



Workplace Safety: Using Recognition & Rewards to Incentivize Employees

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	3
<u>Understanding the Role of Recognition & Rewards in Health and Safety.</u>	5
<u>Health and Safety Recognition Program Best Practices</u>	8
<u>Building Long-Term Health & Safety Culture Through Recognition</u>	11
<u>Incentivizing Employees Through Policies and Programs</u>	13
<u>Communicating the Program and Setting Expectations</u>	14
<u>Utilizing Technology and Tools for Recognition</u>	14
<u>Evaluating and Improving Employee Safety Recognition Programs</u>	15
<u>Final Thoughts</u>	16

1. INTRODUCTION

Health and safety are important issues in every workplace. According to the [Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses](#) (SOII) and the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI):

5,486

fatal work injuries
across the United
States in 2022.

 **5,7 %**

increase of fatal
work injuries in the
US compared to
2021.

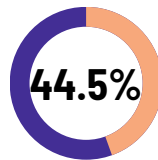
2,804,200

non-fatal workplace injuries
and illnesses recorded over
the same period.

[In Canada :](#)

36,736

occupational injuries
registered in 2021.



of occupational injuries
were considered
disabling injuries.

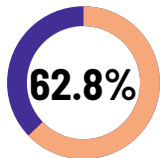
 **3.4 %**

increase in disabling
injuries compared to
2020.



To protect workers and ensure compliance, businesses should adopt a variety of policies and practices that engage employees in ways that foster active participation, promote a safety-first mindset, and encourage continuous improvement in workplace safety.

Recognizing employees' health and safety efforts with positive feedback is crucial to the success of such programs:



accident reduction with the implementation of safety initiatives centered on positive reinforcement.



increase in safety measures when integrating daily feedback and incentives such as earned time off for meeting compliance targets.



labor cost when implementing reinforcement strategies.

The benefits are clear: recognition, incentives and rewards promote better working habits and foster a safer working environment. In this guide, we'll show you how to build a strong health and safety culture through the art of recognition and rewards.





2. UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF RECOGNITION & REWARDS IN HEALTH AND SAFETY

Employee recognition is a strategic initiative designed to support people in professional roles. There are many ways to recognize staff in the workplace, from verbal praise and written communication to tangible gifts and rewards. You can recognize employees based on workplace efforts, years of service, the fulfillment of specific projects, protocols or the improvement of health and safety measures.

In the context of preventing accidents and injuries, companies with a recognition program focused on health and safety at work have seen their number of incidents **decrease by 37%.**

[According to a study](#) by Paul Goodrum from the University of Colorado Boulder and Manish Gangwar from the Indian School of Business, recognition programs have a significant impact on health and safety outcomes.

Their research involved the construction industry, with companies that had "safety incentive programs" experiencing a **44.16% reduction in the mean lost-time workday injury rate over a two-year period.**

Thus, when employees are recognized for their contributions, they're likely to adopt positive habits and build a health and safety culture.

Additionally, **employee recognition also helps maintain high retention rates**, which has a positive impact on the overall stability and security of the organization. Studies indicate that organizations with effective recognition programs experience significantly lower employee turnover rates, **reducing risks associated with onboarding new staff and maintaining team cohesion.**

Moreover, **recognition and reward programs enhance safety compliance and promote proactive behaviors towards workplace safety.** Engaged and appreciated employees are more diligent in following safety protocols and are more likely to report hazards and unsafe conditions. This collective commitment to safety not only protects employees but also supports the company's overall operational efficiency and reputation.



Several independent studies support these findings. For instance, a comprehensive survey by the [Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development \(CIPD\)](#) revealed that **workplaces with robust recognition programs see improvements in employee well-being and safety behaviors, leading to reduced workplace accidents and injuries**. Additionally, research published in the [International Journal for Quality in Health Care](#) highlights the correlation between employee recognition, increased engagement, and enhanced safety performance in healthcare settings.

These insights demonstrate the critical role of recognition and rewards in fostering a safer, more secure, and productive workplace environment.

A Note on Employee Wellness

Employee well-being is essential to workplace safety, and can be effectively encouraged through recognition and rewards. Recognizing efforts promotes better mental and physical health among employees, which then translates into a positive work environment, where employees feel valued and supported on a daily basis. A culture of appreciation reduces stress, improves mental health and encourages participation in physical activities. This holistic approach raises morale, reduces absenteeism, improves productivity and supports the organization's health and safety objectives.



