

# *The National Safety Survey:*

## THE WAR BETWEEN SAFETY AND PRODUCTION CONTINUES



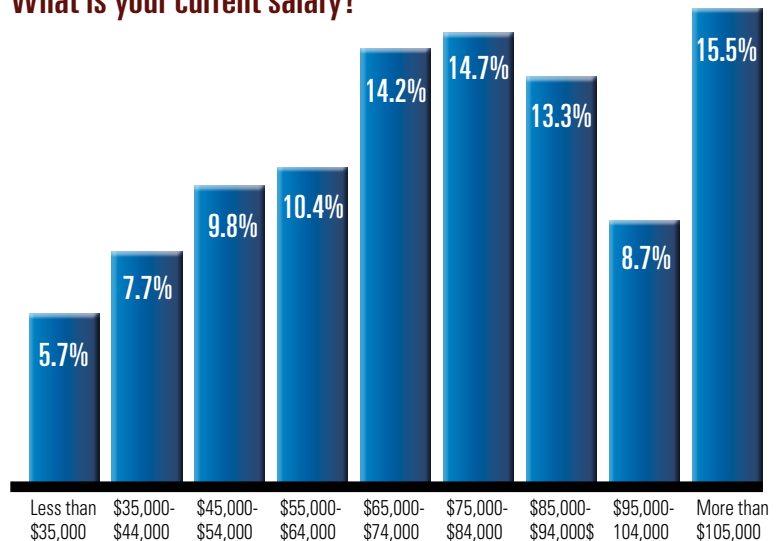
Nearly 1,000 EHS professionals responded to the 2013 National Safety Survey. Most said that safety has improved at their organization in the past year, but many admitted the safety versus production argument is ongoing and some shared truly horrifying stories of workplace violence and bullying.

By **Sandy Smith**

The respondents to the 2013 National Safety Survey generally are well-paid (approximately 80 percent earn more than \$55,000 and 15 percent earn more than \$105,000 per year); most have responsibility for safety (96 percent) followed closely by emergency preparedness (74 percent), occupational health (73 percent), ergonomics (66 percent) and industrial hygiene (65 percent); 94 percent attended college; and three-quarters are certified safety professionals (CSP).

Most rate their organization's EHS performance as "good" (31.8 percent), "very good" (34.2 percent) or world-class (4.9 percent). Companies that offer a "one-size-fits-all" approach to EHS were criticized and the "production versus safety" argument appears to be ongoing.

### What is your current salary?

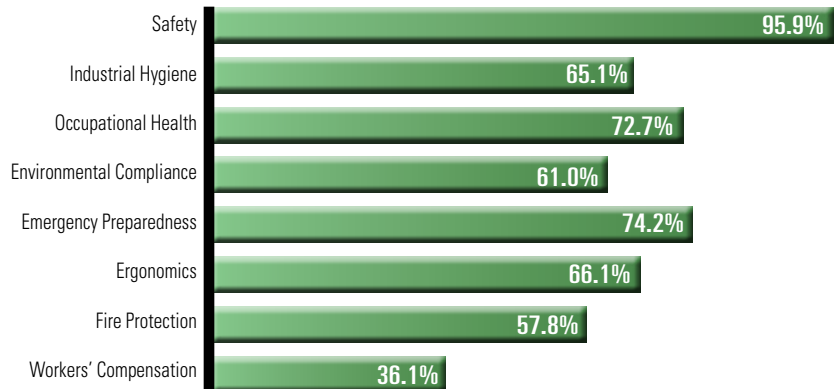


Here is a sample of what some respondents said when asked: *“What is the most frequent complaint you hear from employees about your organization’s safety and health program?”*:

