

Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 28 – Monday, July 6 – Friday, July 10, 2026
Influencing Safety Without Authority

Introduction – Influencing Safety Without Authority

Introduction for Leaders (Use Before Monday’s Toolbox Talk)

Purpose for Supervisors:

This week, we will be talking about something that affects every single person on this team, regardless of title: how to influence safety even when you don’t have the authority to enforce it. Most of the people who notice a hazard, see a risky habit forming, or feel uneasy about a situation are not the ones with the power to write someone up or change a procedure. They’re team members. And that gap between noticing something and feeling like you have the standing to say something is where many preventable incidents live. Our goal this week is to close that gap.

How Leaders Should Frame This Week’s Toolbox Talks:

- Make it clear that influence isn’t about rank. Some of the most respected safety voices on any crew are people without a title; they’ve just earned trust over time.
- Acknowledge that speaking up to a peer, especially someone more experienced or senior, can feel harder than speaking up to a supervisor. Don’t minimize that discomfort; help the team work through it.
- Reinforce that when someone without formal authority speaks up and it goes well, that should be visibly supported by leadership. It sets the tone for everyone watching.

Monday – Influence Is Not the Same as Authority

Discussion:

Let’s start with a distinction that matters a lot more than people usually realize. Authority is the formal power to direct, correct, or enforce, which comes with a title. Influence is the ability to affect how someone thinks or acts, and it doesn’t require a title at all. You can have an influence on day one. You can have influence as the newest person on the crew. You can have influence even if your job has nothing to do with managing anyone.

Here’s why that matters specifically for safety: most hazards aren’t spotted by supervisors. They’re spotted by the people doing the work the person standing right next to the hazard, the team member who notices something looks different today, the new hire who asks a question that makes everyone realize a step got skipped. If influence required authority, most of those moments would go nowhere. They don’t have to.

What gives someone influence, with or without a title:

Credibility. When people trust that you know what you’re talking about because you’ve shown up consistently, done the work right, and been honest they listen to you differently. Credibility is built slowly, through small, consistent actions, not through a job title.

Relationships: People are far more open to feedback from someone they have a relationship with, even a small one. A simple history of being friendly, helpful, and respectful makes it much easier to be heard when something matters.

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Genuine care: When people can tell that you're raising a concern because you care about them not because you're trying to one-up them or follow a rule for its own sake they're much less likely to get defensive.

Timing and tone: The same message landing at the right moment, delivered calmly and privately, can be heard completely differently from the exact same words shouted across a job site in front of everyone.

A real-world example:

A warehouse associate named Theo had been on the job for about four months no leadership title, nothing official. He noticed that a long-time employee, someone with nearly two decades of seniority, had developed a habit of leaving a pallet jack parked in a walkway between uses. Theo didn't have any authority to tell this person what to do. But he'd spent four months being reliable, friendly, and easy to work with. One afternoon, he simply said, "Hey, mind if I move this out of the walkway? I almost clipped it yesterday and figured I'd mention it." The senior employee said, "Oh, yeah, my bad I didn't even think about it." That was it. No title, no confrontation, no escalation. Just a relationship and a moment used well.

Team member engagement:

"Think of someone on this team, any role, any title who you'd say has real influence when it comes to safety. What is it about them that makes people listen?"

Tuesday – Speaking Up to Someone More Senior Than You

Discussion:

Let's talk about the situation that probably feels hardest for a lot of people: noticing something unsafe, and the person doing it has more seniority, more experience, or more standing than you do. Maybe it's someone who trained you. Maybe it's someone whose opinion of you matters for your future here. The instinct in that moment is often to stay quiet not because you don't care, but because speaking up feels like it's not your place. Here's the reframe that matters: it's not about rank, it's about the hazard. The hazard doesn't care how long someone has worked here. And most experienced people would genuinely rather hear about a risk from a newer team member than get hurt because nobody said anything. The discomfort of speaking up is real, but it is almost always smaller than people expect, especially when it's done with respect.

Ways to make speaking up to someone more senior feel less intimidating:

- Frame it as a question, not a correction. "Hey, I noticed you're not wearing the harness for this is that something that's not required for this task, or did it get missed?" This gives them an easy way to either explain or correct without feeling called out.
- Lead with curiosity, not judgment. People are more receptive when they feel like you're trying to understand, not trying to catch them doing something wrong.
- Keep it private. A quiet word to the side carries the same message as a public comment, without putting someone's pride on the line in front of the crew.

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- Remember that most people respond well to being noticed. Even experienced workers can develop blind spots through repetition. A respectful nudge is often appreciated more than people expect.
- If it still feels too hard in the moment, you can always go to a supervisor afterward. The point isn't who delivers the message, it's that the message gets delivered.

A real-world example:

A second-year apprentice electrician named Mia was working alongside a journeyman with over fifteen years of experience. She noticed he had started a task without verifying the circuit was de-energized something she'd been taught was always step one, no exceptions. Her first instinct was to assume he knew something she didn't, given his experience. But the training stuck with her, and she said, "Hey, before we get into this did we already check that this circuit is de-energized? I just want to make sure I'm tracking the sequence right." He paused, realized he'd skipped it because he'd been distracted by a phone call right before, and said, "Good catch, let's check it now." Mia didn't correct him. She asked a question rooted in her own learning, and it was exactly enough.

Team member engagement:

"What makes it harder to speak up to someone with more experience or seniority than you? And what would make it easier?"

Challenge for the day:

Ask, Don't Tell:

- *"If you notice something today that seems off regardless of who is doing it try framing it as a genuine question. Notice how the conversation goes."*

Wednesday – Being the Calm Voice in a Tense Moment

Discussion:

Today, let's talk about a specific kind of influence: the ability to be a steady, calm presence when things start to feel rushed, tense, or chaotic. You don't need a title to be the person who slows a moment down. In fact, sometimes the person with the most influence in a tense situation is the one who simply isn't adding to the tension.