3. HEALTH AND SAFETY RECOGNITION PROGRAM BEST PRACTICES

Health and safety initiatives are constantly evolving to meet the needs of modern businesses. As standards are developed, refined, and codified over time, they become recognized as best practices. Governments typically enforce health and safety protocols, and industry leaders develop best practices as a way to support regulations. Along with workplace rules and guidelines, best practices have been developed around health and safety recognition.

The following practices support a robust health and safety culture through the act of recognition:

Offer Diverse Recognition Options



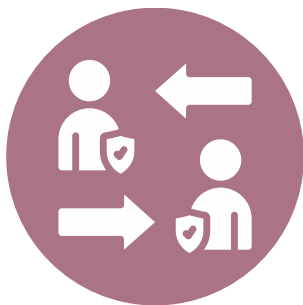
There are many ways to recognize your employees. **To get the best results, it's important to adopt a range of methods.**

Different types of recognition suit different industries, locations, and people. Employees have vastly different personal preferences, and they also achieve very different things. There are lots of recognition options available, from verbal praise and written appreciation to certificates, tangible rewards, and public acknowledgments.

Incorporate Real-Time Recognition



The **real-time acknowledgment** of safe behaviors and achievements **reinforces the importance of health and safety in the workplace.** There are many ways to offer fast recognition, including instant verbal communication and a program based on immediate rewards or points. This is vital to health and safety, which relies on fast response times and consistent application.



Encourage Peer-to-Peer Recognition

For recognition programs to be successful, they need to involve everyone. While top-down initiatives can be powerful, **peer-to-peer programs are often more sustainable**. Employees will readily listen to their peers, learning from the experiences of others within a collaborative and supportive environment. One example of a peer-to-peer health and safety program involves employees nominating their colleagues for safety behavior through an online platform. Managers can then review these nominations and award points to the recognized employees, which can eventually be redeemed for rewards.

Customize Recognition to Fit the Industry

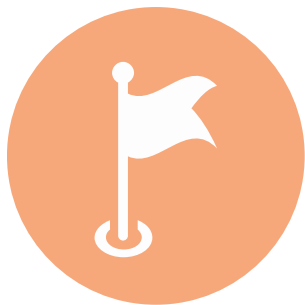
Health and safety recognition is not one-size-fits-all. **Programs work better when they're tailored to the specific needs and standards of your industry**. It's important to customize the guidelines, rewards, and incentives of your program with industry practices and preferences.



For example, in the mining industry, a peer-to-peer recognition program might involve employees nominating colleagues for consistently adhering to safety protocols during high-risk operations, with rewards such as extra time off or specialized safety equipment. In contrast, on a construction site, recognition could focus on teamwork and proactive hazard reporting, with rewards including skill development opportunities or bonuses for team safety achievements.

While some industry workers are accustomed to points-based rewards, others are more likely to benefit from increased responsibilities or tangible gifts.

Celebrate Safety Milestones



Workplace health and safety, being an important issue, is worthy of celebration. It's vital to acknowledge safety milestones, such as achieving a set number of accident-free days or meeting specific safety goals. **This helps foster a collective health and safety culture, motivating team leaders and employees alike.** Industry-specific rewards can be used to mark milestones, such as training opportunities, professional certifications, and equipment upgrades.

Integrate Recognition Into Daily Work



Along with occasional milestones, employee recognition should be delivered on a consistent basis. **When recognition is made part of the standard workday, staff will stay motivated and make adjustments more readily.** This can include daily or weekly shout-outs during team meetings and morning rounds on the floor, or any form of communication regarding safety achievements. Consider implementing gamification elements such as leaderboards and challenges to make safety goals fun and keep them front of mind.



4. BUILDING LONG-TERM HEALTH & SAFETY CULTURE THROUGH RECOGNITION

To support health and safety practices in the workplace, you need to create an inclusive culture. **From new employees to established leaders, everyone needs to be on board.** Recognition programs are the best way to build a robust and sustainable health and safety culture. The following three steps are a great place to start:

Set Clear Goals and Criteria

From the outset, it's vital to establish specific objectives for your health and safety recognition program. What exactly are you trying to achieve? How many resources can you devote? Where do you see your business in the months and years ahead? During the initial phase of a health and safety initiative, you need to define clear criteria for recognizing achievements. **When you list milestones, behaviors, and contributions, you're creating a roadmap for leaders and employees to follow.**

Budget for Health & Safety Recognition Rewards

As in all business matters, money is crucial. After setting clear goals and performance criteria, establish a budget for rewards and incentives. Decide on the type of feedback for safety achievements and how much you're willing to invest. **While a health and safety recognition program can be affordable, it requires careful budgeting and management.**

Empower Health & Safety through Recognition Initiatives

Health and safety recognition is a great way to empower your people. **To get employees excited about health and safety programs, you need to get creative and find a strategy that works for you.** This is not a one-time deal; it involves developing and reviewing initiatives to build culture over time.



