



Getting things done through active supervision: Four key steps

Work needed has been identified. It has been approved by the proper level of authority. The planner has planned. The scheduler has scheduled. Time, energy and money have been invested in preparation for execution of this work. The rubber hits the road; it's time to get it done! We know work has to get done but how do we ensure it is done effectively, efficiently and at the lowest cost?

Active understanding

The best way to do this is to actively supervise the work. This means the first step is for the supervisor to own the work, which in turn assumes he accepts responsibility for executing the work as closely as possible to the plan and schedule that were created with this job in mind.

Secondly, active supervision demands a deep understanding of the job at hand. Once the job has been understood, the supervisor can coordinate activities with the equipment owner (operations personnel) and his work crew. An open discussion about the work with operations personnel will identify whether the scheduled window is appropriate for conducting the work — if so, that is when the work

will be done. If not, a more appropriate time needs to be identified. Operations personnel must communicate the safety requirements for the job and these requirements must match the job plan.

Active communication

After having understood the job completely, the supervisor is prepared to communicate the responsibilities and expectations for the execution of the job with his direct reports. During assignment, the supervisor should communicate who does what and set expectations as to when. The more specific the assignment of the tasks to a specific individual is, the greater the chance of success will be. Communication is a key skill a supervisor must possess in order for active supervision to result in shared success.

Active observation

After assigning work and setting expectations, the work crew can get started. As supervisors are usually responsible for supervising multiple crews at a range of sites, they can't be everywhere. Supervisors will need to identify the critical tasks for the day and decide when

and how frequently the jobs need checking. This should be based upon priorities in the field, job complexity and safety consequences. Once jobs have been assessed, a plan can be developed and put into action.

When approaching a jobsite, the supervisor should make observations as to whether work is being performed safely, whether site work practices are being followed and whether the job is progressing as expected. If any of these criteria are not being fulfilled, the off standard condition must be addressed according to company policy and personal style. Once all off standard conditions have been dealt with, the supervisor should ask the crew directly, "Is there anything I can do to eliminate barriers to your success?" Only when the answer is negative can the supervisor move along.

Active follow-up

Periodically throughout the day, the active supervisor must conduct follow-up rounds — much like the review of first starts. Ideally, this should be done for every job every one to two hours. This ensures work progresses as expected, crews transi-

tion from completed work to the next job smoothly, work is performed safely, delays are understood and communicated to appropriate personnel, and barriers to success are eliminated prior to affecting a job.

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Active supervision is a simple, fail proof method of getting things done. It starts with open communication of assignments and expectations, and ends with follow-up to ensure these assignments are followed and expectations are met. If expectations fall short, the cause of the shortcoming is understood and eliminated in the future. Active supervision is a key part of a continuous improvement cycle — learning from our experience and making things better all the time while still getting things done.

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