



SAFETY GOALSETTING AND BENCHMARKING:

# Measuring for Action in Loss Prevention

Written by Alex Miller, ARM, OHST

# Introduction: Why This Matters



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Most leaders do not need to be convinced that safety is important. What they do need is a practical way to manage it.

In many organizations, safety is still talked about in broad terms. It is described as a priority, a value, or a commitment. Those are fine statements, but by themselves they do not drive performance. In an organization of any type, the things that improve are the things that are watched, measured, evaluated and then acted upon. Safety is no different.

That is the central idea of this discussion. To take a variant of an old expression;

“What gets observed gets done; what gets observed and measured gets done well.”

If we want loss prevention efforts to become consistent and effective, then we have to observe them and measure them.

This is not about turning safety into a paperwork exercise, and it is not about chasing a number for the sake of putting a number in a report. It is about making sure the work done to prevent losses, (such as injuries, vehicle and property damage, and liability events), which create operational disruptions are actually taking place, and those actions are making a difference. For owners, operations leaders, and safety professionals, that distinction matters.

A company can genuinely care about safety and still fail to inspect the field consistently. It can expect accountability and still allow corrective actions to linger, allowing the hazard to remain. It can be committed to prevention but still do very little with the information already sitting in its loss runs, vehicle reports, site inspections, job hazard analyses, warranty work, or incident investigations. This is typically where the gap exists. Not in intention, but in management.

When leaders begin to benchmark safety performance and set measurable goals around it, safety begins to operate more like the rest of the business. Expectations become clearer. Weaknesses become easier to spot. Resources can be directed more intelligently. Supervisors know what is expected. Progress can be reviewed. Most importantly, safety performance becomes something more tangible an organization can manage rather than simply react to.

That is especially important because losses rarely happen in a vacuum. Injuries, vehicle crashes, equipment damage, and liability events are often led by a host of identifiable indicators: poor housekeeping, vehicle incidents, unfinished corrective actions, recurring hazards, poor pre-task planning, repeat equipment defects, increased minor incidents, or poor supervisory follow-up. These are not simply random annoyances to a process; they are identifiable and measurable warning signs. Organizations that get better at recognizing and measuring those signs usually will get better at preventing the bigger losses that follow.

That is the real case for safety goalsetting and benchmarking. It allows leaders to stop managing safety from a reactionary stance, and start managing it with evidence, just like the other functional areas of a business. It gives a company a way to define what acceptable performance looks like, what improved performance should look like, and what actions need to happen in order to get there. To put simply, if we want our loss prevention efforts to be taken seriously, they need to be visible and recognizable. If we want them to improve, they need to be measured.

# Benchmarking and Goalsetting: Basic Definitions



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Before an organization can improve safety performance in a disciplined way, it needs to separate two ideas that are often blended together.

*A benchmark* is an established level of acceptability or comparison. It is the line you measure against. It tells you what level of performance is considered normal, acceptable, expected, or competitive.

*A goal* is a level of achievement that is aspired to. It is the target you intend to reach. It is directional. It reflects improvement, commitment, and planning.

A benchmark is a defined reference point that allows an organization to compare itself against. A goal tells you where you intend to go next. That distinction is more important than it may seem.

*Here is an example:*

- ▶ If a company's Total Recordable Incident Rate is 3.1 and
- ▶ The average for its industry is 2.3, then,
- ▶ 2.3 may serve as an External Benchmark.

But benchmarks are not automatically the right goal. They are often misinterpreted as being similar, but there is a distinction. You set goals to reach the benchmark.

*A realistic first goal may be 2.8 this year and 2.4 next year.*

Likewise, if the company already outperforms the industry average, then simply matching the benchmark is not much of a management objective, and a different benchmark should be used.

The same is true for Internal Benchmarks.

- ▶ If a branch is completing only 70 percent of required inspections on time and
- ▶ Leadership believes that 100 percent is the acceptable standard, then
- ▶ 100 percent is the Internal Benchmark.

But again, the benchmark may not be the appropriate goal.

- ▶ The goal may be 85 percent by the end of the next quarter and
- ▶ 95 percent by year-end.

