

# Visible Management Leadership and Commitment to Safety & Health

When implementing a safety management system (SMS), your overall success lies on the shoulders of the leaders and managers of your organization. Leadership alone can make safety and health (S&H) an organizational priority. Leaders and managers set the tone, provide a path forward, allocate the necessary resources, and, above all, motivate your workforce to support S&H activities. If leadership and management consistently support and show commitment to S&H, it is likely the rest of the workforce also holds S&H as a priority. This one pager emphasizes the importance of management leadership and commitment in an SMS, and provides ideas on how your leaders and managers can visibly show their support for S&H.

*What's important to your boss is important to you!*



The image illustrates U.S. Navy leadership touring facilities. Image retrieved from Google.

## SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Management leadership and commitment is a core factor in nearly every SMS model. The objective of management leadership and commitment is to secure the involvement of the workforce in all aspects of S&H and encourage attitudes for continuous improvement. Non-commitment from top leaders and managers may lead the workforce to question SMS and S&H efforts, which may lead non-compliance with organizational S&H rules and expectations. Management leadership and commitment is a necessary component for the success of any SMS. The commitment must be visible at the leadership level and propagate down through all levels of the organization, including contractors.

## RESPONSIBILITY

All levels of leaders and managers, from the Commanding Officer down to the first line supervisor, are responsible for creating a positive S&H culture. Your leaders and managers must realize the journey to safety excellence either starts at the top, or it doesn't start at all. This commitment may be demonstrated through their actions, to include:

- Communicating and demonstrating the vision of your SMS,
- Holding themselves and all personnel accountable for S&H responsibilities, and
- Rewarding and recognizing groups and/or individuals for S&H excellence.

When developing local S&H policies and programs, consider incorporating responsibilities and duties related to visible management leadership and commitment.



DoD Safety Management Center of Excellence

## IMPACT ON CULTURE

Leaders and managers must be positive and proactive role models, promoting and supporting S&H as a core value of your organization. It is evident when leaders and managers hold S&H as a core value, as S&H is integrated into all organization processes and organization-related decisions, and sets the pace and tone for your S&H culture.

A positive S&H culture generally leads to lower injury and illness rates, improvements in production, employee retention, and positive workplace attitudes.



Image retrieved from Bing Images (Creative Commons)

## VISIBLE SUPPORT

How your organizations leaders and managers show their support for SMS and S&H programs may vary, but should include a visible presence in the workplace. For many SMS models, you may be asked how your leaders and managers visibly show their commitment to S&H; be sure to have some answers queued up!

Here are a few examples to share with leaders and managers in your organization:

TOP LEADERS	MIDDLE MANAGERS	FIRST LINE SUPERVISORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set the organizational S&amp;H mission and vision</li><li>• Draft, sign, and communicate a S&amp;H/SMS commitment letter</li><li>• Take action to address identified hazards and negative trends</li><li>• Set organizational S&amp;H goals</li><li>• Have representation in safety meetings</li><li>• Acknowledge S&amp;H excellence during award ceremonies</li><li>• Lead safety walkthroughs in work areas</li><li>• Ensure open lines of communication</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote and execute the organizational safety vision and goals</li><li>• Set S&amp;H objectives (to meet established S&amp;H goals)</li><li>• Encourage and support employee involvement</li><li>• Engage employees in one on one safety conversations</li><li>• Hold personnel accountable for following S&amp;H rules</li><li>• Participate in safety inspections and safety meetings</li><li>• Recognize safety excellence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lead by example</li><li>• Ensure employees understand and follow S&amp;H rules</li><li>• Inform leaders and managers when employees should receive recognition</li><li>• Actively support employee involvement in S&amp;H activities</li><li>• Implement a stop work program for hazardous conditions</li></ul>

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smcx.org/>.