

Off-the-Job Safety

A SUCCESSFUL SPECIAL
EMPHASIS PROJECT

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Off-the-Job Safety

A Successful Special Emphasis Project

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to the firm's Employee's Assistance Fund. The fund provides tax-free cash grants to employees who are facing unexpected difficulties. Circumstances that may qualify to receive financial assistance are:

- serious illness or injury to the employee or the employee's spouse, child or parent;
- natural disasters such as hurricanes or tornadoes;
- extreme circumstances such as a home fire;
- death of an employee's spouse, child or parent.

Donations to the fund are tax-deductible. A considerable amount of money was donated to the fund during the helmet order period. Donations to the fund increased by 25% during the ordering month compared to the previous month and giving increased during the following month. This special emphasis off-the-job safety project was winning undertaking in many respects.

Conclusion
The importance of having an effective corporate safety program should be top of an organization's hierarchy. For many safety professionals, education and training has focused on regulatory compliance and techniques of occupational safety management. The value of implementing off-the-job safety projects may not be fully realized. Safety undertakings that would be classified as nonoccupational can easily be perceived as an extension of the corporate safety program. Many organizations respond to projects when returns on investment is perceived. When developing a special emphasis project, it is important to analyze what can be of the most value to the employee and the organization. Promoting an off-the-job safety project involving not just the employee's safety but the employee's family safety can reap additional benefits. With a little research, an organization can easily establish

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to an organization's corporate social responsibility policy. This type of written policy is a good business practice that relates how well an organization serves and is involved with its community, which can be a business necessity. As safety professionals, our mission should include not only the prevention of occupational incidents but also incidents that can happen to our coworkers away from work. For many of us, this could be considered the next frontier. *PSJ*

References
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BEST PRACTICES

OFF-THE-JOB SAFETY A Successful Special Emphasis Project By Dennis Burks

Many employers have established exceptional occupational safety programs that have resulted in great return on investment leading to reduced incident rates, low insurance costs, minimal regulatory issues and high employee morale. Having a great on-the-job safety program is an ongoing process.

Although many employers maintain good programs, they may not have invested in off-the-job safety. Most incidents occur off-the-job but these incidents can affect a company's bottom line involving factors such as health insurance premiums and workforce reliability and readiness to perform. The return on investment for an off-the-job safety program can be higher than that of a workplace safety program. An off-the-job safety program could be considered an extension of the workplace safety program. An OSHA professional might consider this to be the next frontier.



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Special Emphasis Project
A great way to start or build on an existing off-the-job safety program could involve a special emphasis project. An organization could focus on any of the various safety concerns that workers face off the job. This article presents an example of a special emphasis project that has worked well for an architecture, engineering and infrastructure firm focused on prevention of head injuries in children from bicycle or skateboard. According to Nationwide Children's Hospital (2012):

- Every year in the U.S., nearly 400,000 children visit hospital emergency departments with bicycle-related injuries.
- The most common injuries are bruises, cuts and sprains to the head, but the most serious are head injuries.
- Nine out of 10 bicycle riders who die in crashes are not wearing helmets.
- Wearing a bicycle helmet can reduce the risk of brain injury by up to 88%.

According to Brainiac (2011), a national multimedia project offering information and resources about traumatic brain injury:

- "Universal bicycle helmet use by children ages 5 to 15 can prevent 36,000 to 45,000 head injuries and 18,000 to 55,000 scalp and face injuries annually.
- One child out of seven will suffer a head injury as a result of a bicycle crash.
- Biking is the cause of more visits to the emergency room for children ages 5 to 14 than any other sport.

In this special emphasis project, a child's bike helmet was offered free of

The company website displays the helmet giveaway information and a suggested \$10 donation to the firm's Employee Assistance Fund, creating an added benefit to this off-the-job safety program.

charge to all employees who ordered one for their child or grandchild who rides a bicycle or skateboard. The helmets were examined by a number of employees who are seasoned bicycle enthusiasts. The helmets that were evaluated met standards set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The firm's logo was printed on the sides of all the helmets ordered. To receive the child's bike helmet, employees placed orders during a selected month on a specially designed website. (The firm's vendor for the helmets designed and managed the website.)

