

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Worker engagement case study 6

This case study is part of a series of case studies, which give examples of best practice when engaging workers to improve health and safety in the workplace.

This case study relates to initiatives undertaken during the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL).

'Core to the success of the CTRL is that it must be completed to the highest standards of health and safety, changing the culture within the construction industry and setting a positive example for future projects to follow.'
Brian Sedar, Project Director, CTRL

The challenge

With such a huge project spread over a wide area, the challenge has been to engage all parties involved and to get them actively committed to the CTRL Target Zero Philosophy.

This philosophy is one where everyone is dedicated to the concept that all accidents are preventable and committed to achieving and sustaining a zero accident performance through continuous improvement.

The project has recognised from the outset that the majority of safety issues it faces are a direct result of individual behaviour. It is people that have accidents and it is people that can prevent them. The aim has been to change negative behavioural attitudes, implement constructive communication channels and improve leadership and accountability from front line supervision.

Health and safety management on the CTRL has been implemented through the highly visible Target Zero campaign, which encompasses key elements of leadership, top-level involvement, communication and People Based Safety.

Leadership

An emphasis has been placed on developing leadership skills amongst managers and supervisors in an effort to encourage them to challenge unsafe behaviours and to proactively encourage the workforce to become engaged in the health and safety programme.

Project fact file

The Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) is Britain's first new major railway for over a century, running 109 km from the Channel Tunnel to St Pancras station in central London. It is also Britain's first high-speed railway, with trains operating at up to 300 km/h (186 mph).

The first section of the route, from the Channel Tunnel to north Kent, opened on time in 2003. When the second section from north Kent to St Pancras opens in 2007, journey times from London to Paris will be cut to 2 hours 15 minutes, and just 1 hour 51 minutes from London to Brussels.

The project is enormous, the construction phase taking almost ten years to complete and creating thousands of jobs. Construction includes 60 rail and 62 road bridges, 26 route-km of tunnels, two new international stations at Ebbsfleet in Kent and Stratford in east London, and the extension and renovation of the Grade-1 listed St Pancras station.

Such a large project presents all of the usual risks including working at height, vehicle movement, lifting operations and confined spaces as well as all the risks of operating on and around live railways.

The CTRL holds regular Safety workshops to develop these skills and give advice on how to achieve positive behavioural changes among team members. The course aims to get a commitment from all attendees to 'make a difference' so they take this message back to site. This commitment starts by looking at themselves, being a positive role model and asking... 'am I doing enough?'

Through these workshops the project has achieved considerable success. Supervisors have been seen to become more visible in health and safety matters and their communication skills have improved, keeping Target Zero at the front of everyone's minds as a consequence.

Top-level involvement

The Target Zero campaign is supported at the very highest level by the CTRL's client organisation, as well as directors and managers from the principal contractors. They demonstrate their backing for the Target Zero campaign through attendance and participation at safety inductions, presentations, briefing sessions and by conducting regular site tours in which they liaise directly with the workforce, answering any questions they have.



The Target Zero Truck briefing provides operatives from different subcontractors with the opportunity to discuss issues such as provision of task lighting in the Barlow Shed, where the needs of a welder are very different from those of a crane driver operating inside the huge structure.



Communication

Two initiatives demonstrate the emphasis placed on two-way communication with the workforce:

The STARRT Talk

Central to the Target Zero campaign is the daily Safety Task Analysis Risk Reduction Talk (STARRT) – a process implemented across the whole project. This is a daily pre-task briefing that enables work teams to discuss with their supervisors the key safety risks associated with the day's work and the necessary control measures required. STARRT allows team members to provide feedback, offer suggestions and report any concerns from the previous day's work. Some teams encourage team members to take turns presenting the briefing.

The Target Zero Truck

In an initiative suggested by employees themselves, a Target Zero Truck regularly visits sites across the whole of CTRL to deliver key health and safety messages and project updates. Equipped with on-board TV and video, the truck has an external studio enabling it to be set up for presentations, briefings and seminars as well as being a tool for handing out worker achievement awards. Front line supervisors make the presentations ensuring that information given is relevant and pitched at the correct educational level.

As well as STARRT, employees also have the opportunity to take part in the Job Hazard Analysis process, in which the work team identifies potential hazards and then develops solutions to eliminate or control them.

'The best thing about this job is that you know that your voice is heard; you can have your say and know that someone will listen, something will get done.'

Colin Simes, Laing O'Rourke

Employee involvement is actively encouraged through the holding of regular safety committees consisting of members of the workforce. The CTRL has an 'open door' policy for all health and safety matters and feedback is always provided to keep workers aware of any actions that have been taken.

On a regular basis, health and safety managers from each contract meet to review any accidents, near-misses or incidents that may have occurred. All lessons learned are implemented throughout the whole of CTRL and safety messages are disseminated to all crafts via safety alerts and health and safety briefs. Safe working practices are rewarded by the presentation of prizes through incentive schemes. The reporting of near-misses is actively encouraged and all employees are informed at induction on how to report a near-miss. The near-miss reporting procedure has also been simplified.

People Based Safety

People Based Safety is a crafts driven programme with operatives observing other staff, focusing on their working behaviours, both safe and at risk. Often the crafts are in the best position to recognise unsafe situations; the scheme uses their knowledge and experience to provide constructive feedback and coaching to correct at-risk behaviour.

This is a no blame process and all observations are anonymous. At the end of the reporting period, data is collected and analysed to identify any trends. The scheme provides crafts with a direct opportunity to make positive improvements to their working environment and helps develop a safety culture based on people looking after each other.

Benefits

Improving worker engagement has brought many benefits to the project, including:

- an accident rate of less than half the construction industry norm;
- a positive change in safety culture;
- individual contracts regularly achieving over one million man hours without a reportable injury;
- recognition by HSE and the construction industry in the UK – and beyond – of CTRL safety achievements.

Safety is about people, and only by people being committed and working together can we achieve our goal of Zero Accidents.