Use safety as a recruiting tool; learn from the best

Issue: Safety-conscious companies look beyond the bottom line.

Benefit: In addition to reducing costs and boosting morale, safety can be promoted as a recruiting tool to applicants.

Action: Reduce accidents using tips from America's safest companies.

Too many employers look at on-the-job injuries as a cost of doing business. Not smart.

By taking a tougher stance on workplace safety, organizations can cut their workers' comp, disability and absence costs. Plus, safe companies can use their exemplary safety records as another feather in their cap in recruiting.

How? One simple way is to use the Careers page on your Web site to mention your safety record or your partnership with an OSHA or local safety agency. Another way: Earn recognition from a safety agency or advocacy group for your extra efforts.

Example: Occupational Hazards magazine just announced its list of America's "safest companies" for 2005. The dozen companies have among the lowest injury and accident/lost-time rates in their respective industries. That's crucial because more than half of the 4.4 million annual workplace injuries and illnesses cause lost work time, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Some practical best practices of these safest companies:

- Safety and audit committees that include managers and employees.

- Awards given to employees and facilities with the best safety records.

- Employees trained to spot and report safety hazards, and to give ideas to improve safety via suggestion programs. Make all employees feel part of the safety team. (Inland Printing in Missouri distributed T-shirts exclaiming "Member of Inland Safety Team.")
• Senior management attends safety meetings and provides public statements in support of safety.

• Promote safety through health and safety fairs.

Among the winners, an Illinois manufacturer cut the time it takes to resolve safety issues from two months to two days, and a California energy company reviews the safety performance of contractors to identify safety weak points.

Online resource: For more tips on creating a safe workplace and to find out how to land on next year’s "safest companies" list, go to www.occupationalhazards.com/safety_zones.