

## Transparency in Safety

*Victor Lawe, PS-MESH*



What is transparency and how can you use it to help your safety program?

Some of you may chair a safety committee. Chairing a committee is a perfect opportunity to cross-pollinate all of the safety ideas and concerns across your organization. You may discuss projects you have completed, have in process, or have not started

yet. Think of it as situational awareness in the world of safety.

How many of you are invited to supervisor meetings, department-level safety committee meetings or staff meetings? These meetings are an opportunity to shine as the safety consultant your organization needs you to be. You don't need to be able to quote OSHA or ANSI by chapter and verse. Just have internet access or a OneDrive ready with all of your safety references. Leave your ego at the door. If you don't know, simply state it with a promise to circle back later with a response to their question.

I want safety professionals to know that though you mostly work alone we need not make decisions in a vacuum. How many of you receive guidance from your boss on what you **should** be working on?

You are trusted to perform with a high degree of competency, independent of direct supervision, and to contribute to the organization's safety success. Some of you may, like me, work in the human resources department. HR is home to a lot of foot traffic from employees needing help with benefits, evaluations, retirement, workers' comp, employee records, recruiting, orientation, corrective actions, safety, health and wellness. How much of your boss' time is occupied managing safety? Not much because benefits, recruiting and evaluations outweigh everything. That's why you exist, to take safety concerns off of their plates.

## Transparency in your career development

How do you promote transparency with your boss? Schedule a monthly one-on-one meeting where you discuss Management by Objective matrix [Figure 1], inspections and training. This simple spreadsheet quantifies the high evaluation ratings you have earned on an annual basis as Supreme Safety Officers of the Universe.

Management by Objectives (MbO)							
Employee's Name		Victor Lawe					
Building		Employee Health Center	Job Title		Safety Officer		
Evaluation Period		From	1/1/2019	To	1/31/2019		
Date	Objective	Area	Frequency	Measurement Criteria	Status	Comments	Priority
1/2/2019	Complete OSHA 300 report for the city	Safety	Annual		Complete	Ahead of schedule by 10 days	High
1/2/2019	Get OSHA 300 report signed by city manager	Safety	Annual		Complete	Ahead of schedule by 10 days	High
1/2/2019	Complete APPA safety award for Electric division	Safety	Annual		Complete	Ahead of schedule by 30 days	Medium
1/2/2019	Shadow NCDOL Safety Compliance officer through designated PWWR sites	Safety	Annual		Complete		Medium
1/2/2019	Complete NCDOL Safety Award applications	Safety	Annual		Complete	Ahead of schedule by 30 days	Medium
1/2/2019	Complete Bureau of Labor Statistics safety report	Safety	Annual		Complete	Ahead of schedule by 30 days	Medium
1/2/2019	Complete AGA safety award for Gas division	Safety	Annual		Complete	Ahead of schedule by 30 days	Medium
1/2/2019	Complete Electri-Cities safety award for Electric division	Safety	Annual		Complete	Ahead of schedule by 30 days	Medium
1/2/2019	Initiate Safety Committee meeting	Safety	Monthly		Complete	Inaugural meeting was a success	High
1/2/2019	Remove old OSHA 300 reports and post 2018 reports throughout city facilities	Safety	Annual		On-going	Parks and Rec locations still in process	Medium

Figure 1

These next graphics quantify what a basic safety officer should do in regard to safety inspections and training. They are great talking points if your boss wants a deeper understanding of what you did and how it went.

