Trade-offs and Spillovers in Safety and Completion Time Management: Public Relative Performance Feedback and Best Practice Sharing

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Studies to date have provided mixed findings as to how task completion time and safety relate. Often this relationship is described as a tradeoff, but occasionally synergies have been cited. Work conditions play a critical role in this determination. However, we know little about the potential impact of specific conditions, such as performance feedback and best practice sharing, in this regard. Implementing a time and motion laboratory experiment, we observe the independent and moderating effects of controlled conditions on completion time and safety. Higher safety, in this study, is evaluated as reductions of musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) risk, tracked by markerless motion capture technology. Treatments include public relative performance feedback (PRPF) and shared best practices (BPS). Results show that, while tradeoffs between safety and speed are clear, providing feedback on safety reduces both MSD risk as well as completion time. Further, best practice discussions focused on completion time—and occasionally on safety—systematically shifted attention toward completion time rather than safety. Collectively, these findings uniquely inform research and practice on conditions that can help promote safe worker behavior even in the presence of time-specific priorities.