The benchmark establishes the expectation, and the goal sets the path for improvement. This is why it is critical that organizations set and use both.



## Where Benchmarks Come From

Benchmarks can be developed from several sources.

**External Benchmarks come from outside the organization. These can include:**

- ▶ Industry Injury-Rate Data
- ▶ Regulatory Statistics
- ▶ Peer Comparisons
- ▶ Insurer Information
- ▶ Trade Association Data
- ▶ Contractor Prequalification Expectations

External benchmarks are useful because they provide perspective. They answer the question, “Compared to others in our industry, where do we stand?”

One of the most common External Benchmarks is the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The BLS publishes annual incidence-rate data through the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses. The BLS reports those rates as the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers per year. For 2024, BLS lists the private-industry total recordable case rate at 2.3 and the DART rate at 1.4. This means that for every 100 employees working for a company, 2.3 of them will be injured annually, and of those 2.3, 1.4 of those will be injured severely enough to be off work or have to have their work modified. Those figures are broad, but they give leaders a common external reference point. (bls.gov)

**Internal Historical Benchmarks** come from the organization’s own performance over time. For example, a three-year average claim frequency, a five-year average auto loss rate, or a prior-year average inspection-completion rate can all serve as practical Internal Benchmarks. These often provide better management value than outside data because they reflect the company’s own operations, exposures, and systems. The organization is measuring itself against itself.

**Internal Comparative Benchmarks** compare one division, branch, supervisor group, or operating unit against another. This can be one of the most useful forms of benchmarking because it highlights variation inside the organization. For instance, if one location closes corrective actions in an average of 9 days and another takes 31, that difference deserves attention. It can develop competition and also provide information on specific managers and how effective individual managers’ behavior is performing.

**Internally Established Benchmarks** are created by leadership expectation, policy, or procedure. For example, leadership may establish that every scheduled site inspection must be completed each month, every serious incident is investigated within 24 hours, and every vehicle defect affecting safe operation is reviewed the same day. In this case, the benchmark is not based on average performance. It is based on what leadership defines as acceptable. These can be and are usually tangible expectations that are used for performance evaluations for management.

# The Statistical Side of Safety Performance



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One reason some organizations hesitate to use safety measurements more aggressively is that they assume the numbers will be too technical to be useful. In reality, the opposite is true. When selected properly, safety statistics are simple formulas that can give leaders a practical management tool. What we are developing with these and other examples of safety statistics is Management Intelligence that is used to help management make intelligent and informed decisions.

The key is to use a combination of lagging indicators, leading indicators, and operational performance indicators as a way to influence and direct the workforce to eliminate hazardous conditions and behaviors.

## Lagging Indicators: What Has Already Happened

Lagging indicators measure outcomes that have already occurred. They are important because they reflect real loss experience, but they are retrospective. They tell you how the organization performed, but not necessarily why.

The most common lagging indicators include the following.

### Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR or TIR)

This is one of the best-known workplace safety measures. OSHA, Cal-OSHA, the BLS as well as general contractors as part of contractual pre-qualification surveys all use this common formula:

$$\text{TRIR} = \frac{(\text{NUMBER OF OSHA RECORDABLE CASES} \times 200,000)}{\text{TOTAL HOURS WORKED}}$$

The 200,000 factor represents 100 full-time employees working 40 hours per week for 50 weeks in a year. OSHA explains that this standardizes injury and illness data so firms, industries, and operations can be compared on a common basis. ([osha.gov](http://osha.gov))

TRIR is valuable because it gives leaders a normalized view of recordable-case frequency. That matters when headcount or hours fluctuate. Ten recordables in a small workforce and ten recordables in a much larger workforce do not mean the same thing. The rate helps put the raw count into context.

## DART Rate

DART stands for Days Away, Restricted, or Transferred. This rate focuses on cases serious enough to result in lost workdays, job restriction, or transfer to another job.

$$\text{DART} = (\text{NUMBER OF DART CASES} \times 200,000) / \text{TOTAL HOURS WORKED}$$

This can be an especially useful measure for leadership because it narrows the focus to cases with more operational impact. Many owners and operations leaders find DART more meaningful than TRIR when evaluating workforce disruption, productivity impact, and claim seriousness. (osha.gov) Analyzing the difference between the two rates can also provide insight into claims management practices and the effectiveness of a return-to-work program.

