

2008 Monthly ES&H Campaign: May Communication—A Key to Safe Performance

Monday, 12th

“What we have here is a failure to communicate.”

This classic line from *The Captain to Cool Hand Luke* has become a catch phrase for communications gone wrong. In the movie, Luke gets a brutal beating from the prison guards, but in real life the consequences of ineffective communication can mean life or death!

What is communication?

There are many definitions for communication, but most define it as a process or technique for expressing ideas or an exchange of information between individuals.

What is effective communication?

Effective communication is achieved if the delivered message is understood. Former President Ronald Reagan was called “The Great Communicator” because of his skill at speaking in a manner that ordinary people could understand his message. A speaker having a clear purpose enables the listener to be better informed and to take the desired action. Hindrances to good communication include:

- A speaker (sender) being unprepared or poorly planned
- A speaker delivering an unclear message
- Listener (receiver) distractions - poor attitude, cultural/language barriers, pre-conceptions
- Technical difficulties – examples: can’t hear, poor quality documents
- Outdated information – example: not using the latest document revision

How important is effective communication to our environment, safety and health?

Ensuring that the message given is the same as the message received is critical to implementing our **Zero Accident Philosophy**.

Some examples of Bechtel tools for effectively communicating ES&H messages are:

Toolbox / tailgate meetings; safety meetings; all hands meetings; Core Processes and Standard Work Process Procedures; ES&H campaigns; posters; training classes; safety snippets; ES&H videos; Job Safety Analysis (JSAs); calling trees; emergency response plans; controlled descent plans; lift data sheets; confined space entry permits; and material safety data sheets.

Each of these communication tools is designed to help prevent ES&H incidents. The effectiveness of these tools depends on both the efforts of both speakers and the listeners. Let’s recommit ourselves to being better communicators while both speaking and listening.

Visit the Communications ES&H website for more information.