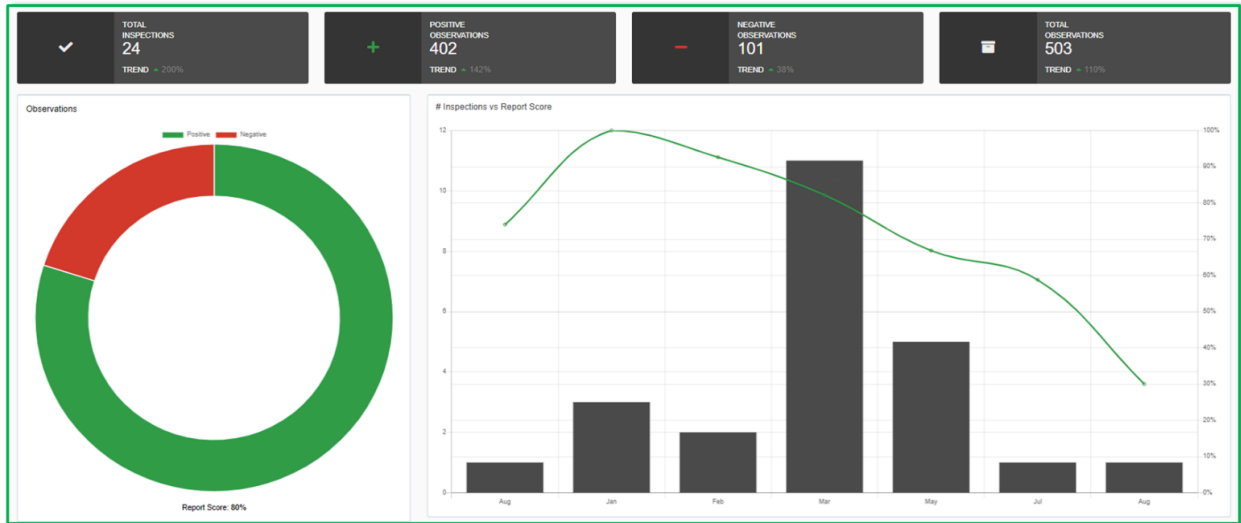


Figure 2

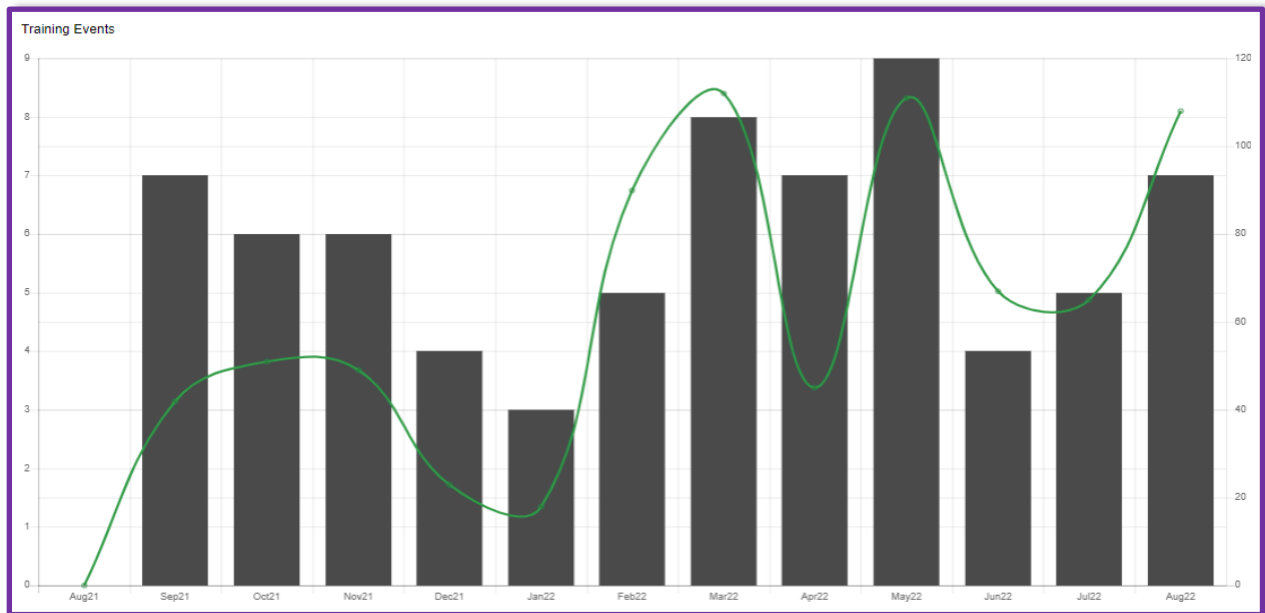



Figure 3

## Transparency on injuries

Let's say an employee gets injured in Department A. Who else knows about it? Who else needs to know about it? How do you get the word out without violating HIPAA?

What about the investigation? Do you want to know what preventive actions the department implemented? In the absence of automated safety management systems, what can you do to promote transparency? Transcribe the information from the injury report, the investigation report and create a template of an injury alert.

PREVENTIVE ACTION TEMPLATE



**ROCKY MOUNT, NC**  
THE CENTER OF IT ALL

Division:  please use drop down menu

Date:

Incident Classification:  please use drop down menu

Incident Type:  please use drop down menu    If Other please describe:

1. Location of incident:  Line 2 from NCIC Form 19

2. Describe fully how injury occurred and what employee was doing when injured: Line 12 from NCIC Form 19

3. List body parts affected:  Line 13 from NCIC Form 19

	Preventive Actions Taken:	Completed (Yes / No)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Key Lessons Learned:

Figure 4

This is a no-name, no-blame document that preserves HIPAA. The investigating supervisor focuses on training all affected employees to reduce recurrence of the injury or accident through a toolbox talk that discusses preventive actions.

What type of environment have you created? A transparent one. One where the lessons learned from an incident are no longer dirty little secrets that die between the injured

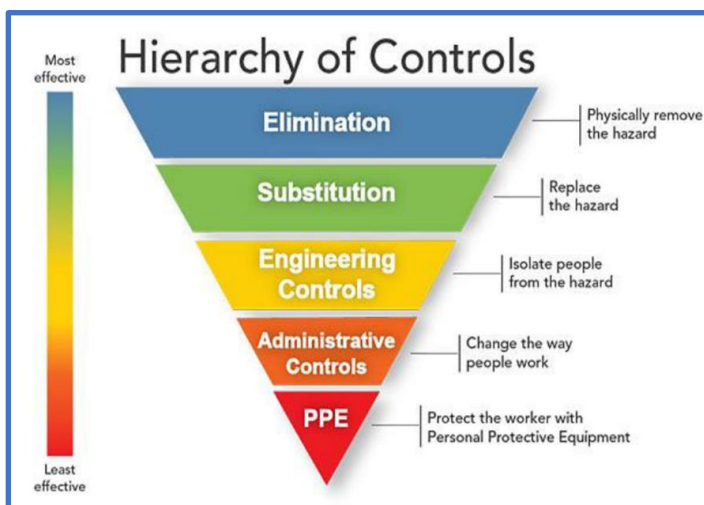
employee and their supervisor. Employee learning must be vicarious in nature sometimes. You can change your processes to impact safety.

