

## Total Hypocrisy

By Loren Meyers, Plantwide Safety Chairman

The New Year is well underway, and I hope for a safer, healthier, and more successful 2022 for all who is reading this. I hope this year will be the last year of the Covid -19 Disaster that has affected people's health, personal lives and social stability that we can somehow move on to common ground. I hope for an honest year, but I am doubtful that this wish will come true due to several work rules put in place by our employer to pit employees against one another as The UAW contract is getting closer to being re-negotiated in March of 2023.

More and more, we are put in no-win situations when it comes to health and safety, especially regarding the reporting of injuries. We are required to report any and all injuries, but if one suffers an injury and reports it, rest assured that every applicable Safe Job Procedure, Standard Work procedure, and the content of every CLMS and CPS class you have taken will be scoured to find a way to assign blame to the individual who reports the incident as required. Anything that you sign or sign off on electronically will be used against you, it's not like your boss actually wants you to read those procedures every month, he just wants you to mark that you did. If your boss really wanted you to read and follow Standard Work, they would regularly audit you for compliance, not wait until you were hurt. When was the last time you were audited? 20 years ago, when I started working at Caterpillar there was a mutual respect between management and worker for safety. Management would stop and fix an unsafe act or issue when they physically walked up on a problem. However, that has all changed with the electronic certification that an employee is required to do to be allowed to perform their job. It is nothing more than a trap to put all the blame on the employee

In 2021 three out of the eight injuries in my facility that defines management's hypocrisy started with the 1<sup>st</sup> injury of 2021 caused by a management employee who had the authority to bypass a test cell lock out tag out and defeat the interlocks so he could trouble shoot the reason the cell was not working. The employee was in the test cell when he found the issue and the test cell engaged striking the employee injuring him. I have been a part of UAW safety since 2006 and whenever I have read scenarios like this in different UAW facilities the result is fatal. This employee was very lucky. However, after the incident, there was no Safety stand down or communication whatsoever. Did this Management employee get disciplined and made an example of? What do you think?

2<sup>nd</sup> injury, a UAW member was being shadowed by a Manufacturing Engineer. While the UAW member was performing her job, the ME was bored and wanted to attempt his hand at assembling a step of the assembly process. When the ME proceeded to perform the task (without proper training) he created a quality issue that needed to be repaired. The UAW member who was trying to help a fellow employee out, tried to repair the damaged part and injured her finger that caused it to be a recordable injury. The Manufacturing Engineers job function is to support the assembler by making sure processes are up to date, that they are following standard work and they have the right tooling to do the job. The ME was not trained to perform the job correctly and knows that assemblers do not have the experience or tools to do repair work. So why did this happen? The company did the investigation, and the UAW member was suspended for working out of process and made an example of. What do think happened to the Manufacturing Engineer?

3<sup>rd</sup> injury, a UAW member was in training and performed a task with a driver and a hammer without the protective guard on the driver because the process calls out for the assembler to use an air hammer. Management did an investigation and couldn't find fault with the trainee, so they suspended the trainer. The trainer was performing the job the way he was trained to do the job. His supervisor and team lead were well aware he was doing the job this way because the guards and hammers for the drivers were available in the workstation (Why available if not on the process). From my experience with air hammer processes in the past, guards and hammers were available in case the air hammer malfunctioned and there was no replacement. I have witnessed supervisors instructing assemblers to work out of process on many occasions and when the UAW member refused to work out of process, the team lead stepped in to perform the task with the supervisor's full support.

February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, a new UAW trainee asked for a Safety Representative because the area she was being trained in, the trainer was absent. No other assembler in the area was trained or certified in the workstation. The untrained team lead certified himself with the supervisor's knowledge, took the trainee and said that they would figure it out together. This did not set well with the trainee because it circumvented everything she was told in training, so she asked for a UAW safety Rep to be involved. The safety Rep. asked the Supervisor how the Team lead was able to certify himself without training because it takes a supervisor's approval for certification. The supervisor told the Rep. that Team leads are not held to the same rules that other UAW members are. That has been collaborated by multiple management personnel. How dishonest and unethical that Managements values are when they expect employees to seek out support from hand-picked individuals that are rewarded for bad behavior.

Management has made honesty not the best policy.

If you are asked what happened or what you were doing when the injury occurred, ask the person questioning you if the answers you give could lead to disciplinary action. If that answer is yes, ask for a **union representative**, and don't answer any more questions about the incident until you speak with your rep. That said, don't think you will be left alone, management might want you to make or write a statement. Again, ask about the possibility of discipline and call for your representative. Anything you say will be used against you.

What does it say about our employer when they put injury and illness reporting policies in place, which on paper have the appearance of genuine interest and concern about the well-being of employees, but in fact are only a pretext for issuing discipline after an incident? What are the messages being sent to the employees, "tell us the truth so we can discipline you"?

So, what are the answers to these problems? Does management really want you to report injuries and illnesses so they can fix the problems, or do they want to beat you down so their safety metrics performance does not negatively affect their matrix's Goal payments? Is discipline the only way to make us, the unwashed masses, safer? No, you are the answer.

Report all hazards, it's your contractual obligation. Do not use the CPS C/I cards to report hazards or tell the Team Lead, tell your boss, that's in the contract too. If you don't have the correct tooling, tell your boss. If you must pound parts with large hammers, use pry bars or cheater bars, tell your boss that there must be a better way to do the job. Tell your boss if your floor is uneven or slippery, tell your boss. If your PPE is worn out, does not fit correctly or is unsanitary, tell your boss. If you have to lift from below your knees or above your shoulders, tell your boss. If you have to climb and cannot maintain three points of contact, tell your boss. If you smell, taste or feel coolant mist, tell your boss. If you are provided a hoist, use it. If you can't, tell your boss. If your boss can't, won't or doesn't know how to address your concerns, ask for your UAW Health and Safety Representative.