CULTURE BITS
What Could We Have Done?

The easy "out" when an employee is hurt on the job is to blame them or put the responsibility on individuals other than yourself. The truth is, as management, there is always something you could have done to lessen the odds that an injury or adverse event occurred on the job. It is not easy to be open to accepting a piece of the responsibility when an injury occurs, however, it is critical in order to identify proactive measures to prevent a similar incident from occurring again.

Let's look at a simple example to clarify this idea. Joe Smith, an experienced laborer, is texting on his phone while walking through the warehouse. He does not see a forklift backing, nor does the forklift operator see him. He is backed over, resulting in critical injuries. In this instance, it would be easy to jump to the conclusion that Joe is at fault for the injury due to his own negligence, but let's ask some hard questions. The first being- *"As management, how could we have prevented this injury from occurring?"*

Your first instinct may be to think *"well nothing because Joe knows he should not have been texting and walking"* or *"the operator is supposed to always look around before backing."* While these points can be true, there are more systematic issues at work to allow an event like this example to occur.

Some items that management has a huge responsibility for that could have contributed to this injury includes training practices, hiring practices, ongoing job safety observations, enforcement of policies, setting expectations, design of the work area, safety equipment invested in, etc.

The next time an adverse event occurs, evaluate what could be improved upon in every aspect of the operation that had an impact on the event occurring. The only positive outcome of an injury occurring is that lessons can be learned and proactive measures can be implemented to assist in preventing it from occurring again. This positive is only realized when the difficult questions are asked and the truth is sought.

Points to Ponder

- **Blaming the injured employee is the easy way out.**
- **Management is responsible in some aspect for every failure.**
- **Management always could have done something to reduce the risk of an injury from occurring.**