

Workplace safety, or, completing work on time?

Meet your deadlines without jeopardizing plant safety.

Whether you practice lean manufacturing principles or not, your profitability depends on projects being completed on time. So, when a production schedule or a project like a plant shutdown falls behind, a common response is for workers to do everything possible to get caught up. That can even include bypassing safety procedures in order to save time. And, if they're working faster and putting more hours into a now tighter timeframe, fatigue can set off an adverse chain reaction. Fatigue causes errors ... which means rework ... which means more overtime to make up for rework delays ... all taking projects and the budget further off track.

Additionally, fatigue is known to cause a higher rate of accidents and higher employee turnover—which means using workers who are unfamiliar with your plant and your safety procedures.

How good are you at managing deadline pressures and keeping workplace safety a top priority?

Rushing jeopardizes work quality and safety—but when delays happen, workers feel pressured to work faster. That's why, as elementary as they may sound, two big keys for managing deadline pressures and safety performance are:

1. Plan for and manage delays.
2. Plan for and manage rework.

Safety check: Asking yourself these questions may reveal ways to improve workplace safety.

- Am I scheduling timelines that are realistic?** Unrealistic timing for task completion opens the door for compromises in quality and safety. Set a more accurate timeline for production—or for events like shutdowns or turnarounds—by allowing for unscheduled equipment downtime, rework, accidents, change orders, etc. Adding contingency hours can help alleviate conflict between production and safety.
- Do I include workers in setting work and safety performance goals?** There's a saying, "people support what they help create." By allowing workers to participate with supervisors in setting goals—and by facilitating communication between supervisors and workers—you can deepen understanding on both sides. This will positively impact attitudes and behaviors, which may help maintain safety performance when deadlines are tight.
- Am I proactive in planning for materials, tools, equipment and resources?** Work disruptions and interruptions will be minimized if work details are accurate—and all needed resources are in place. Fewer delays keep everything running smoothly and on time.
- Do I know how the workers view their environment?** Your plant's safety culture affects the workers' level of safety knowledge and their motivation to comply. Regularly hold safety training to raise risk awareness, reduce unsafe behaviors and make workers feel valued.
- How well do I incorporate safety perspectives while managing our safety protocols?** Approach your answer to this question with a fresh set of eyes—get feedback from others. As someone who has control over production and the work environment, evaluating the way you plan for and manage deadlines and delays may be your best safety tool.



There's a lot riding on the ability to meet deadlines. But the well-being of your workers rests on being able to meet deadlines safely. Do you have procedures in place to deliver on both?