



Case Study

# Safety is Non-Negotiable: How DLF Turned Personal Values into a Competitive Edge

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Any organizational transformation journey is successful, when there is collaboration between its leaders and employees. This commercial real estate organization's extraordinary commitment to worker, tenant and guest safety has had an ancillary impact—making their buildings some of the most sought-after addresses for Fortune 500 companies and other forward-thinking enterprises. The management's commitment to put people's safety first, has proved that a safety-first culture is excellent business.

How did DLF's RentCo business become a leader in safety, exceeding global best benchmarks across multiple measures? This narrative lays out how a technical engagement between DLF and DuPont Sustainable Solutions (DSS) grew into a stunningly successful cultural safety transformation that impacts tens of thousands of people every day.

**“This is about orienting yourself to think, act and feel in a manner where being safe is the only way to be. This does not happen by accident. You really have to make it happen and create a transformation by design.”**

## **There is no “safe enough.”**

As the largest commercial real estate developer in India, DLF's holdings include award-winning shopping centers, high-profile office spaces and Cybercity, the largest business district in National Capital Region. The drive for safety across the organization comes from the very top. Executive management thinks of safety and security in terms of protecting their own families. They don't merely want DLF to be “safe” or “safer than others”, they aim for zero harm and believe that all injuries can be prevented.

To that end, health and safety objectives consistently take precedence over business goals.

Improving safety can be especially challenging in an industry such as commercial real estate, where stakeholders interact with the space in a variety of ways.



**Unlike manufacturing, in which responsibility falls primarily to employees, real estate enterprises are host to office and retail tenants and their employees, shoppers and visitors and third-party contractors, in addition to their own staff. The safety message has to be meaningfully conveyed to all of these users.**

DLF reached out to DSS to help improve safety performance across the organization and set new industry benchmarks on their way toward their zero-injury goal. In the first phase, the focus was on DLF's own employees and contractors—workers over whom the company had the greatest authority. High-risk activities were targeted for new and updated technical standards, as well as education, training and activities designed to change mindsets and behaviors.

The next step was more complicated—engaging the tenants who work at DLF buildings and other visitors. After all, DLF doesn't wield the same influence over tenants and shoppers, and these groups do not generally think about risk management as part of their roles.

## **A cultural transformation takes flight.**

Recognizing that transforming hearts and minds takes more time and effort than changing technical standards, DLF and DSS developed multidimensional, integrated programs to embed new standards, procedures, competencies and skills across the organization and develop a Safety Management System.

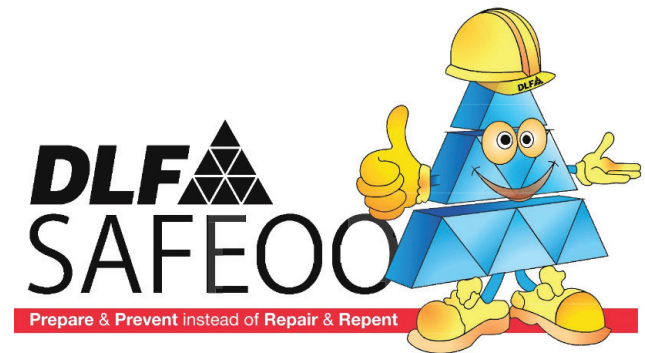
An Apex Safety Committee and five subcommittees were established to oversee the ongoing observations, procedure updates, communications, training and other critical activities the safety plan requires. “This is about orienting yourself to think, act and feel in a manner where being safe is the only way to be,” offers a member of the DSS team. “This does not happen by accident. You really have to make it happen and create a transformation by design.”

Every stakeholder group is addressed via multiple, diverse touchpoints. Tenants, contractors and employees, for example, are encouraged to participate in drills and training, tool box talks and briefings, street theater and more. Shop floor employees are appointed Safety Inspector of the Day on a rotating basis. Everyone also receives ongoing communications in Hindi and English through message boards, a Learning and Improving from Experience (LIFE) program and magazine, and other media.

