

Studies on preventing accidents through behavioural safety

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on field observations during behaviour based safety (BBS) training interventions across multi-national organizations (such as petroleum, engineering, automobile, cement, power, chemical, pharmaceutical etc.) as a part of an on-going national action research survey of behaviour based safety in India including 1751 executives and 713 workers in 64 organizations. During BBS training interventions, the trained participants used a checklist of critical unsafe / safe behaviours to collect observation data from their respective workplaces with the help of behaviour observation and feedback process (BOFP) which is based on cognitive behaviour modification approach. It is assumed that the information gathered from this longitudinal nature of the research and the robust sample size shall be considerably useful for human resource / safety professionals while they would be implementing the concept and process of BBS for reduction of accidents, loss prevention and promoting safe behaviours for developing injury-free culture in their organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Safety research and experience¹⁻¹⁸ (see bibliography) indicate that almost all of the accidents are due to unsafe human acts or behaviours; almost 50 per cent of the unsafe behaviours are identified or noticeable at any plant at any given point of time; 25-30 per cent of safety awareness is lacking among employees which gets reflected in their unsafe behaviours; A manager said, "Though we are aware of the magnitude of unsafe behaviours in our organization we did not know how to control them".

Unsafe behaviours are at the core of any near misses, injury, or fatalities. If we control unsafe behaviours, we may not even have near misses (Fig. A).

It is empirically established that intervening unsafe behaviours will reduce injury/fatality. The organizations need to target zero unsafe behaviour in order to achieve zero accidents or injuries.

Through BBS approach/training, organizations empower their workforce to routinely check unsafe behaviours of their employees before they get injured or damage the equipment/product, etc.

The unsafe behaviours at workplace take place due to lack of the following:

- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by workmen e.g. eye glasses, hearing protection, gloves, hard hat;
- Work area maintained appropriately, e.g. trash and

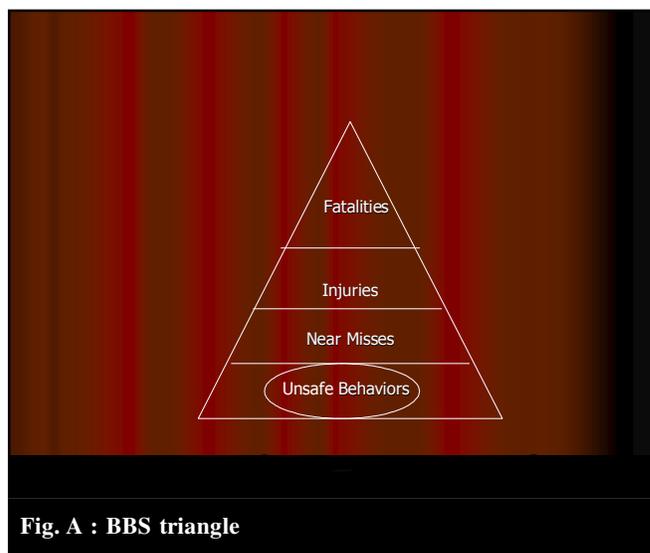


Fig. A : BBS triangle

scrap picked up, no spills, walkways unobstructed, materials and tools organized;

- Using correct tools for the job, using tools properly, and tool in good condition;
- Positioning / protecting body parts, e.g. avoiding line of fire, avoiding pinch points;
- Material handling e.g. body mechanics while lifting, pushing and pulling, use of assist- devices;
- Verbal and non-verbal interactions that affects safety;
- Following safety procedures e.g. obtaining, complying with permits, following safe operating