations as a major force in the U.S. chemical industry. The chemical field is another arena where it is essential that everyone is familiar with all things related to safety in the workplace. The company even created its own vision of safety standards and training called STOP, which stands for Safety Training and Observation Program, to reinforce its hazard-aversion position. The creators of this program believe it can help businesses move from offering simple and perfunctory safety training to cultivating a thriving safety culture. DuPont notes that the oil, gas, and chemical industries report the safest work atmospheres, while agriculture and mining are the least safe. For the chemical industry, this is a vast difference from the days of the past when they had one of the worst safety records, and now it has one of the best—because they focus on culture!

DuPont promotes a behavior based system (BBS) and shares its approach to help other companies in various industries create and operate a safe work atmosphere to keep employees steadily working in their respective fields. The “Bradley Curve” was developed by Vernon Bradley in 1994 while he was part of the DuPont Discovery Group. It defines several stages of evolution in safety culture improvements and illustrates Dupont’s approach to developing a world-class safety environment for its own company—and for yours.



The DuPont Bradley Curve & Safety Culture (Cont.)

The DuPont Bradley Curve features four distinct approaches to safety practices, using a sloped graph to reveal the injury rates according to each of those practices, starting with the highest injury rates on the left, sliding to the right-hand side of the graph for the smallest number of injuries and safest work environments.

1. Natural Instincts. Reactive—With the highest incidents of workplace injuries among the different approaches, relying on humans' natural instincts creates a "reactive" atmosphere instead of a proactive one where everyone on staff knows the risks and takes precautions to avoid those risks. In a reactive environment, no employee truly takes responsibility for their own safety, relying on luck and chance to make it through the day.

2. Supervision. Dependent—Workplaces that rely on supervisory measures to keep safety measures in place, as well as helping employees comply with those measures, only see a slight improvement over a reactive style of safety care. Employees wait for cues from management and really only think of safety issues if they receive those cues. While management does its best to keep employees updated on safety matters, too often they experience a disconnect. When employees do incur injuries in a dependent environment, they often perceive a lack of communication from management. So, even with the best intentions from management, this safety approach still has plenty of room for improvement.

The DuPont Bradley Curve & Safety Culture (Cont.)

3 Self. Independent—This approach brings a huge reduction in injuries, but it still leaves room for improvement. When employees take responsibility for their own safety, taking the daily risks into account each day, injury rates do reduce. Helping employees become more independent and aware of the risks, and how those risks—can directly impact them in an instant—greatly helps businesses see a reduction in injuries.

4 Teams. Interdependent—Once again in life and business, the team approach to a process generates success. When employers ask their employees to work as cohesive teams in the project of safety information and adherence, they see a difference. Employees do not accept low standards for themselves or from others when it comes to risktaking, especially when everyone knows the risks. Taking cues from management, teams talk to each other about the risks that they face each day and work toward ways of improving safety standards to keep everyone safe from harm—and for everyone to make it home the same way they arrived at work. The team approach helps employees focus on achieving a zero-incident goal that they come to believe is attainable every day through strong communication and caring about their teammates' safety as well as their own.