#### Employee Engagement Activities

- Safety Inspector of the Day
- Tool Box Talks
- Employee forums
- Safety observation tours
- Awards and recognition
- Group presentations and competitions
- Participation in audits and risk assessments
- Weekly performance reports
- Safety Scoreboards
- Rewards for safety suggestions and near-miss reporting
- Poster and slogan competitions
- Safety quizzes
- Fire and Safety Week celebrations
- Extensive communications
- Shop floor tactical exercises

Senior managers from across the country are invited to attend one-day safety conferences where they can share best practices in a lively, motivating setting. Taking a day out of their schedules has the additional benefit of clearly demonstrating leadership’s commitment to maintaining a safe workplace.



**Even casual shoppers receive education in the form of a friendly character named SAFEOO, who appears in posters, pictorial signages and pamphlets to make safety instructions quick and easy to understand.**

Naturally, DLF employees and contractors receive the highest level of attention. Across the organization safety is given paramount importance, work place safety is being reviewed by 5 different groups in the organization, namely Safety APEX committee, Customer Assurance Team, Safety sub-committees, Operations head HSE team and Employee consultation forum. Competency mapping, training and performance monitoring ensure that the learn-do-learn cycle effectively fills any knowledge and skill gaps. In addition, a long list of activities and audits that occur daily, weekly and throughout the year foster involvement, empowerment and capability building, as well as instill a culture of mutual respect between management and employees. What’s more, safety performance is part of annual appraisals, reinforcing the theme that safety is a priority at every level.

Of course, without the clear commitment of leadership, none of these programs could be successful. So when issues arise or new opportunities emerge, management embraces them without reservation.

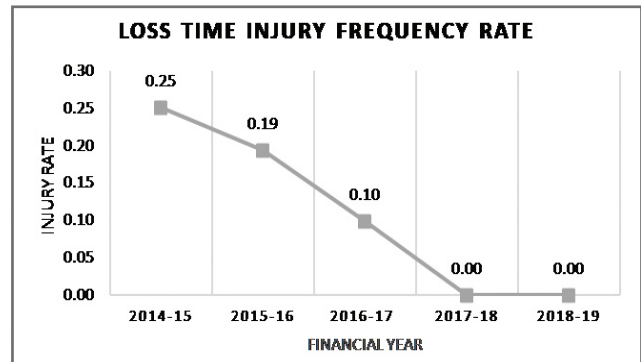
### The business impact of a personal commitment.

Even though business benefits may not be the primary consideration, the DLF safety strategy is winning. In fact, the firm has a current capacity of 34 million square feet and has an ambitious plan to build around 20 million square feet of new space in next 5 year to accommodate the growing need for its existing and future clients. To quantify results, the group emphasizes leading indicators such as inspections, audits, training and more. Engagement has been climbing impressively since the programs began.

- More than 300 training sessions occur each year, with stakeholders learning to conduct safety observation tours, train one another and understand safety standards
- Safety conferences grew from more than 150 participants the first year to over 350 in year three
- Unsafe observations have steadily fallen, while observations of safe behaviors have more than doubled
- Participation in virtually every program, from near-miss reporting and well-being sessions to safety week and promotional events has increased each year.

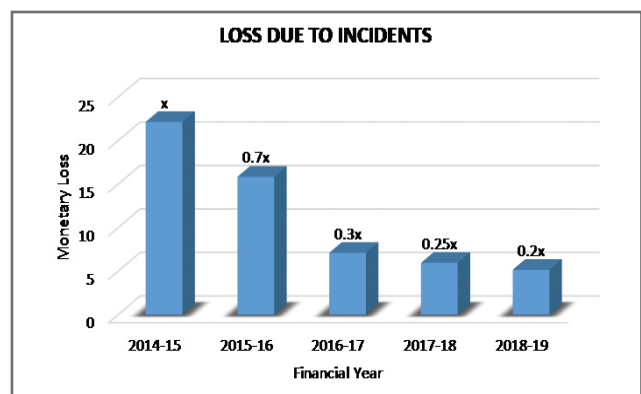
Safety outcomes tell a similar story. Comparing the year ending March 2015 with the year ending March 2019:

- 2 consecutive years of zero LTI achieved
- Incident costs were reduced by nearly 75% compared to March 2015



### Looking forward.

At DLF, customer safety and security is given utmost importance. DLF is proud that they've raised the bar on safety in commercial real estate, and thrilled that it has positioned them advantageously relative to their competitors. Still, even as DLF buildings continue to receive global recognition and accolades for their innovative approaches to safety, the company knows it must remain vigilant to maintain the operational discipline that has helped them set new benchmarks in India and around the world.



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