



JAY JOHNSTON

The Safety Leader

A Forum for Leadership Development with Jay Johnston

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Wisdom Shared

This issue of the Safety Leader will focus on **Safety Follow Through.**

A few weeks ago in Ghent West Virginia there was a tragic accident at a convenience store that killed two gas company personnel, two emergency personnel and seriously injured numerous others.

Unfortunately, we cannot change the past, but our actions today can affect what happens tomorrow. The very outcome of this tragedy will call for a thorough investigation. In fact, the US Chemical Safety Board is reviewing the situation right now. In hindsight, such investigations will determine if guidelines and proper procedures were followed.

Here are probably a few of the questions they may ask:

Had the technician who was switching the propane service been trained on liquid transfer and tank evacuation procedures? Had the local Fire Department and Rescue Squad taken the Propane Emergencies training? Had the business been given safety information and instructed on what to do in the event they smelled gas? Was the system up to code?

I believe we all have good intentions of completing our “to do list” when it comes to safety. If we just knew when and where we could prevent accidents. But that is not how life works.

In real life there are lots of distractions. Our plates are full and we busy.

Unfortunately, every once in a while; a low frequency event rocks our world in a severe and catastrophic way.

We are never prepared for such surprises, however we can prevent many of them from occurring by following through on our best safety practices.

A true leader must stay focused on issues that require safety follow through.

Follow through to Safety Target

In sports, follow through is usually one of the key ingredients to success.

Tiger Woods will hit a clinker if he does not visualize his shot, follow through and finish his stroke to achieve desired results. Trap shooters usually miss when they stop the swing of their shotgun. A short stop in baseball will overthrow the first baseman if he releases the ball too early.

The parallels between life and sports are similar in that we usually miss our target when we fail to follow through.

When it comes to safety and training at your company – how do your intentions compare with your follow through?

Last month I included a neat note from a client who noted the follow through of one of his managers regarding non-owned cylinder filling compliance after one of my safety programs.

Safety leadership is founded in inspecting what we expect.

When we follow through with plans designed to promote safe growth – we prevent accidents and protect the bottom line.

A true leader defines, sees and follows through on safety targets that are critical to achieving safety success.

Office Staff Play Important Role in Follow Through

During a recent safety audit with a client, we discovered that safety material was being sent out, however documentation was incomplete and unprotected. We also discovered that the number of system checks on file was very low and needed to be improved upon.

I reviewed documentation procedures with office staff to include a new stamp for files that said, “Safety Material sent ____Date”. The service techs began to do a complete system check on every out of gas to comply with insurance company requirements of higher system check numbers.

The stamp was ordered and is in continual use.

Many times companies forget that the office staff is front and center when a leak call comes in. At that time, there is no one more important. That is why they need to have specific training and clear instructions on how to handle customers with problems.

Many companies buy my book “The Practice of Safety” for office staff as well as those employees who are drivers, service techs and plant workers.

Sometimes the best ideas for controlling the safety process and managing the documentation of information come from office staff after they attend my one of my safety programs.

A true leader understands that safety follow through must include all employees including office staff.

What would you do?

Last month I asked the question about an out of gas situation where the customer is not home. Here are some of the responses:

If we get a call from some one at work we do not dispatch the driver until there is going to be some one at home. Our procedure is to do a leak test before we can put an “out of gas” back into service.

Chris Klotz
Sapp Brothers Petroleum

My policy would be to make the delivery, attempt to perform the leak test; if a satisfactory test was completed and documented I would shut the system down and tag the tank and house to call the office to restore service. If the leak test did not pass I would still tag the tank and house but would also lock the tank down to insure that we did perform the leak test and restore the service ourselves. Thanks!

Chip Willis
NOCO Energy Corp.
Akron Propane Operations Manager

**Note to readers ...In my opinion failing to do leak checks under the philosophy that “it is cold and they just ran out of gas” is an example of poor follow through - not to mention a violation of code requirements.*

Here in Minnesota a recent explosion killed a homeowner after an Out of Gas. A leak check was performed, however this tragic accident involved work performed by the homeowner and a subcontractor after the driver left.



[Click here to watch video](#) of me telling folks how to be safe with propane.

Safety Follow Through requires Leadership

Many times I find when doing safety audits that what goes on beyond watchful eyes of management is fraught with compromise.

One such example is chock blocks. When I see a driver who fails to put his chock blocks down, I know it is not the first time.

Without observation, warning and consequences – why would any driver adhere to inconvenient rules? And if they ignore that rule what other rules do they choose to ignore? Do they really do a leak check on every out of gas? Do they perform a thorough system check or just check off the boxes?

I do not believe this is always the fault of the employees. Like children, it is the nature of some employees to resist authority and challenge issues they may find inconvenient.

Like parents, our ability to motivate compliance has to do whether we inspect what we expect or are too lazy to do it.

One time I told a client that Zana and I have been lucky with our children, who are now adults and succeeding in ways that make us proud and thankful. My friend's response was "I don't believe it was luck. Those kids turned out that way because of the job you two did as parents".

While I am still thankful and reluctant to claim credit – he is right.

Leadership can only be effective when we follow through by inspecting what we expect, by having consequences for failure to act and rewards for achieving success.

So I ask you to look at your employees and co-workers and tell me whether they consistently follow through or occasionally hold your company safety policies hostage?

A true leader follows through by inspecting what is expected to achieve safe results.

What Would You Do?

Your most profitable non-owned fill station has installed a car wash vacuum without explosion proof electronics within 5 feet of your dispensing tank.

The local fire authority has jurisdiction, but approved installation.

Should the driver fill the tank? Should anyone fill cylinders? What would you do? Why?

Discuss this situation at your next safety meeting. Examine alternatives and determine appropriate action. If you send me your thoughts on how your company would handle such a situation, I will publish a summary of those results in the April issue. Send to: jay@thesafetyleader.com

Safety Audits and Programs Save Million\$

I have performed safety and insurance audits all over the country for propane marketers who care about safety. Many marketers bring me in to put on a safety program at the same time.



Often owners will buy a book for all attendees when I speak. It's always appreciated and it's an inexpensive way to say safety is important at your company.

You don't have to experience a serious accident to prevent one. Just ask attendees of one of my programs.

For more information about how to schedule a memorable safety program and/or an effective safety/insurance audit call 952-935-5350.

How to Use this Newsletter

This newsletter is primarily designed to encourage proactive thinking and leadership development. It is filled with opportunities for you to expand an old idea or tryout a new concept.

You may notice that this issue was focused on **Safety Follow Through**.

If you use this issue in a safety meeting – spend some time talking about how to encourage each other and show the support required to achieve safe growth. **Discuss the Problems. Design Solutions.**

A true safety leader follows through on safety issues to make sure each job is finished correctly to ensure tomorrows profitable results.

Jay Johnston – Editor

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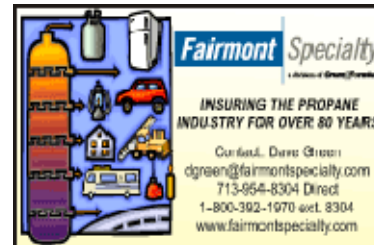
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