



MONITOR WHAT MATTERS

– What helps me

Fraser Whineray, CEO Mercury

When I think about monitoring and reporting on health and safety, a useful metaphor is the pixels making up the picture on your TV. The more pixels, the better the picture, and the greater detail you can see.

The important thing in understanding what's going on in your organisation is to bring in information from a wide range of sources. In the past year we had three lost-time injuries – all of them quite low severity. If we had only investigated those – if we had only three dots on our screen – we would have completely missed the true picture of safety in the business.

You need richer colour and more resolution. That's why we also consider other angles like serious near misses, incident actions, drug and alcohol testing results and driver infringements. These can point to the potential for harm, and identify a possible high-severity incident before it happens.

We have introduced online reporting and a mobile phone app to make it easy for staff and contractors to record issues in real time. They can take a photo on their phone and report a hazard or incident directly into the Synergi Life database. This is about moving from the 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff', to putting a safety barrier and a warning sign at the top.

Thinking beyond the numbers is crucial. Anything from safety walk-arounds, qualitative data from employee surveys, to feedback from discussions, and the importance of gut feeling when you look at work activity, and asking the right questions. This adds pixels to the picture.

In our staff survey, three of the top four rated questions were on safety. That's telling us that our people are engaged; we have eyes and ears open and a strong safety culture. When you see pockets of disengagement, that could give rise to a safety risk.

Triangulation, cross-referencing the hard data with imperfect pieces of information and then giving it an intellectual overlay, is key. We ask ourselves: 'Are we getting a good picture and therefore are we focusing on the right things?' It's when things look like they're going particularly well, that's when I start to get uncomfortable. There is no room for complacency. You need to keep looking and asking questions.

Another valuable source of information comes from outside our organisation. We were a founding partner in the collaborative initiative StayLive, which promotes sharing of learnings, investigations, initiatives and reporting. StayLive has initiated measures including training, process safety, shared investigators for incident review, and common prequalification health and safety standards.

We operate in one of the most competitive markets but no one should be competing on safety. It's about co-operation and collaboration for the common good. If one of our competitors finds a material risk that could apply across the industry they would instantly let us and others know through StayLive. It's another way of adding colour pixels to the TV screen and getting a high-definition picture.

Mercury (formerly Mighty River Power) is an electricity generator and retailer listed on the NZX and ASX.

