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Operations Testing is Performed Consistently

Setting-up a successful system to further fairness and consistency

Safety Culture is based on behaviors. Performing a task in the field, such as handling a switch or communications on the radio, may have certain steps or rules to follow. Whether or not employees adhere to these rules shows us a behavior from both the management and employee perspective. If rules are not followed consistently, what are the employees or management doing about it? This is where normalized deviation comes into play, or when the practice does not meet the standard set by a rule and then becomes normal behavior. Management can then change the standard, or change the behaviors to meet the rule. Having a regularly practiced, consistent, accessible, and well-documented policy for Operations Testing can help to alleviate any normalized deviation from your company's rules. This may also give managers an opportunity to coach and mentor employees in the proper procedures and build communication channels and trust. This month, we would like to share some tips about enhancing Operational Testing programs.

When enhancing your Operational Testing program, you may want to incorporate:

- A consistent company-wide plan for safety and operational rules that models continual learning and employee development
- Opportunities for coaching, mentoring, and feedback
- Immediate response to any mistakes or learning opportunities physically witnessed to address any gaps of knowledge quickly
 - Ensure follow-up rule or operation practice reviews with the employee in the field and observe them again to ensure their knowledge has grown and the correct practice is understood for the future
- A contact person the employees can reach out to for further information or safety questions and dates for additional or upcoming training courses
- Neatly storing all of your observation tests
- Other management from transportation departments during your observation testing to gain or learn different rules (i.e., Mechanical Department)
- Notetaking when observing, because you may not remember exactly what you saw later
- All managers perform the same level of effort and tests are conducted in a fair and consistent manner
- Focus on quality, instead of the quantity of tests
 - Avoid placing a value on a set percentage of failures

For more information about how to improve your program, please contact our Safety Culture Assessors at SLSI@shortlinesafety.org

For more safety tips, please see our website, www.shortlinesafety.org