

## **Organizational Safety Climate Research Proposal**

Stephanie C. Payne, Ph.D. and Mindy E. Bergman, Ph.D.  
Industrial/Organizational Psychology  
Texas A&M University

### **Purpose of the Research and Research Questions:**

Industrial accidents take the lives of thousands of people every year. Following several catastrophes, safety has become a high profile topic of interest in the last two decades of the 20th century. One variable thought to precede individual and organizational safety outcomes is safety climate. Safety climate is defined as shared employee perceptions of the policies, practices, and procedures concerning safety (Zohar, 2003). Perceptions of safety climate can influence the way employees behave and perform their work, which can have a direct impact on safety outcomes such as accidents, near misses, and everyday safety behaviors.

The goal of our program of research on safety climate is to gain a better understanding of safety climate, its influences, and its effects on incidents and accidents. This research study attempts to answer a number of questions human resource practitioners and safety engineers are likely to have concerning the link between safety climate and organizational safety-related outcomes. For example,

- *How does safety climate contribute to a safer working environment?* Identify the mediating mechanisms facilitating a relationship between safety climate and safety-related outcomes.
- *What is the relative influence of safety climate?* Calculate the relative influence of safety climate on safety-related outcomes (compliance, performance, accidents, micro-accidents, injuries, near misses) compared to other variables (e.g., individual differences, safety attitudes, job characteristics).
- *What contributes to safety climate perceptions?* Determine what contributes to variability in employee safety climate perceptions within a given organization and/or work group.
- *Does safety climate have cross-level effects?* Assess whether safety climate is meaningful and operationally similar at different levels of the organization.

### **Proposed Benefits of the Study**

Industry can benefit from this research in several ways:

- This research will identify ways in which safety engineers and human resource managers can work together to increase safety and safety climate in organizations
- This research will help determine attributes of organizations that are safer as well as the characteristics of individuals who are more likely to act safely.
- This research will help identify ways for organizations to enhance their safety climate across organizational levels.

## **Study Plan, Procedures, and Measurements**

To enable us to better understand safety climate and how it relates to safety-related outcomes, we propose survey administration to a targeted sample of employees.

1. The sample will need to be representative of the focal position of interest (e.g., frontline workers, managers) within the organization. Employees will be asked to complete a confidential, 20-minute web-based or paper-based survey including questions about dispositional preferences, job characteristics, safety climate perceptions, safety behaviors, and safety attitudes.
2. If possible, short interviews and focus groups with personnel at varying organizational levels to explore the content, antecedents, and consequences of safety climate, events, and behavior in the organization will also be conducted.
3. Your organization will have the opportunity to review and approve all questions asked.

## **Outcomes**

The researchers will provide a report summarizing the study's findings and implications approximately 4 weeks after organizational records are collected. Additionally, preliminary findings from the survey will be generated and reported 2 months after data collection is complete.

We invite your organization to include additional questions in the survey to collect information on additional areas of concern or interest to ensure that our research adds value to your organization.

## **Resources**

We request the following resources from your organization to successfully conduct this study:

- (1) A brief memo to all employees stating that upper management supports this study and encourages employees to participate.
- (2) Contact information (e.g., e-mail addresses) or assistance communicating with employees to inform them about the study and how to access the survey/distribute the survey.
- (3) 20 minutes for each employee to complete the survey.
- (4) Access to organizational records (e.g., near misses, micro-accidents, accidents, incidents) approximately 6 months after survey administration.

## **Timeline**

We would like to administer the web-based survey within approximately one month of organizational approval to conduct the study; however, the timeline is negotiable. We will submit a proposal to conduct the study to Texas A&M University's Institutional Review Board. It usually takes about one month to obtain approval.

## **Contact Information**

For more information regarding this research and proposed study, please contact Stephanie Payne at (979) 845-2090 or [scp@tamu.edu](mailto:scp@tamu.edu).