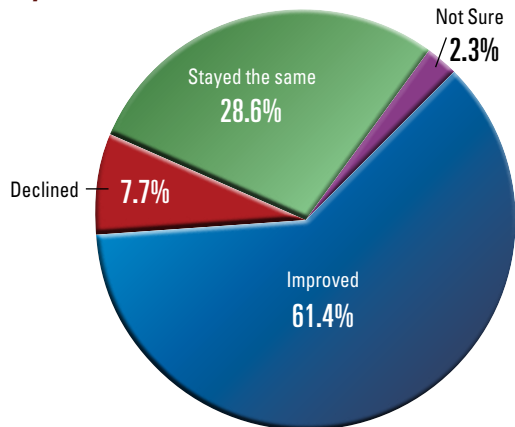
- Our managers care more about product than safety.
- The foremen of the company still push and drive with disregard to safety. The foremen are not held accountable [for poor safety performance].
- Management does not follow safety programs.
- That our side (construction) has to follow the regulations but the facilities and maintenance sides do not have to follow safety policies, training or OSHA requirements.
- They identify a hazard and it does not get fixed in a timely manner.
- Some safety rules make the job more difficult.
- Lack of consistency in policies vs. procedures.
- Inconsistent messages and an overwhelming number of corporate (global) “one size fits all” procedures.
- The people enacting rules and regulations have never gotten their hands dirty.
- We don’t know what happens to folks that are poor performers in relation to safety
- Management does not really listen to the employees.
- No money (many mentioned money/budget concerns).

More than half the respondents (61 percent) say that safety performance has improved at their organization in the past year, and 77 percent agree that top management at their organization provides “active and visible support” for occupational safety and health. Still, many said that employees perceive corporate offices or managers only are giving “lip service” to safe production and even the EHS managers and directors who said they get the resources they need when they ask still wished for upper management support and commitment for safety policies and procedures.

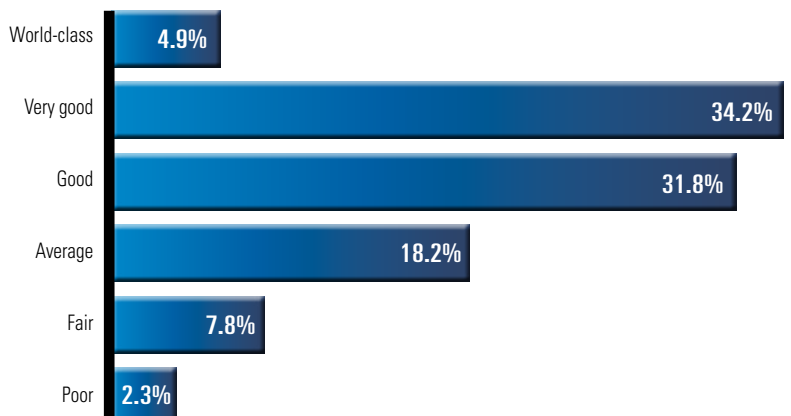
### For which areas do you have responsibility?



### Would you say your organization’s safety performance in the last year has:



### How would you describe the occupational safety and health program in your facility/organization?



When asked, “In what area would you most like to see improvement in your organization/facility’s safety and health program?” they offered these responses:

- Focus on prevention.
- I would like to see the managers/supervisors’ salaries tied to safety performance/participation.
- Responsibility and accountability moved to the supervisors/leaders and away from the EHS person.
- A move from a compliance culture to behavioral culture.
- More positive re-enforcement of safe acts; focus on the good things employees do.
- Stress relief: Deadline, deadline, deadline!! Pushes people to act before they think.
- Personal ownership by every person at every level.
- Proactive towards safety instead of reactive.
- Support for professional certification and meeting attendance.
- I am currently the only person responsible for the management of over 500 employees. I would love to see them hire an additional person to support me in my duties, even if it is someone from inside the company. I can train them, and prepare them for furthering their education.
- The addition of a holistic worksite wellness program that overlaps with the home and family.
- With a 9-year record without a lost-time injury and three recordable incidents during that time, the need for significant improvement is hard to identify.
- A move from using AFR as a measure tied to corporate bonus to leading indicators. I fear incident reporting is being driven underground.
- To find some way to get the employees to realize that they are ultimately responsible for their safety and eliminate the “momentary lapse in attention” that results in the majority of our injuries.
- First, let’s have a program.