The corporate communications process and the quarterly safety newsletter communicated both the importance of children using a bike helmet and the employee ordering procedures. Orders for the helmets came immediately after the announcements. The company estimated how many employees' children or grandchildren would need and request helmets. To estimate the numbers of helmets that might be ordered, the human resources department analyzed a company census of dependent children who were enrolled in its digital database. A large number of helmets were provided, a total of 503. In case of low employee interest and orders, a backup plan was developed to donate the helmets to the local safety council, which has a variety of children's safety programs for the community. At the conclusion of the ordering month, 371 employees had placed orders requesting 488 helmets. The helmets were distributed across the U.S., from the east to the west coast. The few helmets remaining were requested by employees who forgot to order.

Returns on Investment
This example of the off-the-job safety special emphasis project was a big success that other organizations might consider. The benefits or return on investment considered in the development of this project were:

- providing safety motivation to the workforce;
- increasing employee interest concerning off-the-job safety;
- reducing the number of insurance claims due to child head injury and the associated costs;
- further demonstrating top management's commitment and involvement in employee safety;
- enhancing the firm's public image; visibility of the firm's logo on the side of the helmets is surrounding communities;
- demonstrating the firm as a premier employer for prospective and existing employees;
- most importantly, protecting one of the firm's most precious resources, employees' children.

Recognizing these successes could conclude this article. However, this particular project pursued into further success. An executive from the firm recommended that the ordering website suggest a \$10 donation



Off-the-Job Safety Considerations

- ▶ An off-the-job safety program could be considered an extension of the on-the-job safety program
 - ▶ Most accidents occur off-the-job
 - ▶ Can affect a company's bottom line
 - ▶ Involving health insurance premiums
 - ▶ Having a reliable workforce ready to perform

Off-the-Job Safety Perspective

- ▶ For many safety professionals, our education and training has focused on
 - ▶ Regulatory compliance (i.e., OSHA, MSHA, etc.)
 - ▶ Techniques of occupational safety management
- ▶ The value of implementing off-the-job safety projects may not be fully realized

Off-the-Job Safety Initiating a Project

- ▶ Many organizations respond to projects when the *return on investment is perceived*
- ▶ With a little research within an organization, a return of investment can be easily established concerning economic and humanitarian concerns
- ▶ This could also be seen as a contributor to a *Corporate Social Responsibility Policy* that your organization has established

Off-the-Job Safety

Researched Children Injuries

- ▶ According to Nationwide Children's Hospital, an academic pediatric medical center:
 - ▶ Every year in the U.S., almost *400,000 children* visit the emergency department with *bicycle-related injuries*
 - ▶ The most common injuries are bruises, cuts and broken bones, but the most serious are head injuries
 - ▶ *9 out of 10 bicycle riders who die in crashes are not wearing helmets*
 - ▶ *Wearing a bicycle helmet can lower the risk of brain injury by up to 88 percent*

Off-the-Job Safety Benefit Proposal

- ▶ The benefits or return on investment that were considered:
 - ▶ Providing safety motivation to our workforce, increased employee interest concerning off-the-job safety
 - ▶ Possible elimination of cost to the firm of having a child head injury insurance claim
 - ▶ Further demonstrating top management's commitment and involvement in the employees' safety
 - ▶ Enhancing the firm's public image
 - ▶ The firm's logo (on the side of the helmets) being seen in our communities
 - ▶ Demonstrating the firm being a premier employer for prospective and existing employees
 - ▶ Most important, protecting one of the firm's most precious resources, our employees' children

Off-the-Job Safety Special Emphasis Project

- ▶ A child's *bike helmet* was offered free of charge to all employees who ordered one for their child or grandchild who rides a bicycle or skateboard
- ▶ The firm's logo was on the sides of all the helmets ordered
- ▶ Employees placed their orders and address for shipment during a selected month on a specially designed website
- ▶ The firm's vendor for the helmets designed and managed the website



Off-the-Job Safety Special Emphasis Project



Off-the-Job Safety Additional Benefit

- ▶ This particular project parlayed into further success
- ▶ A recommendation was made by one of the executives from the firm to suggest a donation of \$10 to the firm's **Employee's Assistance Fund** on the ordering web site
- ▶ The purpose of the Fund is to provide tax-free cash grants to employees who are facing unexpected difficulties
- ▶ Circumstances that may qualify to receive financial assistance are:
 - ▶ Serious illness or injury to the employee or the employee's spouse, child or parent
 - ▶ Natural disasters such as hurricanes or tornadoes
 - ▶ Extreme circumstances such as a home fire
 - ▶ Death of an employee's spouse, child or parent

Off-the-Job Safety

Concluding Thought

- ▶ As safety professionals, our mission should not just include the prevention of occupational accidents but also accidents that can occur to our co-workers (and family) away from work
- ▶ For many of us, this could be considered as our next frontier