There are many ways to empower your people, with the following practices among the best:



Verbal Praise

Effective workplace communication is crucial. **Provide immediate verbal praise for employees who follow safety protocols to reinforce desired behaviors.** This instant acknowledgment helps solidify positive actions in employees' minds, increasing the likelihood of repetition and is easy to integrate into daily interactions.



Written Appreciation

Written feedback is a formal yet thoughtful way to appreciate employees for adhering to safety initiatives, delivered through emails, notes, or letters. While not as immediate as verbal praise, **it conveys a higher level of seriousness and underscores the significance of the appreciation.**



Public Acknowledgment

When cultivating a health and safety culture, consider the group dynamic. **Public acknowledgment is effective for praising individuals and teams alike, fostering appreciation and enhancing team morale.** This boosts engagement and reinforces commitment to safety practices, making it ideal for safety events or business meetings.



Tangible Rewards

Showing appreciation through physical rewards is impactful. These rewards, such as safety gear or professional equipment, support health and safety initiatives. **Personalized incentives** like gift cards and extra days off **not only acknowledge safe behaviors but also improve employee well-being and job satisfaction.**

5. INCENTIVIZING EMPLOYEES THROUGH POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

It's important to support health and safety culture in the workplace through good policies and practices. **When designing recognition and reward programs, involve employees and listen to their feedback.** This is a great way to enhance ownership and boost participation. It's also vital to implement tailored recognition strategies that work for your industry. **When you customize rewards and incentives based on industry standards, you're more likely to engage employees and get corporate buy-in.**

For example, [the mining sector](#) faces unique challenges when it comes to health and safety culture. People typically work in small teams, and they often develop different safety habits around reporting. To build unity around health and safety goals, it's often necessary to address specific groups. If one team increases the frequency or quality of its risk and accident reports, showing recognition to that group can be a powerful way to galvanize the collective.





6. COMMUNICATING THE PROGRAM AND SETTING EXPECTATIONS

To get people on board with a recognition and reward program, you need to communicate its value. It's important to share goals, set expectations, and lay down the criteria and process. Along with delivering vital information, this helps to engage employees and motivate the management team. **Once you establish clear expectations regarding participation and contribution, you can get people excited about the program.**

7. UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY AND TOOLS FOR RECOGNITION

Technology plays a vital role in all areas of modern business. When developing a health and safety recognition program, **software tools can be used to track performance, facilitate recognition, award points, and cash in a reward.** Some platforms and applications provide real-time safety recognition and data analytics, allowing you to measure efforts and outcomes throughout your business.

When you implement a recognition and reward tool effectively, you can recognize good behavior instantly and send rewards for defined health and safety objectives. **At Altrum, our Peer Recognition & Rewards Software does just this.** If you want to build a recognition program tailored to the needs of your business, [consult with our team](#) to learn more.



8. EVALUATING AND IMPROVING EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

Rolling out a health and safety recognition program is just the start. **If you want to benefit on a long-term basis, it's vital to collect data and analyze results to see what's working.** When you conduct regular assessments, you can evaluate the program and make adjustments to improve results over time.

There are many ways to evaluate and improve a health and safety recognition initiative. Along with comparing specific goals and outcomes, it's important to gather feedback from employees and managers to understand the program's impact. **You can use data and analytics to uncover areas for improvement, making adjustments and enhancements to improve outcomes for everyone involved.**

9. FINAL THOUGHTS

Workplace health and safety is an essential subject for every business, but it's not always straightforward. **The best way to keep your people engaged with health and safety is to adopt an ongoing recognition and reward program.** When employees are recognized for following health and safety protocols, a positive feedback network is created. This helps employees feel seen and heard, and it motivates them to keep following safety protocols.

Beyond saying "thank you," employee recognition is about supporting workers and collectively driving towards better outcomes.