## Severity Measures

Frequency matters, but so does severity. There is a saying; “Frequency breeds severity,” and it is absolutely true. The more often a minor event happens, the more quickly the major event will happen.

Two organizations may have similar claim frequency and very different loss experiences if one has far more serious cases.

### SEVERITY CAN BE MEASURED USING BENCHMARKS FROM MANY SOURCES, INCLUDING:

- ▶ Average Lost Workdays per Claim
- ▶ Average Incurred Cost per Claim
- ▶ Total Incurred Cost per 100 Employees
- ▶ Restricted-Duty Days per Dart Case
- ▶ Average Claim Duration

A common leadership mistake is to look only at the number of incidents and ignore the magnitude of each of the losses. A company with fewer incidents but much higher severity may still have a weaker risk profile than one with slightly higher frequency and lower severity. If we can identify the “why” each of these exist, then we can set the appropriate goals to address them.

## Incident Frequency and Incident Cost Rates

Many organizations also calculate rates tied to incidents rather than just OSHA recordables. They create these Internal Benchmarks because they are indicators that are important and also specific to their operations, and reflect more accurately their situation.

Examples include:

- ▶ Workers Compensation Claim Frequency per 100 Employees
- ▶ Near Miss or Close Calls Reported by Division
- ▶ Workers Compensation Claim Frequency per 200,000 Hours Worked
- ▶ Auto Claim Frequency per Million Miles Driven
- ▶ General Liability Claim Frequency per Revenue Unit, Project Count, or Operating Location
- ▶ Average Incurred Cost per Claim
- ▶ Total Incurred Loss Rate per Labor Hour or Payroll Unit

These measures often speak more directly to owners and senior managers because they connect safety performance to a financial outcome. Different benchmarks will have different impacts with different audiences. C-suite audiences may find more importance with cost-based benchmarks, while line managers may find time-based benchmarks more motivating.

## Leading Indicators: What Predicts Future Results

Lagging indicators matter, but they are not enough by themselves. If an organization wants to manage safety proactively, it has to measure the activities and conditions that influence future outcomes.

That is where leading indicators come in.

Examples include:

- ▶ Percentage of Scheduled Inspections Completed on Time
- ▶ Number of Hazards Identified and Corrected
- ▶ Average Days to Close Corrective Actions
- ▶ Percentage of Required Training Completed on Schedule
- ▶ Number of Job Hazard Analyses Completed Before High-Risk Work Begins
- ▶ Number and Quality of Supervisor Safety Observations
- ▶ Driver Vehicle Inspection Completion Rate
- ▶ Defect Follow-Up Rate from Vehicle Inspections
- ▶ Preventive Maintenance Completion Rate
- ▶ Near-Miss Reporting Rate
- ▶ Safety Meeting Attendance and Participation

These indicators matter because they tell leadership whether or not the preventive work is actually occurring. The indicators may not be providing information in real time, but it is providing information much sooner than if they were to wait until a Lagging Indicator kicks in. So, if inspections are not being completed, if corrective actions remain open, if high-risk work begins without pre-task planning, and if vehicle defects are not being addressed, then using Leading Indicators as a Benchmark will produce results before the poor outcomes show up as a Lagging Indicator, (also known as a loss), and should not come as a surprise.

## Operational Indicators: The Missing Middle

There is another category that deserves more attention, especially from operations leaders: operational indicators. These are measurements that may not always be labeled as safety metrics, but they often reveal the strength or weakness of the organization's controls.

### Examples include:

- ▶ Warranty Work/Rework
- ▶ Equipment Damage (reported and not reported)
- ▶ Downtime Tied to Preventable Conditions
- ▶ Failed Quality Checks
- ▶ Housekeeping Deficiencies
- ▶ Delayed Maintenance
- ▶ Missed Inspections
- ▶ Repeat Deficiencies from Audits
- ▶ Incomplete Documentation on Critical Tasks

Why do these matter? Because organizations that struggle with discipline in one area often struggle in others. Poor follow-through, weak supervision, inconsistent planning, and poor accountability usually do not stay confined to one department. If a company has repeat warranty issues, recurring vehicle defects, or chronic unfinished corrective actions, that is often an indicator to something broader about management systems, and requires further investigation.