Think about how group dynamics actually work. When everyone is moving fast and feeling the pressure, that energy is contagious people feed off each other, and the pace accelerates even further. But the same is true in the other direction. One person staying calm, asking a clarifying question, or simply slowing their own pace down can shift the whole group's rhythm without anyone announcing that's what's happening.

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What being a calm influence looks like in practice:

- Asking a clarifying question when the group is moving fast. “Just to make sure we’re all on the same page what’s the plan for this part?” can interrupt momentum without anyone feeling criticized.
- Naming what you’re seeing without escalating. “I’m noticing we’re all moving pretty fast right now just want to make sure we’re not missing anything” is observational, not accusatory.
- Modeling the pace you want to see. If you do your part of the task at a deliberate, careful pace, it gives others around you implicit permission to do the same without a word being said.
- Being the person who double-checks, out loud, in a way that invites others to do the same. “Let me just confirm this is locked before I move on” isn’t slowing anyone down it’s modeling a habit worth catching.

A real-world example:

During a tight turnaround on a production line, the whole shift was visibly anxious about falling behind voices were a little sharper, movements a little quicker, everyone aware of the clock. A line operator named Faith, who had no supervisory role, noticed the tension building and made a point of slowing her own movements down slightly and narrating her steps out loud as she normally did when training someone, even though no one was being trained that day. Within a few minutes, the pace around her noticeably steadied. Nobody commented on it. Nobody thanked her for it. But the shift finished the turnaround without a single near-miss, in a window where they’d had two the previous month under similar pressure. Faith didn’t do anything dramatic. She just didn’t let the tension become hers, and that mattered more than she probably realized.

Team member engagement:

“Can you think of a time when one person’s calm or one person’s rush changed the energy of the whole group? What happened?”

Challenge for the day:

Set the Pace:

- *“If you notice the pace around you picking up in a way that feels rushed today, try deliberately slowing your own pace and narrating a step out loud. See what happens around you.”*

Thursday – Building Influence Over Time

Discussion:

So far this week, we’ve talked about moments specific situations where influence matters. Today, let’s zoom out and talk about something bigger: how influence gets built in the first place. Because the truth is, the people who are most effective at influencing safety without authority didn’t become that way overnight. It’s the result of many small choices made consistently over time. The good news is that this is something every single person on this team is already building, whether they realize it or not for better or worse. Every interaction either adds to your influence or takes away from it, just a little. Over months and years, those small additions and subtractions add up to either being someone people listen to, or someone people tune out.

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Habits that build influence over time:

- Doing your own work right, consistently, even when no one is watching. People notice this more than you'd think, even if they never say it out loud.
- Following through on what you say you'll do. If you tell someone you'll fix something or report something, do it. Reliability is one of the fastest ways to earn trust.
- Admitting your own mistakes openly. Nothing builds credibility faster than being the kind of person who says "I messed that up" without being prompted. It makes it much easier for others to hear feedback from you because they know you're not coming from a place of superiority.

Habits that quietly erode influence over time:

- Pointing out other people's mistakes while cutting your own corners. This doesn't go unnoticed, and it undermines everything else you might say.
- Bringing things up in a way that embarrasses people, even if the underlying point is correct. People remember how they felt longer than they remember what was said.
- Being inconsistent caring about safety some days and not others, depending on mood or workload. Influence requires people to know what to expect from you.

A real-world example:

A maintenance technician named Owen had worked at his facility for about three years. He wasn't a lead, didn't have any formal title beyond his role, and rarely said much in meetings. But over those three years, he had built a reputation: when Owen said a piece of equipment wasn't ready, it wasn't ready. When Owen said he'd follow up on something, he did. When Owen made a mistake, he was the first to say so and the first to fix it. So when Owen quietly mentioned to his supervisor one day that he was concerned about a new procedure that had been rolled out that it seemed to create a pinch point that hadn't existed before his supervisor didn't need convincing. The procedure was reviewed and adjusted within a week. Owen never raised his voice, never escalated, never had to. Three years of consistency did the work before that one conversation even started.

Team member engagement:

"Think about your own reputation on this team right now. What do you think people would say about how reliable or consistent you are when it comes to safety? Is there anything you'd want to change about that?"

Challenge for the day:

Bank a Deposit:

- *"Today, do one small thing that builds trust follow through on something you said you'd do, help a team member without being asked, or own a mistake openly. Small deposits add up."*

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Friday – Week Wrap-Up

Discussion:

This week, we talked about something that doesn't always get named directly, but affects every single person here: how to influence safety without needing a title to do it. We talked about the difference between authority and influence, and how influence is built through credibility, relationships, genuine care, and timing not rank. We talked about how to speak up to someone more senior than you, framed in terms of curiosity rather than correction. We talked about being a calm, steady presence when a moment starts to feel rushed. And we talked about how influence builds slowly, through consistency over months and years.

Here's the takeaway: you already have more influence than you probably think you do. Every shift, you have opportunities small ones, mostly to either build that influence or let it sit unused. The hazards that matter most are often spotted by the people closest to them, not the people with the most authority over them. That means every person in this room is part of what keeps this team safe, regardless of title. That's not a burden. It's something to be proud of.

Team member engagement:

Let's wrap up the week with a few honest questions.

- *"Did anything this week change how you think about your own ability to influence safety on this team?"*
- *"Is there a situation where you've held back from saying something because it didn't feel like 'your place'? Looking back, how do you feel about that now?"*
- *"Who on this team do you think has earned a lot of influence through consistency, even without a title? What can we learn from how they operate?"*
- *"What's one thing you want to start doing even something small to build more trust and influence with the people around you?"*