

# VOLTS NEWSLETTER

*Valuing Our Lives Through Safety*

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## Leading Indicators—Kirk Stevens

When we make decisions, we often think of the most desirable outcome first, and those desirable outcomes influence our course of action. Having the results in mind can prove critical when making any decision, yet many key factors come into play first. When feasible, it's best to take the time to collect all the necessary information, process it, and apply it in ways that will best help us achieve our desired results.

From a safety and performance perspective, leading indicators have proven beneficial because they provide information about what to expect in the future. Sometimes, leading indicators also help diagnose problems that have not surfaced yet. Conversely, a lagging indicator, such as an injury rate used as a metric alone, does not tell the whole story because people may not see how their day-to-day actions influence the result. There are many important details to factor in when calculating an injury rate throughout its reporting period at IPSC.

The point that I am trying to make is that we need to look at all of the information when we are trying to achieve the best results. For example, because of a recommendation from Jese Ruiz, my family and I found ourselves at a table in a restaurant called Gino's East Pizza in an old, refurbished fire station just outside downtown Chicago, Illinois, in July 2009. The décor (old firefighting tools, trucks, and miscellaneous firefighting equipment) was pleasing enough, but the addition of the aroma gave us a pretty good indication that this pizza was going to be outstanding!

The waiter came to take our order and asked what we would like. We returned his question with a question and asked him what he recommended. Without hesitation he stated that most people ordered the 4-cheese and the sausage pizzas. We, of course, asked him to bring us one of each. His next question took us back a little, "Do you want crumbled sausage or patty?" What!? Patty? Having been to our fair share of pizza places around the country over the years, we had never heard of the sausage patty option before. Of course we were going to go with the patty option! I mean who doesn't like more pork, right?

When our order came out, we realized just how accurate the indicators were about how amazing this pizza was going to be! The 4-cheese pizza was delicious, and the sausage patty pizza was...well just picture a pizza with one single patty covering the entire thing. If I need to explain the awesomeness of that further, you must not be a fan of pork like I am. It was incredible!

Like our noses sniffing out good pizza, leading indicators are important tools that help us identify potential risks in our behavior. We deal with leading indicators in just about every aspect of our lives. If the furnace squeals every time the fan kicks on at home, it is a fairly good indicator that maintenance is needed. More wear on the inside of a tire than the outside indicates that your car needs an alignment. If your child comes home from school with a love note at age 6...well good luck with that kid in the future.

# Leading Indicators—Kirk Stevens (cont.)

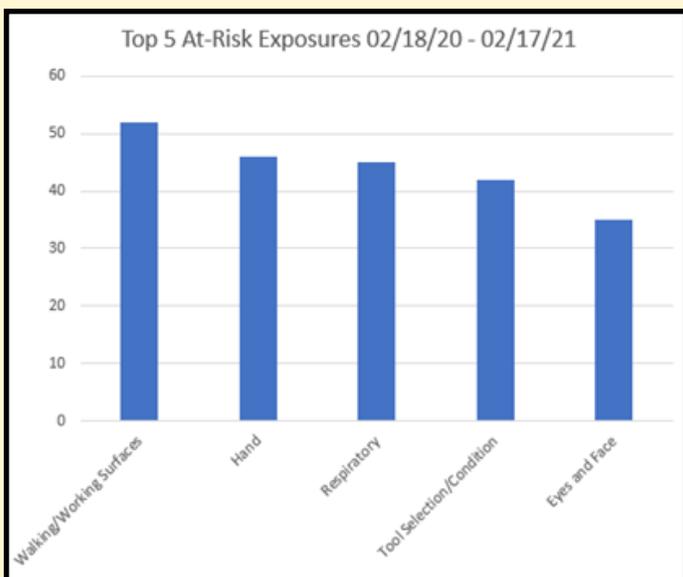
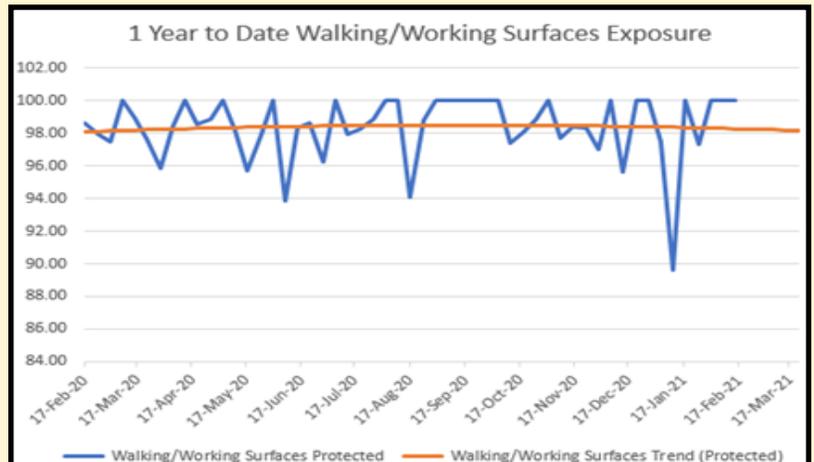
We can take the indicators and analyze the data to identify trends that can point out potential future risks. This pre-assessment allows us to make adjustments that can help mitigate unsafe behavior and stave off a potential risk from becoming a problem or an injury. The observation process is one tool that we utilize at IPSC to collect data points and identify future risks. The behaviors we observe and record are used to create reports that aid us in this effort. Each time you record an “at-risk behavior” on an observation card, you are helping to build a trend that we can plot allowing us to see improvements that have been made in the past and areas that may need some extra focus in the future. The observations performed and the data collected from them are crucial to the VOLTS process’s feedback.

You may have noticed on your way out the gate that we are working toward reaching another record for days with no lost-time injuries. It is important to

reevaluate our safety behaviors and spend a little time thinking about potential risks that can present themselves when we are doing our jobs—especially with the outage coming up quickly. Try to notice any indicators in our behavior that might pose a potential safety risk, and then find solutions to fix them. Finding these indicators, either on your own or through a safety observation, can help us all be safe and reach a new record for no lost-time accidents.

The VOLTS Steering Committee can’t extend enough thanks to all those who complete observations. We appreciate your efforts in gathering data to identify leading indicators that need some attention. I hope everyone agrees that each one of us being able to live every day uninjured is a great goal to work toward. No one wants to see a coworker hurt or to be hurt themselves. Let’s all remember our own why and be healthy and safe...so we can eat pizza covered in sausage and cheese and enjoy life to its fullest.

## VOLTS Data Report—Casey Draper



*What's your why?*  
Do an Observation today!