

# Incident- and Injury-Free Culture: Transformation in the Works at GLDD



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*To transform corporate safety culture: JMJ Associates' Steve Pianalto addresses senior and middle-level GLDD leadership in Oak Brook.*

Great Lakes' senior management has launched a major initiative to transform safety attitudes from simple compliance with rules and regulations to a mindset that intends to eliminate work-related incidents and injuries altogether. Safety professionals call this a realignment of safety culture. It is a change that can be realized only through the commitment and engagement of all Great Lakes employees.

## A Change in Culture

What is safety culture? It is the sum of the underlying values, beliefs and assumptions about safety that are present in an organization. These can be positive: "I know the people I work with care about my safety;" or negative: "All management cares about is production."

This transformation is important to senior management because of the following facts:

- They have a genuine concern for the personal well-being of every Great Lakes employee.
- Even though we are safety leaders in the dredging industry, we still experience accidents at our project sites.

The greatest danger  
for most of us is not  
that our aim  
is too high  
and we miss it,  
but that it is too low  
and we hit it.

— Michelangelo

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Richard Adams, Publications Manager ♦ Richard Lowry, Editor

2122 York Road, Oak Brook, Illinois 60523 ♦ 630.574.3000 fax 630.574.2909 ♦ [www.gldd.com](http://www.gldd.com)



*The excavator dredge New York in New York Harbor*

- These same values regarding the importance of workplace safety are being expressed more and more by the customers we serve.
- They desire to change the way every layer of management and our field employees look at safety!

The company has contracted the services of JMJ Associates, LLC, a leading international consulting firm that specializes in high-performance safety systems, to assist GLDD in launching a program to create a breakthrough in attitudes about workplace safety. The integral approach adopted by management began with an examination and discussion of commitments, behaviors, culture and system requirements needed to create a company-wide intention to eliminate injuries.

The program was kicked off with a four-hour meeting at the Oak Brook office on March 21, 2005, to launch the consulting engagement. The chief concern was how Great Lakes could achieve broad, long-term, sustainable changes in safety performance.

#### **Interviews in the Field**

The next step was to conduct personal interviews with field management and employees to determine what leadership, culture, systems, commitments and behaviors are currently in place. Ninety-five confidential interviews were conducted by five consultants during the period March 22 to April 7 at eight project sites. This work was comprised of interviews aboard three hopper

dredges, three cutter suction dredges, several beach fill sites and three mechanical dredges.

This was a key effort: knowledge of the personal perceptions and assumptions of the interviewees was vital to enable leadership to move forward effectively and rapidly to establish a new platform from which to build an Incident- and Injury-Free Culture.

#### **Reporting to Management**

The results of the confidential interviews were compiled into an Interview Summary Report that detailed currently held attitudes and perceptions among field personnel:

- Progress made in safety performance over the last decade.
- The balance between safety and productivity.
- Views on the degree and quality of management's commitment to safety.
- Challenges facing the workforce.
- The current level of safety leadership from upper and middle management.
- The effectiveness of the safety department and its safety systems.

On May 11 and 12, forty-five members of upper and middle management including dredge captains, project managers, and maintenance personnel, attended a two-day High Performance Safety® (HPS) Commitment Workshop near the Oak Brook headquar-





*The Texas in Brunswick Harbor*

ters. A second workshop is scheduled for June 1 and 2 in Charlotte, N.C. Sixty members of management are expected to attend this session. The objectives of the workshops are to:

- Examine our current safety and loss prevention efforts and explore individual and collective actions that will be required to achieve incident- and injury-free performance.
- Discuss the challenges, issues and barriers to achieving extraordinary safety performance, and explore our individual and collective roles in addressing these issues.
- Provide leaders with the training to help them develop skills to examine, understand and translate this commitment into effective action.

#### **Not to Prevent, but to Eliminate**

The focus of most safety management programs are directed toward *accident prevention*. That is the cornerstone on which successful programs are built. JMJ Associates' High Performance Safety® system takes the whole matter a step higher. It is founded on the belief that the more effective focus needs to be on forming a *proactive commitment to create an incident- and injury-free work environment*.

