

Greetings all, Today's bulletin is about Culture and The Hierarchy of Control.

I talked about the Hierarchy of Controls in [Bulletin 243](#) and covered off on 5 different controls ranging from Elimination to PPE... i.e. "Don't do the dangerous activity" vs "Do it but wear a helmet and gloves". Simple stuff...

HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS



BUT, is there a missing control here that trumps all of them? I believe there is and it's the CULTURE/ATTITUDE on site which can be either the knight in shining armour or the root of all evil. The safety culture will dictate the way the workers view, comprehend and implement the philosophy above.

Unless you are in some way passionate about your work it's unlikely that you'll be a leader and a good example for others to follow. This applies to safety also. We need to have a culture of proactively looking out for hazards and anyone behaving in a hazardous manor.

The workers must understand, believe and embrace what they are doing to mitigate risk to the point where they would do it even if it was not mandatory.

They need to pull each other into line when someone does something that endangers them or a member of the crew.

Operators should not be applauded and encouraged to operate cranes above their limits. On social media when we see photos of sub-par slinging or outrigger timber packing, the captions should be condemning the action, not laughter and thumbs up.

We are in the midst of a skill shortage in our industry reflected by the prevalence of labour hire and casuals who are often unfamiliar with their working environment, equipment, tasks and colleagues. Whilst

not ideal, this is reality and we need to find a way to function safely as a team. Anyone unfamiliar with what they're doing, need to be empowered and confident to go straight up to the supervisor or leading hand and say exactly that rather than pretending to know what they're doing. If you're having a genuine crack and are making the best of the situation you should not be penalised.

Recent data from Worksafe is pointing to the majority of crane tipping incidents being from experienced operators. This would indicate that for what ever reason, many machines are operating closer to their limits more often. Perhaps this is due to time and financial pressures prohibiting the option of moving a crane to a better position if already set up. Perhaps the load was heavier than expected and a larger crane was better suited but unavailable at short notice. The culture must reward and protect those that put their hand up and say "too risky – let's rethink this"

Things were different a couple of decades ago. We had riggers riding the hook and walking beams 30 floors up without fall protection. Nowadays we use lanyards handrails and Alimaks and rightfully so, but there is a distinct difference between the way workers operated as a team back then compared with some of the crews today. In that era, they were a tighter self-moderating unit with stronger leadership which is what we need to tap in to in the current era.

Finally, an important biproduct of this strong culture is morale. Workers with empowerment and confidence and a sense of belonging are more productive, alert and learn faster. Bullying is a whole separate topic and is severely detrimental in many ways for morale and the culture we strive for.

In Summary, the culture and attitude is the fabric that underpins what and how we do every task, especially relating to workplace safety.

Having a strong safety culture fostering the following attributes is vital.

- Strong leadership and a tight unit.
- Culture of looking out for (genuine) hazards
- Empowerment to report hazards
- Condemning recklessness
- Fostering and assisting those less experienced
- Zero tolerance for bullying/intimidation