June 2016. Excerpt from an article on 8 principles for smarter safety metrics.

One way to improve the effectiveness of your safety program is to change the way it is measured. Emphasis on evaluating safety has traditionally been based on review of injuries which is a trailing indicator, a reactionary method. Recent emphasis on safety metrics has shifted focus to evaluation of leading indicators such as safety training and safety audits which provide a proactive approach.

Leading metrics/measures should be valid, actionable and easy to communicate. Valid means the indicator occurs before the incident and is statistically correlated with outcome measures. Actionable measures position the organization to intervene and actually reduce exposure. A measure that's easy to communicate makes it understandable and applicable to those in harm's way.

Here are eight principles for making your measures valid, actionable and easy to communicate:

1. **Think broadly** to ensure all elements of the safety footprint are considered.
2. **Emphasize exposure.** Safety is defined as "reducing exposure for self and others." Metrics that support the identification and mitigation of exposure are the most impactful.
3. **Establish logical measures.** Leading measures don't need to be "one size fits all" but must be reasonable, with a sound basis in logic or fact.
4. **Ignite engagement.** Employee participation is the cornerstone of safety, and metrics should support engagement. Worker involvement ensures measures have validity and helps leaders anticipate the behavioral impact measures will have before they're implemented.
5. **Plan for change.** Leading metrics change over time. Review the existing metrics annually to ensure they're still valid and not driving unintended consequences.
6. **Resist implementing only lagging measures** just because the infrastructure is in place to gather such data. Organizations often gravitate toward outcome measures because they're easier to track and more available.
7. **Consider implementation and value in selection criteria.** New metrics that require significant new work or effort from the workers may be difficult to implement immediately, and they run the risk of being poorly implemented.
8. **Take the long view.** Even though the present system may not support a particular metric, consider how to phase it in over time. What are the steps that will lead to using a metric in a few years?

Michael Mangan, Ph.D. "Safety Leadership: 8 principles for smarter metrics." National Safety Council *Safety+Health* digital edition.. March 27, 2016. http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/13823?utm_source=april1st&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=inThisIssue