The difference between the two approaches is more than a matter of playing with words. In one attitude, there is a certain amount of acceptance that dredging is a risky business, that accidents will happen, that they can't really be prevented. This includes such attitudes

as "This is the dredging industry; people are going to get hurt." The other says "Rubbish. We control the workplace environment. I don't want to be injured, and I don't want you to be injured: Injuries are unacceptable. We will do what it takes to make the work place a safe place for me and for you. We are all responsible for taking ownership of safety — not just for ourselves, but for each other as well. In that way, we all get to go home to our families at the end of the shift in the same condition in which we arrived!"

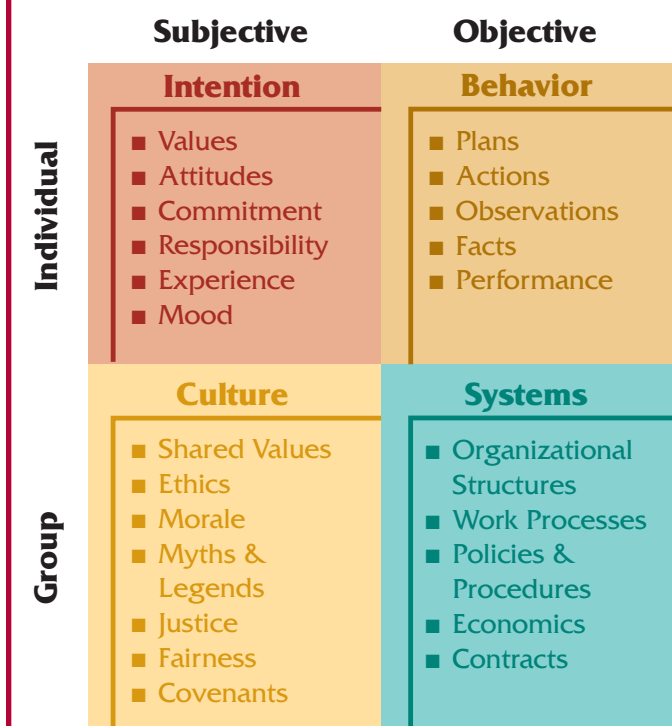
This new model of safety awareness involves more than just knowledge of recognized hazards and how to avoid them. It also entails:

- Immediately taking corrective measures when potentially unsafe conditions, practices or activities are observed by management or are brought to field management's attention by our employees.
- Providing the quickest possible response to maintenance needs.
- Carefully planning each task, taking into consideration the environment in which it will take place, and the proper tools and personnel needed for its execution, asking "What's the most dangerous thing that can happen to us here, and how can we make conditions safer?"
- Changing attitudes from a mindset of having to follow safety rules and regulations to choosing to follow them, from complying with safe practices to adopting them as a standard to safeguard your own safety, and acknowledging your importance to the company and to your family.



*The Liberty Island off Dewey Rehoboth Beaches.*

## An Integral Model



- In order to keep the focus on an incident- and injury-free environment, safety is now the first agenda item at weekly progress meetings at projects sites and at management meetings in the Oak Brook office.
- Accepting personal responsibility for safety and being held accountable.

### At the End of the Day . . .

The end result of the application of these principles and attitudes will be the creation of an incident- and injury-free (IIF) culture. This means that concern for the well being of the workforce and the commitment to eliminate incidents and injuries are shared values, not just “high priorities.” By adopting these goals, Great Lakes joins a number of prominent international businesses that have achieved startling improvement in their safety performance through IIF culture, including such leading companies as Chevron Texaco, Dow Chemical, Exxon Mobil and Intel.

There will be more IIF safety communiqués in the weeks and months ahead. In the meantime, all employees should know that Great Lakes has committed substantial corporate resources of time, money and personnel to effect this important transformation. This is a bold initiative on the part of GLDD’s senior management, and their commitment requires the cooperation of each and every employee to effect this change!

—Prepared with materials provided by  
Glenn Thomas, Dave Simonelli  
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