

Enhancing Cultures of Safety and Safety Engagement: A Collaborative and Multidisciplinary Inquiry

Saskatchewan's mining industry has a very strong safety tradition and the industry proactively improves its practice around safety and safety engagement. One project around improving safety practice was a collaborative project between IMII, its member partners, the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Polytechnic called "Enhancing Cultures of Safety and Safety Engagement in the Saskatchewan Mining Industry: A Collaborative and Multidisciplinary Inquiry". This project was initiated in 2014, drawing on the multi-disciplinary research expertise of over 80 people at both the University of Saskatchewan (USASK) and Saskatchewan Polytechnic (Sask Polytech). The research team was called **SESEMI** (Safety Engagement of Saskatchewan Employees in the Mining Industry).

The objectives of the project were to investigate the current state of safety culture and examine existing safety management and engagement within companies. The SESEMI team utilized a two-pronged approach. The USask team members set about completing a comprehensive literature review, scanning over 180,000 documents to "short-list" 1480 sources covering 39 topics. The Sask Polytech team members completed on-site document analysis and interviewing to understand the safety practices and cultures at different mining-related organizations. The combination of the extensive literature review and on-site work allowed SESEMI to compare the knowledge base with actual practice.

The study found that that Saskatchewan mining companies have very strong high-level systems and practices in place. Some of the existing strengths include: comprehensive and effective management of safety policies; compliance with external regulations, OHS committees and unions; free flowing and efficient communication in all directions; optimal relationships with contractors and consultants; a focus on continuous improvement; systems to proactively identify hazards and analyze root causes and the importance of mental health and psychological well-being.

The study also found that safety systems and culture would be enhanced with more focus on mid-level to individual strategies. These strategies could include: assessment of safety culture; managers and supervisors equipped to build the safety culture; hiring processes that use a safety lens to evaluate candidates; safety training and programs based on best practices; systematic evaluation of safety training and programs; tackling modern issues of substance use; and accommodation of changing demographics.

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