Using NAOSH Week to Improve Safety: Some Practical Strategies



May 7, 2012 – NAOSH Week (North American Occupational Safety and Health), the 2012 installment of which officially kicks off today, isn't as much fun as some other holidays.

There's no ho-ho-ho'ing NAOSH Clauses coming down the chimney.

Guys don't give bouquets of red NAOSH roses and heart shaped boxes of chocolates to their sweethearts.

Nobody uses NAOSH as an excuse to dress in green, shoot off fireworks, trick-or-treat or stay home on a Thursday for turkey and football.

In fact, NAOSH Week is pretty ordinary. But I'm not trying to channel my inner Stevie Wonder. I'm just writing to tell you that NAOSH Week *is* important and that it represents the perfect occasion for taking a hard look at your safety program and the attitudes of the organization it's meant to serve.

How NAOSH Week Came to Be

The goal of NAOSH Week is simple: to focus employers, employees and the public on the importance of preventing injury and illness—inside and outside the workplace. NAOSH Week is marked by safety conferences, poster displays and special training sessions for workers across North America.

The idea of NAOSH Week came from Canada during the NAFTA (North America Free Trade Agreement) talks. Canadians had been observing their own national safety week since1986 and thought it would be pretty cool to get their continental neighbors to join in the fun. The US and Mexico agreed and in 1997 all 3 countries began setting aside the same week as NAOSH Week.

Using NAOSH Week as a Safety Opportunity

In a better world, people would pay special attention to safety all the time. But they don't. So if the NAOSH folks are going to give the safety professionals an excuse to command the spotlight for a week, I strongly suggest you take full advantage.

And don’t underestimate the safety opportunity presented by NAOSH Week. According to the information kit on the official NAOSH Week website, getting involved in NAOSH week has been shown to help organizations:

- Improve their attitudes towards safety;
- Foster a safety-minded culture;
- Increase cooperation;
- Raise awareness; and
- Improve communication between employees, safety committees and safety professionals.

A 2 Pronged NAOSH Week Strategy

So what can *you* do to cash in on NAOSH Week? Here’s a good to-do list:

First, reflect on your organization’s safety culture and whether your efforts to promote and protect health and safety are not only appreciated but supported.

Next, explain to management and corporate decision makers what a safety culture is and why you need one.