From a statistical standpoint, these indicators can be powerful because they give you more data points than major injuries alone. Serious injuries are relatively rare, which makes them difficult to trend in smaller organizations. Inspection completion, corrective-action aging, repeat hazard categories, defect closure time, and rework patterns produce larger data sets and are often more useful for monthly management.

Remember, the whole point of developing these items is to assist ownership and for management to identify where there are holes in the company's processes (whether it is an individual supervisor, employee, or the process itself). Unless the action that is taken (goals and benchmarks) is done from an informed and exacting manner, it would be similar to a shotgun approach.

# Developing Benchmarks



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One of the most practical steps an organization can take is to not assume that useful safety data comes from outside sources. Most companies already have a substantial amount of internal information that can be developed into benchmarks. The challenge is not the lack of information. The challenge is that much of it is collected for administrative purposes but never turned into Management Intelligence.

Loss runs are a good example. Most companies review loss runs to identify open claims, reserves, or renewal concerns. Fewer use them to benchmark injury types, body parts affected, claim duration, claim frequency by location, repeat loss patterns, average incurred cost by event type, or claim lag time between occurrence and reporting. Yet those are exactly the kinds of measurements that can help leaders identify where prevention effort should be focused.

The same is true of site inspections. Many organizations complete inspections because they know they should. Far fewer mine them for trend data.

- ▶ Which hazards appear most often?
- ▶ Which employees complete area safety inspections on time?
- ▶ Which locations have the highest repeat-deficiency rate?
- ▶ Which supervisors consistently close issues promptly?
- ▶ Which categories remain unresolved the longest?
- ▶ What percentage of identified hazards are corrected within a defined time standard?
- ▶ Is there a correlation of identified hazards to the data generated from the loss run? Is there a pattern where any two intersect?

Job Hazard Analyses, Pre-Task Plans, and Field-Level Risk Assessments are other underused sources. It is not enough to know whether these forms exist. A better question is whether they are happening where they should, when they should, and with enough quality to matter. A benchmark can be built around completion rates, timeliness, or task coverage.

Driver Vehicle Inspections are similar. If drivers are submitting reports but no one is measuring defect trends, review time, recurring deficiencies, or maintenance closeout, then a potentially valuable control is being reduced to paperwork. Telematics has been a technological advancement that can assist in this area a great deal, especially if the fleet is of a size where the exposure is something that is considerable, and should be seriously examined as a risk management tool.

Even Warranty Work and Rework can be useful. Many organizations treat them strictly as quality or operations issues, but they often overlap with safety and risk management. Poor planning, shortcuts, weak supervision, inadequate training, and poor process discipline can all show up in both rework and loss activity.

## Internal Data Sources That Can Support Benchmarks

A company's internal benchmarking system may draw from:

- ▶ OSHA 300 Logs and Annual Summaries
- ▶ Workers Compensation Loss Runs
- ▶ General Liability and Auto Loss Runs
- ▶ Site Inspection Reports
- ▶ Safety Audit Reports
- ▶ Job Hazard Analyses and Pre-Task Plans
- ▶ Vehicle Inspection Records
- ▶ Preventive Maintenance Records
- ▶ Incident Investigation Reports
- ▶ Training Completion Reports
- ▶ Near-Miss Reports
- ▶ Corrective Action Logs
- ▶ Quality Reports, Warranty Work, and Rework Data
- ▶ Telematics Data

The point is not to measure everything. The point is to identify the data sources that actually reflect exposure, discipline, and performance. Once the data sources are identified, the analysis and decisions must be made as to which one(s) will have the highest impact on employee work environment and employee behavior, and ultimately the prevention of any and all types of losses.

## A Practical Process for Building Internal Benchmarks

A straightforward process looks like this.

### 1. IDENTIFY THE DATA YOU ALREADY GENERATE

Most organizations already have enough information to begin. They simply have not organized it into a usable tool.

