

Spread a little Christmas cheer!

It's Christmas! A time for peace on earth and goodwill to all men (and women). It is a time for being merry and getting on with each other. Maybe we should remember this when it comes to safety and health in the workplace.

Don't worry; this isn't another reminder about all the risks associated with having a good time: risk assessing the office party, checking the electrics on the Christmas lights or not over-doing it with the sherry trifle. This is much simpler. What a great time of year for us all to be a little bit less miserable about safety. Life can be depressing enough without constantly measuring our failures (accidents) and only talking to someone when they have done something wrong. Most of your workforce will spend most of their time working really well. They will be following procedures, using the right tools, wearing the right kit and looking out for themselves and each other. So why don't we all just give it a break – let's concentrate on the positive for once. We all appreciate it when someone recognises that we are doing a good job and that should include doing a safe job. And don't give me that feeble argument that says "*they are supposed to be working safely – that's what they get paid to do!*" Yes, and you are supposed to do a *good* job, that's what you get paid to do but you still like it when someone says "*Thanks!*"

We must be careful not to over-do it. We mustn't praise the trivial and most importantly, we must be sincere. If you really don't mean it then don't say it because it'll be obvious that you don't really mean it.

This approach of Positive Reinforcement (praise and recognition for the safe behaviours) is so much more effective than Negative Reinforcement (punishment and criticism for the unsafe). Whilst negative reinforcement may discourage the unsafe behaviour it will rarely encourage the safe. This is likely to result in people choosing the safe option when they fear the effects of getting caught. How many people do you see slowing down as they drive past a speed camera only to speed up again once they are past it?

So, spread a little festive cheer. Break with tradition and be nice to people – get out into the workplace and see if you can't *catch someone* working safely this Christmas time. And when you do catch them be sure to let them know about it!

Merry Christmas