## Transparency on projects

As safety professionals, “*other duties as assigned*” is a Tuesday through Friday event. Let’s say you are tasked to create or update a safety policy or procedure. Should you involve your stakeholders for their input? Yes. A perfect opportunity for transparency is to discuss your safety projects in process with stakeholders who are directly affected.

This informs your customers what you are doing to improve safety. From this conversation, you will receive valuable feedback before implementation. Part of that feedback may include a historical perspective to help you navigate any unseen obstacles.

Are your safety policies punitive in nature? Punitive language includes phrases like “*failure to adhere to this policy will result in progressive discipline leading up to and including termination.*” I would remove as much of that caveman language from your policies as you can. Every organization has their “6 Safety Absolutes” or their “7 Deadly Sins.” If an employee violates these policies, their career is over. I will stress to you to limit that language to those few life-altering policies. No one ponders what safety rule they are going to violate today. Our safety policies should be guidelines. If a subordinate division or department wants to use your policy as their policy, great! If they need to build in more specifics that apply to their operation, again, great! The implied task is that your standard from which others may increase not decrease.



How many of you include pictures or flashy graphics with your policies? The Hierarchy of Controls is my favorite. I never miss an opportunity to stick this in a policy or presentation to remind leaders and employees there are other things besides personal protective equipment to abate hazards.

There’s no logic in logistics. What does that mean? Things that work together are not shipped together. It’s an old military adage. Did you know that M16

rifles used to ship without their charging bolt? Bolts were classified secret and the rest of the weapon was not classified. Why are we talking about logistics? Many of your policies reference supporting forms but do not include them. Break the cycle and put the logic back in logistics.

### **Transparency at the management level**

How do you communicate how their safety program is doing at their level? Schedule a quarterly meeting and give them a safety review presentation. Show them the good, the bad and the ugly. Every department has a little bit of each. At the end of it, ask how you can help them take their safety to the next level. Most managers will be stunned at the level of detail you've included.

Concurrently, you may receive feedback on what works, what doesn't, and what data your audience can digest. It may take a few iterations to find that sweet spot that appeals to all. Reduce the amount of safety jargon and keep it simple.



Sharing is caring. Your tools are their tools. If they are struggling with creating a specific safety program, if you know something that is working in another department will help them, coordinate the meeting right there. Expose them to the same tools we have access to: safety program templates, toolbox talks, product videos, training classes, safety magazines, safety articles, risk management articles, training webinars, training seminars and safety conferences. You may receive newsletters, magazines and emails from numerous organizations about safety. You should be a good steward of these resources by reading and passing on these items to your customers for use in toolbox talks and post on their bulletin boards or in their restrooms as part of their Stall Street Journal.

### **Transparency at the employee level**

Inform all employees from new hire orientation to the 30-year vets that you have an open door and open floor policy. You are there to help them and their safety program. Your wish is to see every employee go home the same way they arrived, alert and alive, with 10 fingers and toes attached. No one wants to notify an injured employee's next of kin that their loved one is not coming home. Your time is theirs as you strap your customer service hat on to address their safety concerns. In my city, I've done ride-

along with employees where we talk about the job, safety and what keeps them coming back to work every day. As I observe how they work, I ask and answer questions.

Transparency is a lot of hard work and involves a lot of communication. What does this net us? Relationships and trust across multi-functional branches. It brands us as Supreme Safety Officers of the Universe.



## About the Author



Victor Lawes graduated University of DC and received a BA in Journalism. Victor enlisted in the Army as a Private First Class and finished his 10-year career as a captain. He is a combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm and a peacekeeping veteran of Operation Joint Endeavor. He spent the next 20 years in numerous production leadership roles from supervisor to production manager to EHS manager. He has worked in various industries to include alloy casting, aluminum extrusion, automotive assembly, and plastics. He received his MBA from Indiana Wesleyan University. He received his Six Sigma Green Belt from Villanova University. He has continued to be a trailblazer for African Americans highlighted by his current role as the first African American to serve as a certified Public Sector Manager of Environmental Safety and Health for the City of Rocky Mount, NC. He is a member of NC Public Risk Management Association, the Eastern Carolina Safety Council, and the National Safety Council. He is a recognized Safety Ambassador and Survivor Advocate by the National Safety Council. He recently received the City of Rocky Mount City Manager's Award for excelling at exemplifying the city's core values, customer centered service, professionalism, respect, teamwork, leadership, and supportive work environment. Victor's outside activities include weightlifting, collecting comic books, watching movies, skateboarding and babysitting his grandchildren.

Victor's motto is *"Safety first, safety last, safety always."*