Building a Culture of Safety at the City of San Diego

The City of SAN DIEGO

Building a Culture of Safety

Safety must be more than messaging, and it must be effectively integrated into our work culture and daily practices.

A culture of safety is not a one-time activity. All employees, from leadership to managers and frontline drivers, all are critical to creating an environment where employees not only feel safe but feel that they can call out unsafe behaviors.

- We Need Visible Leadership
  Our actions must match our words

- We Need Accountability
  We must examine the entire situation

- We Need To Make It Acceptable to Speak Up
  We must listen to the employee's experience and then act on what they tell us



Standards that Protect Workers

Established standard operating procedures turn our commitment to safety into consistent, repeatable practices.

Critical Areas Where Waste Collection Standards Can Strengthen Worker Protection:

1. Pre-trip inspections and equipment maintenance
2. Traffic safety and visibility
3. Backing and riding procedures
4. Safe material handling and personal protection
5. Regular safety briefings and clear communication
6. Assess and address heat, fatigue, and fitness for duty



Training, Communication, Continuous Improvement

Written procedures are important but having employees who u and consistently apply those procedures is what makes the dif



Make Training Practical and Inclusive

Consider language needs, reading levels, experience, and comfort with technology

Safety information must be accessible to everyone who needs it

Have the Difficult Conversations

Intervene, explain the risk, reinforce the correct procedure, and follow up

We must change behavior so employees can go home safely

Leadership Commitment:

Making Safety Decisions Personal, Not Financial

Safety isn’t expensive, it’s priceless



- No budget savings can justify ignoring a known, preventable haza
- Safety must be integrated into our operational and financial decisions
- Ask not only whether the decision improves efficiency, but also, whether it protects our workforce

Closing Thoughts On Safety

- We owe our employees an operation that recognizes their value and takes their protection seriously.
- As leaders, we set the expectations. As supervisors, we reinforce the standards we set. As coworkers, we look out for one another. And as an industry, we must continue sharing knowledge and improving our practices.
- Our success should never be measured only by how efficiently we operate. It should also be measured by whether every employee who reports to work returns home safely.
- We must make safety more than a policy, let's make it the standard by which we operate every single day with best practices acknowledged, implemented, and enforced.