Hands and backs appeared to take a beating when EHS professionals answered the question about the most-common injuries suffered by employ-

ees. Cuts and punctures to hands and fingers, musculoskeletal injuries and back strains and slips, trips and falls were mentioned the most often, but heat stress, chemical burns and eye injuries also made the list. It was clear from the answers that most companies represented on the survey had few – and minor – injuries for the most part, which is in line with national statistics, which shows steady declines in OSHA recordables and fatalities.

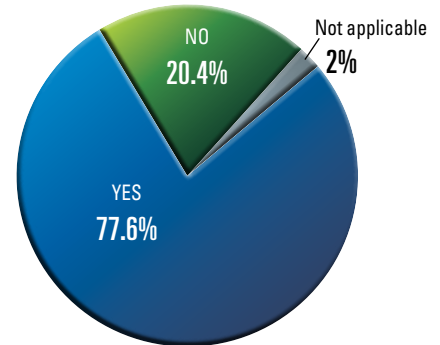
“We have had no problem with absenteeism due to illness ever. And most injuries, which are [almost] non-existent, are never the same type, and are usually caused by someone just not thinking,” said one respondent. “We have gone 23 years without a lost-time injury and have only had two recordables in the last 7 years,” said another.

The best place to work might be the one where this respondent is employed: “No common injuries or illnesses are seen. Accommodation of workplace conditions to help aging workers more comfortably do their jobs has averted many problems that could arise.” This company “gets” that in order for safety programs and processes to be effective and impactful, they have to be proactive and focus on leading indicators.

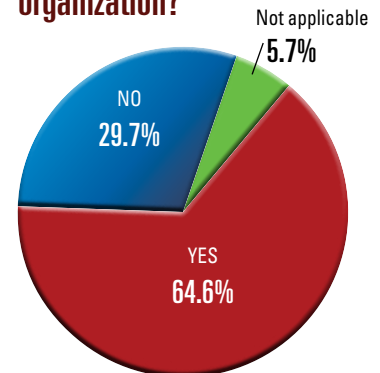
Thanks to everyone who participated this year!



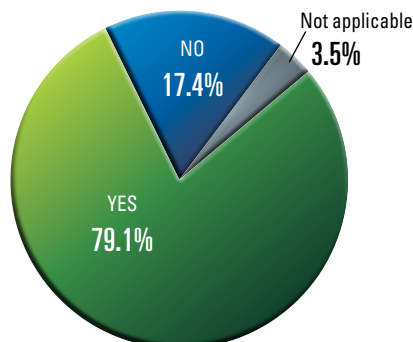
### Does top management in your organization provide active and visible support for occupational safety and health?



### Is safety on par with production in your organization?



### Do you use leading indicators to measure safety performance?



### If you answered “yes,” please check all that apply:

Tracking near misses	81.4%
Encouraging and monitoring employee engagement in safety	84.1%
Conducting workplace observations	91.6%
Job- or site-specific training	88.9%
Pre-shift safety meetings	55.1%
Tying management compensation to safety-related activities and commitment to safety	33.0%
Monitoring and maintaining housekeeping at facilities	78.9%

# WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND BULLYING



**N**early 20 percent of respondents said that they had witnessed or been directly impacted by workplace violence. Many have witnessed fistfights, while some were threatened or harmed themselves. Here is what respondents reported seeing:

