Evaluating Your Health And Safety Culture: Nine Important Questions to Ask

The process of evaluating EHS culture does not have to be complicated or burdensome. One can develop a strong sense of EHS culture simply by walking around a facility, taking time to speak with a representative number of operators, front line supervisors and managers, and asking them the following nine questions:

1. What worries you most about our EHS performance?

2. What hazards exist in the workplace?

3. Where is the next incident going to occur?

4. What can we do to prevent it?

5. Do we fix problems when we find them?

6. If we don't fix them, why not?

7. Are operating procedures followed?

8. Can you report hazardous conditions without fear of negative consequences?

9. Is your contribution valued?

Soliciting the answers to questions such as these is only the first part of the process, however. It is very important that your company promptly address concerns or deficiencies identified. Not responding only weakens the culture further by reinforcing perceptions that the company and its managers are indifferent to worker concerns and EHS performance.

Government agencies such as the U.S. chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) and the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) continue to focus on the importance of corporate culture and oversight as part of their incident investigations. Evaluating your company's environmental, health and safety culture could be the difference between compliance and noncompliance.