

VOLTS News

Valuing Our Lives Through Safety

February 2024—Volume 123

VOLTS Data Report for January

Total Observations: 284

IPSC Emp. Contact Rate: 0.91

Total Safe Behaviors: 2,289

Total At-Risk Behaviors: 19

Top 3 Safe Behaviors

- Required PPE (204)
- Focus on Task (196)
- Eyes on Path (158)

Top 3 At-Risk Exposures

- Walking/Work Surfaces (4)
- Seat Belt (3)
- Required PPE (3)

VOLTS Steering Committee Members

Casey Draper, Facilitator

Amy White, Secretary/Editor

Alan Wood

Brandon Webb

Bryan Chapman

Dusty Smith

Joe Pruitt

Rod Moore

T.J. Taylor

Van Beckstrom, Jr.

Mark Shipley, Sponsor

The Benefits of Social Connections by Amy White



During one's lifetime, it's possible for the average employee to spend 90,000 hours at work. Connecting with others can improve the time spent while earning a living and developing one's skills.

What is social connectedness?

Social connectedness is a feeling of belonging and having the support and care you need. The amount and quality of our relationships matter, as do the various roles they play in our lives. (Health, CDC, 2023)

Connection happens when two or more people interact with each other and each person feels valued, seen, and heard. Connecting with others may occur during an activity but doesn't always require words—sometimes human connections take place during companionable silence. There's no judgment, and one feels stronger and nourished after engaging with the people in the group.

How can social connectedness benefit us?

For most people, the need to be connected with other people is hard-wired into human behavior and is just as important to our physical and mental health as exercise and healthy eating. Social connectedness:

- Can improve mood and self-esteem while reducing stress.
- Provides a buffer in the difficult seasons of life.
- Helps one cope with stress, anxiety, depression, suicide ideation, and during hard times by having the support of people who care or are familiar enough to listen and empathize.
- Enhances and improves cognitive skills.
- May outweigh the harmful effects of other risk factors like obesity and smoking.
- Could boost life expectancy with better sleep and create healthier habits and behaviors while improving mental and physical health.
- Social connections improve one's quality of life. (Berkeley ExecEd, 2023)
- According to Psychology Today, the three pillars of social connectedness related to brain health are social connectivity, networks, and support. (Randolph, 2020)
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs notes that one's need for love and belonging ranks just after their physical and safety needs are met.
- "Interpersonal relationships help motivate behaviors of friendship, acceptance, trust, and being a part of a group." (WellMark, 2023)
- Berkeley ExecEd tells us that:
 - ◇ Genuine connections are more important than being seen as part of a tribe.
 - ◇ It's vital to realize that people are more important than the pursuit of money, influence, and recognition.

How can we improve our social connections?

- WellMark advises that it's important to:
 - ◇ Give everyone a chance to speak

The Benefits of Social Connections

by Amy White (cont.)

- ◇ Celebrate milestones and accomplishments
- ◇ Set up monthly coffee or lunch breaks

Social connectedness goes beyond individuals and can help communities (like the places we live and work) thrive. It can support the overall well-being, health, and safety of communities while creating trust and resilience. People may even be inspired to give back or pay it forward when social connectedness is present. (Health, CDC)

What are beneficial connections?

- Home/family
- Social circles/friends
- Work relationships
- Skill-building/self-development environments
- Hobbies/interest-based environments
- Church/spiritual communities (Berkeley ExecEd)

How can social connectedness improve safety?

According to Berkeley ExecEd, a connected workforce:

- Is a stronger workforce.
- Facilitates greater learning and knowledge sharing.
- Has improved retention and engagement with increased innovation and performance.
- Encourages a sense of belonging and a positive workplace culture.
- Fosters empathy and self-awareness.
- Enables people to recognize and accept their similarities and differences.

According to Forbes.com, employees with friends or social connections at work tend to be more engaged, loyal workers. (WellMark) Strong connections at work can help keep adverse emotional and behavioral conditions from surfacing or flaring up as we're able to flourish at work and in every other facet of life.

I believe we've seen those attributes at IPP through the years with shared collaboration and problem solving. The new ideas and perspectives we encounter enable us to be stronger and better employees and coworkers.

VOLTS Steering Committee Member suggestions:

- Remember stress adds weight just like rocks in a backpack.
- Participate in activities and interaction to mitigate stress.
- Support others to limit stress.
- Pay attention to coworkers.
- ◇ Ask, "Are you okay?"

- ◇ Watch for signs of substance abuse.
- ◇ Make note if people seem "off."

How to get more from your connections

- Know your values and what you need from relationships
- Take time to create and strengthen social connections
- Seek more genuine connections
- Reflect on your interactions
- Be authentic, honest, and genuine in every interaction and with your admiration
- Offer a smile, be a good listener, and maintain eye contact
- Respect people's boundaries; recognize that everyone has different connectivity needs
- Explore ways to meet people—join a club or take a class
- Consider volunteering at a nonprofit organization near you
- Reduce practices that lead to feelings of disconnection from others, such as excessive social media use
- Talk to a healthcare provider if you're concerned about stress, loneliness, and social isolation to ensure you're taking care of your mental health. (Berkeley, and Power, CDC, 2023)

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NATIONAL BURN AWARENESS WEEK

February 4-10, 2024

Preventing Flammable Liquid Burns

Fire prevention starts with you!

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| 1.
Beware of fire hazards.
Don't refuel gasoline-powered equipment while it is hot. | 2.
Handle with care.
Use flammable liquids only in well ventilated areas. | 3.
Common risk of injury.
Never use an accelerant such as gasoline to start a camp fire. | 4.
Know what to do.
Start charcoal grills only with a fluid labeled as "charcoal starter fluid." |
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