### 2. SELECT MEASURES THAT MATTER

The best measures are understandable, repeatable, and tied to real exposure or real prevention activity. If a number does not help leadership make a decision, it is probably not a useful benchmark.

### 3. ESTABLISH A BASELINE

Calculate the current state. That may be a one-year average, three-year trend, monthly average, rolling 12-month rate, or branch-to-branch comparison. The purpose is to determine where the organization truly stands. Honesty and integrity are critical at this stage. Remember, you are not trying to put on a good face for people to see, you are trying to reflect the reality of your situation. Brutal honesty will pay dividends in the long run.

### 4. SORT METRICS INTO USEFUL CATEGORIES

These four categories are good examples of metrics to begin with, however, do not limit yourself to these types. Expand your metrics with specific measurements as patterns and trends emerge with time.

- ▶ Outcome measures such as TRIR, DART, claim frequency, and incurred cost
- ▶ Exposure measures such as hours worked, miles driven, equipment hours, project count, or employee headcount
- ▶ Process measures such as inspections completed, training delivered, job hazard analyses performed, and corrective actions closed
- ▶ Quality measures such as timeliness, completeness, recurrence, or effectiveness of the activity performed

This structure helps keep the organization balanced. It prevents a dashboard from becoming all outcomes and no prevention activity, or all activity counts and no loss results.

### 5. COMPARE THE BASELINE TO SOMETHING MEANINGFUL

That comparison may be industry data, historical company performance, the best-performing branch, or a company-defined acceptable standard. Remember, the comparison must be important and meaningful to the audience receiving the analysis.

### 6. CHOOSE ONLY THE MEASURES YOU INTEND TO MANAGE

This is one of the most important steps. A smaller set of metrics reviewed consistently is far more useful than a large set that sits on a report no one uses. Making an impact on one aspect of the safety effort is typically longer lasting than trying to make impacts on multiple fronts. The effort expended on too many things tend to fall away and disappear.

# Developing Goals and Goalsetting



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Once benchmarks are established, the next step is goalsetting. A goal is not just a desired number. It is a management plan tied to a desired number.

That is worth repeating, because many organizations treat goalsetting like a declaration rather than a process. They say they want to reduce incidents by 20 percent or improve inspection completion, but they never define the actions required to achieve the result. It is either delegated, or insufficient time and thought put into it as a group.

A benchmark tells you the level of acceptable or reference performance. A goal tells you what level of performance you are aiming for in a defined timeframe. The action plan is what connects the two.

For example, suppose a company finds that corrective actions currently take an average of 26 days to close. Leadership decides that anything over 14 days is too slow. In that case, 14 days becomes the benchmark.

The goal may be to reduce average closure time to 18 days within the next six months and to 14 days by the end of the year. But that only becomes meaningful when the organization also defines the actions that will support it:

- ▶ Assigning ownership immediately
- ▶ Reviewing aging weekly
- ▶ Escalating and acting on overdue items
- ▶ Requiring proof of closure

The same logic works for any other safety measure.

If the benchmark is 100 percent monthly inspection completion, then the goal may be 90 percent within one quarter and 100 percent sustained by year-end.

If the benchmark is a lower vehicle accident rate per million miles, then the goal may be to reduce preventable crash frequency by improving driver coaching, defect management, route planning, and supervisor review.

If the benchmark is a lower strain frequency, the goal may involve a more focused material-handling initiative, higher-quality pre-task planning, and more targeted field observation. The goal needs to be A destination, not necessarily THE destination on the path where you want to be. These mid-term goals help keep the effort going in the correct direction and not only shows leadership that things are progressing, but also allows leaders to make course corrections to the goals in they need to.

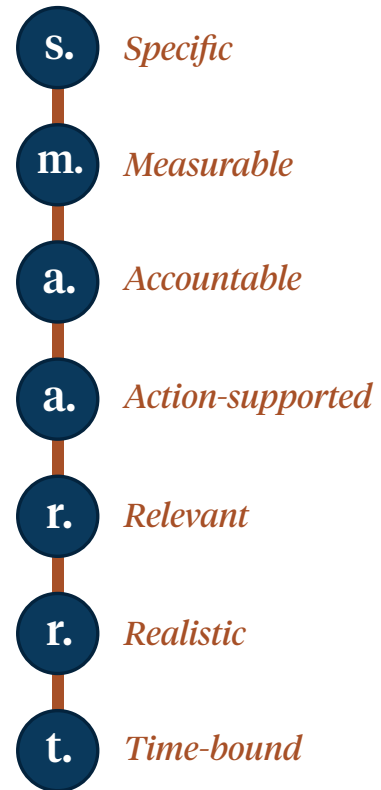
## What Good Safety Goals Look Like

Strong safety goals share several characteristics.

