



## Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 7 – Monday, February 9 – Friday, February 13, 2026

### ***Accountability vs. Blame***

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#### **Introduction**

This week we will discuss the difference between accountability and blame, and how our response to mistakes and near misses directly affects safety. The goal is not to avoid responsibility, but to create an environment where hazards, concerns, and errors are reported early.

#### **Monday- Understanding the Difference Between Accountability and Blame**

Accountability and blame are often confused, but they lead to very different outcomes in safety. Blame focuses on who made a mistake, while accountability focuses on understanding what went wrong and how to prevent it from happening again. When blame is the default reaction, people become defensive or silent. When accountability is emphasized, people are more willing to speak up, report concerns, and learn from errors. Accountability still requires ownership and responsibility, but the purpose is improvement, not punishment. A team that understands this difference is more likely to prevent incidents before someone gets hurt.

#### **Discussion Points:**

- How would you explain the difference between blame and accountability?
- What happens when people are afraid of being blamed?
- How does accountability improve safety outcomes?

#### **Tuesday – How a Blame Culture Hurts Safety**

A culture of blame discourages people from reporting near-misses, unsafe conditions, or mistakes. Most serious incidents are not caused by a single bad decision, but by multiple system failures like unclear procedures, poor communication, time pressures, or missing safeguards. When the first question asked is “Who did this?” the real causes often stay hidden. A blaming response sends a message that staying quiet is safer than being honest, which increases the risk of future injuries.

#### **Discussion Points:**

- Why do people hesitate to report near-misses?
- How can system issues contribute to individual mistakes?
- What information do we lose when people don’t speak up?

#### **Wednesday – What Accountability Looks Like in Practice**

True accountability is shared across the organization. Workers are accountable for following procedures, using controls, and speaking up when something doesn’t feel right. Leaders are accountable for providing clear expectations, proper training, realistic schedules, and the right tools to do the job safely. Accountability shifts the focus from fault to function—asking what barriers failed or were missing instead of assigning personal blame. When everyone understands their role, safety becomes proactive rather than reactive.



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#### **Discussion Points:**

- What does accountability look like at your level of the job?
- How can leaders support accountability without creating fear?
- What questions help uncover root causes instead of assigning blame?

#### **Thursday – Responding to Mistakes in a Learning Focused Way**

Mistakes happen, even when people are trying to do the right thing. The way we respond determines whether we learn or repeat them. A learning-focused response looks at whether procedures were clear, training was adequate, and conditions supported safe work. Discipline should be reserved for willful or reckless behavior, not honest mistakes. When leaders listen first and react thoughtfully, they reinforce trust and accountability rather than fear.

#### **Discussion Points:**

- How should we respond when someone makes an honest mistake?
- What's the difference between an error and a willful violation?
- How do leadership reactions influence future reporting?

#### **Friday – Building and Sustaining a Culture that Speaks Up**

A strong safety culture depends on trust, consistency, and follow-through. Speaking up about hazards, near-misses, or concerns is an act of accountability, not a failure. Recognizing and reinforcing these behaviors, especially when it's uncomfortable, shows that safety truly matters. Teams should regularly reflect on what could hurt someone today and what could be improved tomorrow. Removing blame doesn't lower standards; it raises them by encouraging transparency and continuous improvement.

#### **Discussion Points:**

- What makes it easy or hard to speak up?
- How can we reinforce accountability daily?
- What's one thing we can change to make work safer right now?