Whose Responsibility Is It?

After an accident has occurred, it is not unusual for those who were around the injured worker to feel guilty. This guilt is part of each person’s inner awareness that there was possibly something they could or should have done to prevent the accident. Sometimes the accident is the result of someone else’s mistakes. But who causes the accident is not as important as who is responsible for the accident, and what steps will be taken to correct future similar accidents from happening. The following is a partial list of responsibilities for safety on the job.

Guide for Discussion

Who’s Responsible? (Discussion Points)

Senior company management?
Crew supervisor?
Each person on the job?
Trained safety professionals?
Company safety committee?

Some Responsibility Rules for Everyone

If it’s unsafe for you then it’s unsafe for the next person and the hazard should be corrected.

Safety doesn’t belong to any one construction craft; rather it is part of every construction craft to be responsible.

If safety doesn’t begin with you, it won’t begin at all.

An Individual’s Responsibility

To yourself
To your family
To your co-workers
To your company

Additional Discussion Notes:  (See Pages 6A and 6B)

Remember:  Workers’ compensation checks won’t pay all the bills nor will they replace the self-esteem one has from being a good provider to their families. Without complete cooperation from everyone on the worksite, it just will not be as safe as it should be.

Attendees:

NOTE: Always promote a discussion on any of the topics covered in the Tool Box Talks. Should any question arise that you cannot answer, don’t hesitate to contact your Employer.
Supplemental Information For
Whose Responsibility Is It
A Tool Box Talk

Instructor Note: This written test can be given to employees, supervisors, the employer and the company safety committee to reinforce training in “Whose Responsibility Is It.” An answer sheet and a discussion topic is found on page 6B.

In our company, who is primarily responsible for the following safety activities?

E  = Employee
SC  = Safety Committee
S  = Supervisor
EMP  = Employer

__________  Complying with Safety Rules
__________  Conducting Safety Training
__________  Recognizing Others for Safety Performances (Good or Bad)
__________  Reporting Injuries or Illnesses
__________  Providing Feedback About Safe Work Procedures
__________  Enforcing Safety Rules
__________  Conducting Area Safety Inspections
__________  Selecting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
__________  Assessing Workplace Hazards
__________  Reporting Hazards
__________  Conducting Accident Investigations
__________  Rewarding Incentives
__________  Recommending Corrective Actions to Eliminate Hazards
__________  Demonstrating Safe Work Practices
__________  Training Safe Work Procedures to New Employees
__________  Ensuring Safe and Healthful Work Areas
__________  Monitoring Safety and Health Programs
__________  Showing Others How to Use Personal Protective Equipment
__________  Reporting Incidents or Near Misses
__________  Eliminating or Reducing Hazards
__________  Developing Safe Work Procedures
__________  Conducting Job Hazard Analyses
Supplemental Information For: Whose Responsibility Is It, Continued

Answer Sheet

Choices

E = Employee
SC = Safety Committee
S = Supervisor
EMP = Employer

Because each company is different, there are no single correct answers. However, one perspective of primary responsibility recommends one of the following answers:

E, SC, S, EMP  Complying with Safety Rules
SC, S, EMP  Conducting Safety Training
SC, S, EMP  Recognizing Others for Safety Performances (Good or Bad)
E, S  Reporting Injuries or Illnesses
E, SC  Providing Feedback About Safe Work Procedures
SC, S, EMP  Enforcing Safety Rules
SC, S, EMP  Conducting Area Safety Inspections
SC, EMP  Selecting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
SC, EMP  Assessing Workplace Hazards
SC  Reporting Hazards
SC, S, EMP  Conducting Accident Investigations
SC, EMP  Reward Incentives
E, SC, S  Recommending Corrective Actions to Eliminate Hazards
SC, S, EMP  Demonstrating Safe Work Practices
SC, S, EMP  Training Safe Work Procedures to New Employees
SC, S, EMP  Ensuring Safe and Healthful Work Areas
SC, S, EMP  Monitoring Safety and Health Programs
SC, S, EMP  Showing Others How to Use Personal Protective Equipment
E, S  Reporting Incidents or Near Misses
E, SC, S, EMP  Eliminating or Reducing Hazards
SC, S, EMP  Developing Safe Work Procedures
S, EMP  Conducting Job Hazard Analyses

Why such emphasis on Supervisors?

WAC 296-800-14020
The employer shall instruct each employee in the recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions and the regulations applicable to his/her work environment to control or eliminate any hazards or other exposure to illness or injury.

Past WISHA rulings have indicated that:
"Any supervisor or persons in charge of work are held to be agents of the employer in the discharge of their authorized duties."

Authorized duties include:
(a) The execution in a safe manner of the work under their supervision;
(b) The safe conduct of their crew while under their supervision; and
(c) The safety of all workers under their supervision."

It makes good sense to hold supervisors responsible for the employees placed under their charge. It builds a sense of teamwork and shared responsibility for safe productivity. Supervisors are generally closer to the employees under their charge and better able to positively influence positive behavioral change.