- ▶ **They are specific.**  
Everyone understands exactly what is being measured.
- ▶ **They are measurable.**  
Progress can be confirmed objectively.
- ▶ **They have accountability.**  
Someone is accountable for driving the work.
- ▶ **They are action-supported.**  
They are connected to steps that operations can actually take.
- ▶ **They are relevant.**  
The goal is tied to meaningful exposure or meaningful prevention activity.
- ▶ **They are realistic but challenging.**  
A goal should stretch performance, but not so far that it becomes decorative.
- ▶ **They are time-bound.**  
Review periods and deadlines are clear.

(Ok, if you are someone who likes acronyms, strong safety goals are S.M.A.A.R.R.T., or SMART, but whatever gets the message across.)

This is where many safety goals fall short. They focus only on outcomes and ignore the processes that create the result. A statement like “reduce recordables by 25 percent” may sound strong, but it tells field leadership very little about what to do differently tomorrow. A better approach is to pair outcome goals with process goals. Now leadership has both a result goal and the operating levers that should influence it.



# Making the Statistical Side Useful to Leadership



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Owners and operations leaders usually do not need more numbers. They need more useful numbers.

That means safety data should be organized to answer management questions such as:

- ▶ Where are our losses coming from?
- ▶ Are they becoming more frequent, more severe, or both?
- ▶ Which business units, tasks, locations, or exposures are driving the trend?
- ▶ Are the preventive activities we expect actually happening, and are they having the anticipated effect?
- ▶ Are corrective actions being completed quickly enough to matter?
- ▶ Which measures are improving, and which are stalling?

A practical safety scorecard often works better than a long technical report. In many cases, the most useful executive view is a limited set of monthly metrics that combine Lagging and Leading Indicators.

- ▶ A basic leadership scorecard might include:
- ▶ Rolling 12-Month TRIR
- ▶ Rolling 12-Month DART
- ▶ Workers Compensation Claim Frequency
- ▶ Average Incurred Cost per Claim
- ▶ Preventable Vehicle Crash Frequency
- ▶ Inspection Completion Rate
- ▶ Average Corrective-Action Closure Time
- ▶ Pre-Task Plan or JHA Completion Rate
- ▶ Near-Miss Reporting Rate
- ▶ Top Three Recurring Hazard Categories

This kind of scorecard does two important things. First, it helps leadership avoid overreacting to one isolated event. Second, it helps leadership notice patterns that raw incident counts may not reveal.

Rolling averages are especially valuable here. In smaller organizations, one serious case can distort a single month or quarter. A rolling 12-month view usually gives leaders a more stable picture of direction and will flatten out a trendline, which provides a more accurate indication of direction.

Trend analysis is equally important. It is not enough to know that a rate is high or low. Leaders need to know whether it is improving, worsening, or remaining flat. Safety performance is much easier to manage when it is shown as movement over time instead of a static number on a spreadsheet.

# Developing Benchmarks



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The following examples show how benchmarking and goalsetting can work in a real operating environment.

## Example 1: Site inspections

A company finds that only 72 percent of required site inspections are completed on time.

- ▶ **Benchmark:** 100 percent completion, based on company expectation
- ▶ **Goal:** Reach 90 percent within two quarters and sustain 100 percent by year-end
- ▶ **Action plan:** assign inspection ownership, automate reminders, review completion weekly, escalate overdue items, and spot-check inspection quality (SMART Goals)

This is a simple example, but it matters. If inspections are not happening, hazard recognition is not happening at the level leadership expects.

## Example 2: Corrective-action management

A branch network discovers that average corrective-action closure time is 24 days, and 30 percent of actions are more than 30 days old.

