

# People-Based Safety Vs Behavior-Based Safety

More than a decade ago, SPS proposed the need to address both behavior-based and person-based factors to improve workplace safety over the long term. We called this approach “people-based safety” and proposed substituting empowerment, ownership, and interpersonal trust for more traditional safety terms like compliance and enforcement. And we accompanied these new people-oriented concepts with practical procedures.

People-Based Safety strategically integrates the best of behavior-based and person-based safety in order to enrich the culture in which people work, thereby improving job satisfaction, work quality and production, interpersonal relationships, and occupational safety and health. This, in turn, leads to fewer injuries.

## 6 Basics of People-Based Safety:

### Principle 1: Start with Observable Behavior.

Like Behavior-Based Safety, PBS focuses on what people do, analyzes why they do it, and then applies a research-supported intervention strategy to improve what people do. This includes an understanding and assessment of how people’s thoughts and emotions impact safety (especially with employees working alone).

### Principle 2. Look for External and Internal Factors to Improve Behavior.

BBS focuses primarily on safe and at-risk behaviors. PBS teaches people how to address their internal thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes related to improving safety behaviors and reducing injuries.

### Principle 3. Direct with Activators and Motivate with Consequences.

Activators (or antecedents, direct behavior) are only as powerful as the consequences supporting the behavior. In other words, activators tell us what to do in order to receive a positive consequence or avoid an unpleasant consequence. This principle is used to design interventions for improving behavior at individual, group, and organizational levels. It is the intervention model for both PBS and BBS.

### Principle 4. Focus on Positive Consequences to Motivate Behavior.

Using excessive punishment decreases morale and personal responsibility. Unfortunately, the common metric used to rank companies on their safety performance is “total recordable injury rate” (or an analogous count of losses) which puts people in a reactive mindset of “avoiding failure” rather than “achieving success.” While these metrics are necessary, they are often over-emphasized which leads to under-reporting of injuries and a fear-driven work environment. Both BBS and PBS provide proactive measures employees can achieve in order to prevent occupational injury. We set up systems to ensure employees are working to achieve success rather than just to avoid failure.

### Principle 5. Apply the Scientific Method to Improve Intervention.

People’s actions can be objectively observed and measured before and after an intervention process is implemented. This application of the scientific method provides critical feedback upon which to build improvement. This is demonstrated with the DO IT process: D = Define the target safety behavior to change; O = Observe the target action to get a baseline of current performance and to set improvement goals for the future; I = Intervene to change the target behavior in desired

directions; and T = Test the success of the intervention. If it works, target other behaviors. If not, target other interventions for that behavior.

**Principle 6. Consider the Internal Feelings and Attitudes of Others.**

PBS focuses heavily on improving people's thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and awareness to increase safe work practices and decrease risky behavior. This includes information on scanning your environment for hazards, better assessing risk exposure, severity and probability, and understanding one's safety identity.

**How can SPS help?**

SPS provides a range of services to help you develop a PBS process for your organization:

1. **New observation process** development
2. **Evaluate and enhance** an existing observation process
3. **Behavior-based Ergonomics** (Using an observation process to target ergonomics)
4. **Human Error Reduction** (Using an observation process to identify and eliminate human error.)
5. **Behavior-based Incident Analysis**
6. **ACTS Training**

**Additional Links:**

SPS also offers various products to support a new or existing behavioral observation process:

1. **RADAR:** Behavioral Data Analysis Software
2. **BOLT:** Observation Process On-Line Training
3. **Safety Culture Assessment**
4. **Safety Leadership** for Senior Leadership and Supervisors
5. **Improving Safety Communication**