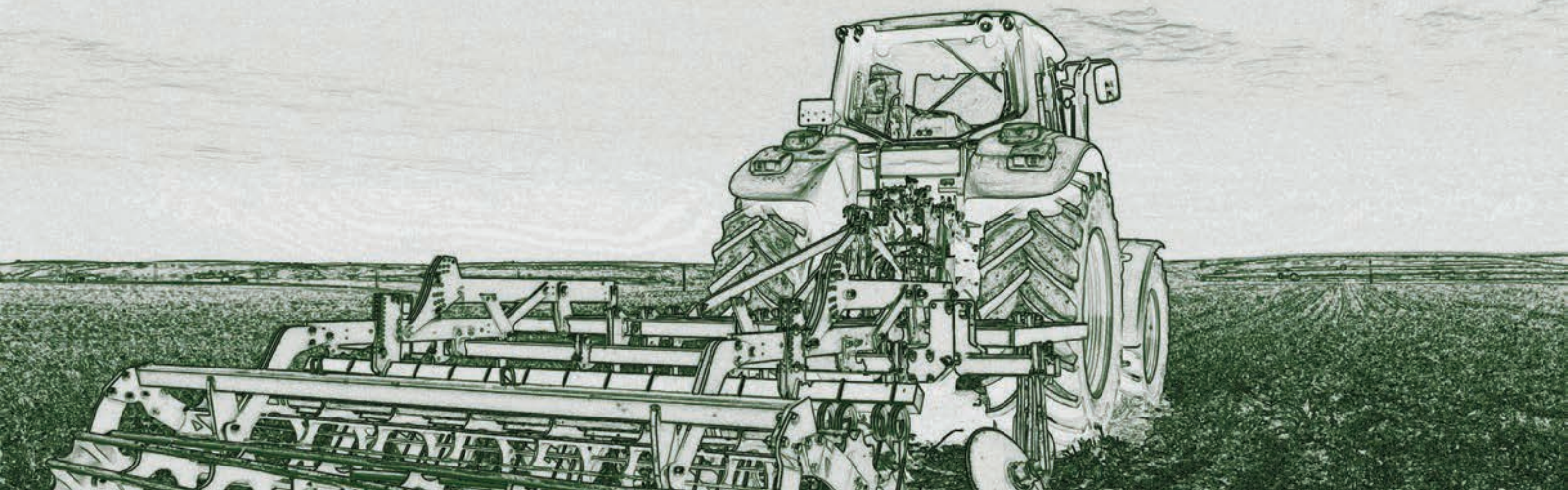
The DuPont Bradley Curve helps businesses improve profitability through the interdependent approach to creating a safety culture. As employees become more in tune with and invested in their work surroundings, they and their co-workers find ways to reduce the potential for workplace injuries, which helps reduce fees associated with injuries as well as time lost for employees. Additionally, a strong safety culture helps cut down employee-turnover rates, which prove extremely costly to businesses.

OSHA & Safety Culture

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) has reported—along with independent researchers—to the U.S. Department of Labor that companies that develop and foster strong safety cultures have the single greatest impact on accident reduction of any process. That includes agriculture and similar industries.

Just like any other culture, a safety culture establishes and reinforces a communal set of shared beliefs, practices and attitudes within your business. Through OSHA training, employees become aware of safety protocols and, as a result, do not let any safety breach or infraction go unchecked. For example, in a safety-training presentation, the OSHA trainer described the general atmosphere within an organization in which employees demonstrate their roles in its safety culture. The premise of the example is an employee noticing a supervisor like the plant manager not wearing the proper PPE in a hazardous area. Given the organization's safety culture and after spotting a potential safety risk, the employee feels comfortable enough in approaching the supervisor—or anyone in the organization—to remind them that, in that area, they need to put on their safety goggles and protective helmets.

In safety-culture environments, safety becomes part of the active daily dialogue between employees without judgment or worry over facing some type of punishment for lapses. Everyone in the organization works toward sustaining an open environment with an upbeat and straightforward focus on safety.



Facts About Safety in the Agricultural Industry

Hazards are part of any business, but the fact is that, in the agricultural industry, employees and managers deal with large and dangerous machinery that can disable or kill someone when not used with the most laser-focused safety precautions. No matter how many safeguards an ag company implements to keep employees safe, agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries around the globe.

Worldwide, the industry is responsible for the fatalities of 170,000 employees, with almost 6,000 of these deaths occurring between 2003 and 2011 in the U.S. alone, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. So, it is critical for all agricultural businesses to revisit health and safety plans in an effort to reduce fatalities. To put those numbers in perspective, many countries report that fatal accident rates in ag are double the average rates over all other industries, according to the International Labour Office (ILO) of Switzerland. As unpleasant as it is to consider the possible dangers that any worker in the agricultural field might face, it's necessary to do so to help prevent any negative situations that might arise due to those dangers.

