


CONTRA COSTA WATER DISTRICT
Interoffice Memorandum

DATE: March 5, 2010

TO: Operations and Maintenance Employees

FROM: Pete Schoemann 

SUBJECT: Reporting and Resolving Safety Concerns

The objective of this memo is to provide guidance to staff on reporting and resolving safety concerns or issues in a timely manner. Some employees feel that the District focuses on "assigning blame" versus "lessons learned" with regards to how it responds to safety incidents or concerns. As a result, some employees do not report near-misses or observed unsafe work practices. Trust remains an issue. However, for safety's sake, it is important that when safety concerns come up, they are quickly reported and resolved so work can progress and everyone can benefit from lessons learned as we move forward as a Department. As stated in the CCWD Safe Practices Handbook, "Any employee may stop District work without fear of retaliation if he/she believes the task must be evaluated to determine necessary safety precautions." This directive to stop work applies to both District work and outside contractor activities. If possible, communicate concerns directly and immediately to the person(s) performing the work, especially if the situation is life threatening.

The goal in resolving safety concerns is to solve them quickly at the lowest possible level. Safety concerns should be communicated directly to the employee "in-charge" of the work activity or the contractor's employee/foreman. If the concern is not resolved or there is disagreement, employees are encouraged to bring the item to their supervisor and/or the supervisor in charge of the work. In the case of outside contractors, the construction inspector or construction administrator should be contacted. Employees should provide as much detail as possible and avoid speculation when uncertain of the facts. Employees also have the option of reporting safety concerns to the Site Safety Committee Representative instead of their supervisor. The Site Safety Representative is responsible for reporting the concern to the employee's supervisor and will act as the point of contact between the supervisor and the employee, keeping the employee informed as to the status and follow-up actions.

The next level of safety concern resolution is the Supervisor. Supervisors should try and resolve the safety concern at their level, using the Safety Officer as a resource. If the concern is not resolved at the Supervisor level, the concern will be brought to the Superintendent. The Superintendent and the Supervisor shall keep the employee and/or the Site Safety Representative informed as to the status of the item and follow-up actions.

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If the Superintendent is unable to resolve the issue, he/she shall bring the item to the attention of the Division Manager. The Division Manager will keep the Superintendent updated as to the status of the item and follow-up actions.

It is important that we all work together to improve how we communicate and resolve safety concerns as it is fundamental to the overall safety culture improvements.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me.

PS/SZ

cc: Jerry Brown
Steve Welch
Spiro Zapantis