

Safety focus drives Ford's onboarding for hourly workers

When Ford hires new factory employees, their initial training includes a heavy dose of workplace health and safety training. The car maker's "Sustainable Workforce" effort aims to keep hourly employees safe and healthy, starting on their first day. It focuses on four components:

High-performance hiring: Ford gets nearly 30 applications for every open job, so the HR team narrows the field by testing candidates on skills like reading, arithmetic, defect spotting and manual assembly. Also assessed: abilities like work ethic, conscientiousness and teamwork.

Advanced training: New operators get several weeks of training in the classroom, in a simulated factory and in an actual factory. Semi-skilled operators receive up to six months of training, and skilled trades get up to nine months.

Protection and safety: Ford's safety process requires employees to "stop, think and plan" before taking on any task, from replacing a light bulb to working on an assembly line. *The result:* The number of injuries has dropped by 90% since 1999, and lost-time injuries are a fraction of the number in 2000, the company reports.

Health and well-being for life: With a focus on hourly employees, the Dearborn, Mich.-based company is piloting a program that offers personalized care to help participants manage chronic health problems and prevent future illnesses.

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