- ▶ **Benchmark:** corrective actions closed within 14 days unless formally extended
- ▶ **Goal:** reduce average closure time to 18 days within six months and 14 days within twelve months
- ▶ **Action plan:** weekly aging reports, branch-manager ownership, color-coded escalation, and documented verification of closure (SMART Goals)

This kind of measure often has stronger management value than simply counting incidents.



### Example 3: Vehicle loss prevention

A fleet operation sees a rise in preventable backing incidents and minor collisions, while vehicle inspection forms show recurring equipment issues being reported repeatedly.

- ▶ Benchmark: all safety-related defects reviewed within 24 hours; preventable crash rate reduced to a defined threshold per million miles
- ▶ Goal: cut preventable backing events by 20 percent and close 95 percent of safety-related defects within standard
- ▶ Action plan: targeted backing training, camera or spotter expectations, supervisor review of vehicle defects, maintenance follow-up tracking, and monthly driver coaching

This is where the statistical side becomes useful. Crash counts alone do not tell the whole story. Rates per mile, defect recurrence, and closeout timeliness provide a clearer management picture.

### Example 4: Strain and sprain losses

Loss runs show that strains and sprains make up the largest share of claim frequency and a significant share of total incurred cost.

- ▶ Benchmark: lower strain frequency relative to the company's historical average or industry reference
- ▶ Goal: reduce strain-related claim frequency by 15 percent over 12 months
- ▶ Action plan: targeted task review, material-handling controls, stronger pre-task planning, supervisor observation of high-risk tasks, and trend review by body part and task category

This is a good example of using data to focus effort instead of treating all hazards as equally important.

# Common Mistakes to Avoid



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There are a few predictable mistakes that weaken safety goalsetting.

## *1. Measuring only injury outcomes.*

Injury rates matter, but by the time they appear, the loss has already occurred. Organizations need process and quality indicators too. Only using Lagging Indicators puts you in some cases almost a full year behind. Employees leave, procedures change, and so keeping up a more up-to-date handle on metrics and what they provide is exceedingly important.

## *2. Measuring activity without measuring effectiveness.*

Counting inspections is helpful, but not if the inspections are rushed, shallow, or never acted on. Also, what areas do the inspections affect, and is there a correlation to any losses in that area? Is the activity having the desired effect? Creating data and reports is good, but making sure that this data creates some corrective activity is the reason for data to exist. Also, you should begin to see where some of these measurements begin to correlate and intersect.

## *3. Setting goals that are unrealistic or disconnected from actual operations.*

Goals should stretch the organization, but they still need to be credible.

## *4. Using too many metrics.*

A dashboard with twenty-five measures usually results in none of them being managed well. It is very much like trying to drink from a fire hose, you will get wet, but you won't drink much.

## *5. Failing to assign ownership.*

A goal that belongs to everyone usually belongs to no one.

## *6. Reviewing performance too infrequently (or not at all).*

Annual review is not enough. Monthly review is usually where management value is created.

# Final Thoughts

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## Safety goalsetting and benchmarking are not complicated because the math is complicated. They are often challenging because they require management discipline.

They require leaders to decide what acceptable performance looks like. They require organizations to gather the information they already have and use it more intentionally. They require supervisors and managers to own the process, not just the safety department. They require review, follow-up, and adjustment.

That is also why they work.

When an organization benchmarks its safety performance, it creates a destination. When it sets goals tied to those benchmarks, it creates direction. When it backs those goals with action plans and measurable checkpoints, it creates accountability and a road to success.

This is how safety becomes more than a message. It becomes a managed part of the operation.

For owners and operations leaders, that is the real value. Better safety performance is not just about avoiding injuries. It is about reducing disruption, controlling loss costs, improving reliability, strengthening supervision, and creating a more disciplined organization.

The companies that do this well are usually not the ones with the most slogans. They are the ones that know what they expect, measure what matters, and follow through consistently.

That is the point.

If we want our loss prevention efforts to be effective, we need to observe them. If we want them to improve, we need to measure them. And if we want them to be taken seriously across the organization, we need to manage them with the same discipline we expect from every other part of the business.

What gets observed gets done. What gets observed and measured gets done well.