- Greased steering wheel, flat tires, bullets shot at car.
- We had an employee threatened with a gun by a security guard. We've had employees ganged up on by peers and bullied by peer pressure.
- Physical altercation between two operators with a known poor relationship.
- A different safety manager was threatened with being shot by another safety manager who worked in the same office. There was harassment and bullying for quite some time afterwards by the threatening employee's new manager.
- I have been threatened (during the first few years of my career in safety), investigated threats and even had to deal with an employee who was keeping a loaded firearm and "hit list" in his locker at work.
- [I'm a] member of a workplace assessment team for possible work place violence problems. As a member of corporate security in a previous role, I performed threat assessments and in some cases, was part of the "intervention" to prevent [an incident] or a responder.
- Stabbing in break room.
- [I was] shot in DC while returning from a meeting.
- I have been assaulted by clients so many times that I cannot count.
- I was robbed at gunpoint in a previous job.
- Food fight turned into fist fight in lunch room.

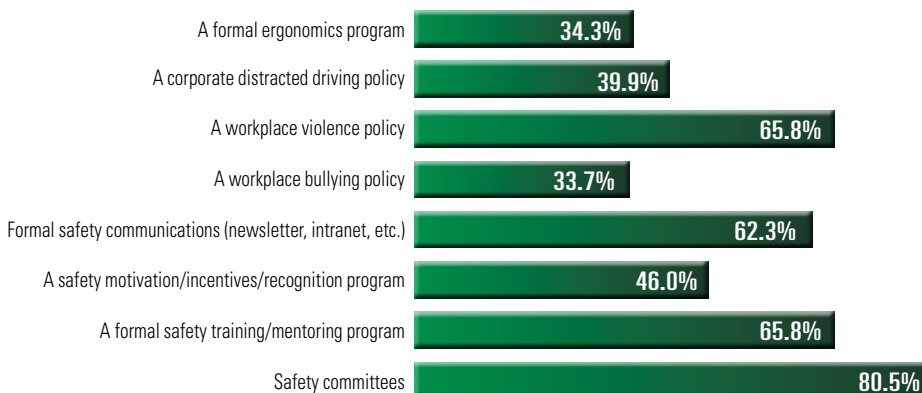
- I was an eyewitness to a homicide at work. A man shot his wife in parking lot as she and I were coming in to work.
- Gang violence, death threats, physical violence between employees.
- A hostile third party threatened our employees. We had to go on lockdown.
- I hired a person and by noon I escorted him off the property as he had threatened a female and made sexual advances toward her.
- Employee came to work drunk, wielded a pipe and tried to start a fire. I had the employee escorted out to waiting police.
- A truck driver tried to dump a forklift load of pipe on me because he didn't like a woman being the supervisor.
- I'm a MIOSHA compliance officer; need I say more? We're not loved by all!!

Nearly one-quarter of the respondents to the 2013 National Safety Survey admitted to being bullied or witnessing bullying of co-workers. Some of it turned violent, some of the bullies were protected by supervisors or managers (or were supervisors or managers) and all of it was demeaning and non-productive, said respondents.

Forms of bullying included threats of job loss, sexual harassment (by both men and women), cursing and yelling. One person recounted an email that circulated to many people at the company that mocked an employee's surname. Another talked about a foreman who tried to bully an employee into performing maintenance work without having safety protocols in place. Another employee stepped up and intervened, possibly saving a life:

"A foreman had bullied one of his workers into crawling under a suspended tank to clean the bottom of it before they set it down. He told him if he didn't do it he would fire him. One of the other workers wrote up an observation card on it and sent it in. The worker and the foreman were called into the boss's office and the worker was reprimanded for not refusing to do an unsafe job and the foreman was fired on the spot for even suggesting that the worker would be fired for not doing the job [he had asked several other workers to do it and they had refused because it was unsafe]. The tank was then placed on some planks and braced properly and the job was done safely."

## Does your organization/facility have or make use of the following:



## Does your organization offer any of the following wellness initiatives?

A formal workplace wellness program	65.1%
On-site medical checkups	40.8%
A gym or fitness facility	40.3%
Healthy on-site food options	34.2%
Nutrition education	40.3%
Weight-loss competitions	43.2%
Wellness incentives	56.8%