

How to Set Specific and Measureable Goals

Measurement can be defined as to qualify, order, and quantify certain events and use the results as a basis for the control and prediction of performance. Multiple words can be used for measurement such as metrics, analytics and dash boarding — it is important to use the term most understood by your organization.

Safety performance indicator (SPI): A set of parameters that are easy to follow up and which give a sufficiently clear picture of the safety status of the operation, and which at an early stage will give the operation management an indicator that some aspect of the operation is about to deteriorate so that corrective action can be initiated before the situation creates an unacceptable risk.

As part of a safety management system an employer is required to set specific and measureable objectives or safety performance indicators (SPI). A safety performance indicator is a set of parameters that are easy to follow up on and that give a clear picture of the safety status of the operation. The Safety Performance indicators will give the workplace an indicator that an aspect of the operation is deteriorating so that corrective action can be initiated before the situation creates an unacceptable risk. In setting the safety objectives and safety performance indicators consideration should be given to:

- Consider if there are problems to be solved, or an important area where improvement is needed
- Consult workers, the committee and representatives
- Ensure compliance with legal requirements
- Determine SPIs with consideration of the organization's operational and business requirements
- Make sure the indicators selected have direct ties to the outcomes you are trying to achieve and that the SPIs are within your sphere of influence
- Include leading and lagging indicators to establish and monitor the objectives
- Designate responsibility for achieving objectives and targets
- Determine the means and time frame within the objectives to be met
- Communicate the objectives to all employees
- Hold employees accountable for their safety related actions, employee accountability must be consistently enforced
- Safety should be included in performance evaluations
- There must be an element of continuous improvement
- The safety objectives must be discussed and evaluated at a regular and planned intervals by management (at least once per year)

Leading Indicators measure the volume of safety activities such as number of safety/toolbox meetings held, the number of job hazards completed and or reviewed, the number of hazards reported, the number and type of inspections completed, the number of employees trained to lift safely.

Lagging indicators measure historical data such as number of incidents, lost time claims, medical aids, first aids.

The leading indicators are there to identify the failing through routine checking, to plug the holes before an incident occurs.

The lagging indicators reveal the holes through the occurrence of incidents or defects at which point action can be taken to prevent recurrence.

Together leading and lagging indicators provide a solid, bigger picture perspective on what is and is not working in your OHS management program.

In summary, the steps to establish effective SPIs:

1. Establish the organizational structure and leadership commitment.
2. Identify the risk control in place and set lagging indicators that indicate failure.
3. Identify critical elements of the risk control system; actions or processes which must function correctly and set associated leading indicators.
4. Prepare and implement the Safety Performance Indicators (SPIs).
5. Establish a data collection and reporting system.
6. Review the data and take action.
7. Review the effectiveness of the tracking system — continuous improvement.