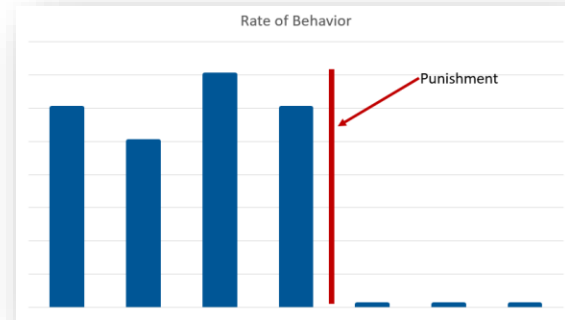




Why do we punish? We punish in an effort to make the future a safer place by discouraging future unsafe behaviors. This makes sense from a logical perspective, but there are some potentially harmful pitfalls we should be aware of if we choose to punish people when incidents or injuries occur.

Defining Punishment, Behaviorally *Something is a punisher IF, and ONLY IF, future behavior is decreased.*



The Most Common Pitfalls of Using Punishment when Injuries and Incidents Occur

- 1. Natural Punishment Is What Changes Behavior, Not Discipline** *In 99% of cases, it's the injury or incident that prevents someone from making the mistake again, not the discipline.*
- 2. Punishing the Result, Not the Behavior** *Usually an incident is simply the first time a person has been caught engaging in a dangerous behavior, not the first time it has occurred.*
- 3. Extremely Difficult to Administer Consistently** *If you punish people for violating safety rules, it requires that you enforce all safety policies, 100% of the time.*
- 4. Inadvertently Punish Honesty** *Most of the time the thing that gets punished is the reporting aspect, not the behavior itself.*
- 5. Punishment Creates Uncertainty and Damages Morale** *Punishment creates an us vs. them mentality, and damages morale and relationships on teams.*
- 6. Punishment Makes Safety the Boss's Responsibility** *It becomes the boss's job to ensure workers are behaving safely and to punish accordingly. This requires more effort and policing.*
- 7. Only Punishing the Performers** *Often, the role and impact that leadership may have had is not considered, and the performer is the only one punished.*
- 8. Assuming Punishing One Person Makes the Future Safer** *Punishing one person (especially by firing them) may actually make the future less safe because you lose the ability to learn from the incident, and 'making an example' of someone rarely changes other people's behavior permanently.*

What should we do instead?

Examine & Understand the Environment

Avoid Knee Jerk Reactions

Make Incident Investigations About Learning & Prevention

Coach Rather Than Police

Ask People Involved About Consequences

Make Safety Easy

Reinforce Honesty

Set Clear Expectations & Be Consistent