

A more engaged and inclusive approach to safety leadership

Central to our Purpose is our relentless endeavour to keep our people safe and well.

So, alongside our introduction of new technologies that are making Anglo American a safer and healthier place to work, we are building a stronger safety culture, based on the established concept of Visible Felt Leadership (VFL), to help leaders, at all levels, demonstrate in a personal way how much they care about their teams' safety and well-being in the workplace.

At Anglo American, we see VFL as an active, practical and highly visible expression of living our Values, connecting, in the field, on a one-to-one or small-group basis around a task or activity, and ensuring that it is done safely and effectively. Unlike traditional 'top-down' interventions, which were generally regarded by both leaders and front line workers as "looking to see what's wrong", our approach to VFL recognises people for doing the right things, and encourages them to stand up for safety and speak up if they see something that doesn't look or feel right.

VFL is central to improving safety

Applying the concept of VFL provides the opportunity for leaders to see for themselves what is really happening on the front line, to understand and influence employee behaviours, and help to instil a safety ethic. These conversations enable managers and supervisors alike to demonstrate their team commitment, foster understanding, break down barriers, and are vital to building greater trust with our workforce.

When we ask our leaders to engage directly with front line personnel, we want to create not just physical, but also psychological safety. By encouraging our operational leaders to create a psychologically safe working environment, our workforce feels more empowered to speak up about unsafe work practices and to stop unsafe work. As well as improving



At our Minas-Rio iron ore mine in Brazil, senior manager – operations, Bruno Cipriani, talks with members of his team about the day's operational plans.

overall safety, this approach brings further benefits such as enhanced levels of engagement, better morale, and higher productivity.

How VFL is being implemented

Building a safety culture in any organisation can be a slow and painstaking task – and it demands more of everyone's time. So, how is the time our leaders spend in the field, an essential component of this, being rolled out?

At a Group level, we are monitoring our newly introduced Leadership Time in Field key performance indicator (KPI) which now forms part of management bonus structures for all sites. That said, the focus is on leaders spending quality time in the field engaging in a meaningful way rather than on collecting data. For example, following a VFL engagement, the information collected, which may include critical safety aspects such as the identification of high-potential hazards, is captured in a central system for any necessary follow-up actions and further analysis.

Since introducing the KPI, we are seeing a more encouraging overall improvement in our total recordable injury frequency rate (TRIFR), and this correlates well with the greater amount of quality time being spent by our leadership with the frontline at site level.

Next steps

We are exploring how best to use various technology options such as data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) to help identify safety trends across the organisation and to measure the impact of leadership time in the field across our sites and operations.

Roll-out of a new mobile app to leaders is under way; this will make capturing records of VFL engagement and communicating insights gained in the field a more efficient process. We have also introduced an operational guide to provide additional guidance and support to leaders in conducting meaningful, quality VFL engagements that support the culture shift we are looking for.

"Visible Felt Leadership (VFL) is a key component of improving our safety culture. What distinguishes it today from earlier approaches is the greater amount of time leaders, at all levels of the organisation, spend in the field – and the fact that it is interactive, in that it encourages two-way dialogue with colleagues to speak up for safety. VFL is also underpinned by the latest developments in technology, which are able to identify potential hazards and incidents, along with safety trends, and capture them on a central data base. This is allowing us to measure VFL's impact across the company and to get a comprehensive perspective of the positive difference it is making at our operations."

Tony Brock
Group Head of Safety, Health and Environment