Productivity is a wonderful thing, and it is what we strive for as a direct result of our hard work. However, *productivity without safety is meaningless*. A safety culture offers agricultural workers more than having a safety professional to absently rattle off a list of essential safety precautions to employees, hoping everyone follows them to the letter. A safety culture creates an atmosphere of healthy and positive accountability toward keeping employees and their co-workers safe at all times to help minimize the global risks, starting right in your own facility.

Common Attitudes Toward Safety in the Workplace

Many modern employees view safety according to the old paradigm that stresses “safety training” versus creating and growing a culture that focuses on employee and management safety in the workplace as a proactive endeavor. Many staff members consider safety-training matters boring, or they believe that many facets of staying safe in the workplace are common sense-related, thus setting themselves up for reactive responses once a hazardous situation is in progress. While common sense is important, maintaining a safe workplace requires more than instinct. It requires constant attention to the risks that are always present and lurking in the workplace, where accidents can happen due to any reason, ranging from a human operation standpoint or from a mechanical error in a power tool or a piece of machinery.



Does Your Farm Have Safety Culture?

You probably know whether your farm already has safety culture or not, but there are ways that you can determine whether your farm staff is already organically working toward the concept of a safety culture and how ready they are to adopt and develop the philosophy when you consult the DuPont Bradley Curve for your answer.

Take a look around your facility to see how your employees and managers view and discuss safety in your facility. If you can immediately say that there is little open daily discussion about safety, your answer is clear that your team is working in a safety environment that leans more toward the “reactive” end of the spectrum and that safety culture is a new concept for everyone. If you note that employees take an interest in their own safety as well as the safety of others, reporting possible hazards that might affect their co-workers or asking about the safest way to do a job, you already have some solid groundwork for building a proactive safety culture.

Can Your Farm Have a Safety Culture?

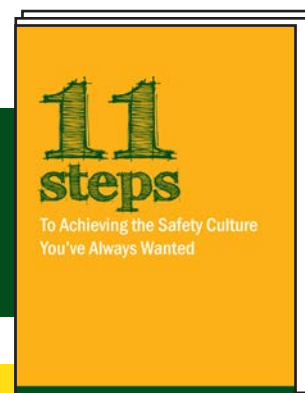
With hard work and dedication from everyone, any workplace can have a highly interactive safety culture that helps to keep hazardous incidents to a bare minimum through collective commitment, attention and proactive behavior.

Checklist:

Carefully consider and apply these 11 steps, and watch your employees' attitudes toward safety improve, while injuries decrease and productivity increases.

- 1 Determine Hazards in Your Facility, and Devise Safety Guidelines to Avoid Further Risks.
- 2 Work with Managers and Supervisors to Achieve Your Company's Goals for a Thriving Safety Culture.
- 3 Develop Measures to Generate Hazard Reports and Means of Reporting.
- 4 Devise a System to Note the Timeliness of Addressing and Correcting Hazards.
- 5 Meet with Staff to Describe Safety Culture and Discuss Risks in Your Facility.
- 6 Inform Your Staff of the Available Reporting Methods.
- 7 Generate and Distribute a List of Potential Hazards That Employees and Management Need to Report.
- 8 Discuss a Rise in Incidents and Incident Reports with Managers and Supervisors Once the Employees Receive Their List of Potential Hazards.
- 9 Monitor Your Safety Culture's Progress and Continually Reevaluate.
- 10 Recognize Employees Who Embrace Safety Culture and Help It Thrive.
- 11 Update Your Employees and Management About the Effectiveness of Their Work Toward Developing a Safety.

To learn more in-depth information about how to execute these 11 steps, download our next FREE eBook:



For more information about how Good Day's Work can help keep your farm safe with its dynamic, web-enabled, OSHA safety-training and compliance-reporting software platform visit **GoodDaysWork.Ag**