

Enhanced Field Safety through Social Media Collaborative Digital Inspections*

Susan Smith Nash¹

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¹Director of Education and Professional Development, AAPG, Tulsa, OK (snash@aapg.org)

Abstract

A common problem with field courses is the fact that safety is often viewed as a checklist, and there can be a certain level of complacency. Given the ever-changing nature of field conditions and also the fitness levels of the participants, it is very important to develop an approach to safety that heightens engagement and also becomes collaborative and participatory. The result would be an elevated awareness and an emphasis on a culture of safety.

Introduction

By leading by example and by emphasizing collaboration and teamwork, the field geology culture can be one of enthusiastic, engaged cooperation, which results in a sustainable, ongoing example of transformational leadership. Ultimately, the individuals will be safer and healthier, and the organization will provide an increasing number of opportunities for innovation and positive change.

Overall Goals and Objectives

The primary objective is to inculcate a collaborative, participatory approach to field safety that is ongoing and omnipresent. Further, it is structured around collaboration which helps reinforce constructivist learning.

This approach is also very motivating, particularly if some of the activities can be gamified and competition / rewards are incorporated.

Safety Inspection

Each person in the team will participate in an inspection. They will physically conduct a review, and then take a photo of each element that requires inspection:

- The vehicle
- Safety gear
- Personal protective gear / safety equipment
- Each location / site
- Traffic markers
- Maps / instructions
- Medical / first aid equipment
- Water, supplies

The photos can be taken and processed individually or as a team. The key is to go through the checklist together and then post the photos in a location (Instagram, for example). Once the safety checklist has been completed, each person will receive a badge.

Preliminary Setup

- Everyone has a phone / handheld / tablet.
- Take photos (e.g., [Figure 1](#)).
- Highlight safety checklist items to do via social media collaboration.
- Ask everyone to open a Flickr or other account where they can post (can include privacy settings so it is not public) their photos.
- Or, alternatively, create a collaboration space in a discussion board, wiki, or other place where people post links or actual photos. Make it shareable only to members of the team and the host organization leaders.

Operational Procedures: Potential Problem Areas

- **Make sure that the field guide is digital.**
- **Make sure the checklist is complete.**
 - Make sure that everything used is inspected -- vehicle, equipment, supplies – not just the initial equipment.
 - Personal protective equipment should be appropriate for the climate and the locations.
 - Each stop should be thoroughly described / detailed.
 - Up-to-date traffic safety procedures should be detailed.
- **Collaborative activities**
 - Each person takes photo of checklist item and posts it (can do individually or collaboratively).
 - Each person takes photos of their personal protective equipment / checklist supplies / items.
 - Instructor takes photo of each stop the day or week before in order to "ground truth" the location for a review of conditions.

- **Gamification**

- Give stars for people who complete the checklist effectively and thoroughly.
- Have a contest for safety / health insights – who can identify ways to make things safer and to assure optimal health.
- Issue badges.
- Award “fun” prizes as well as geology-related prizes (maps, etc.).

Conclusion

Incorporating a digital inspection and also a safety / health optimization set of activities can turn a task that is often looked upon as compliance-based drudgery into something that is fun and ultimately a part of an integrated solution that achieves a culture of safety and health.

The facilitator should incorporate emulatory leadership strategies and should lead by example. Further, the goal should be transformative leadership, which can bring about a sustainable organizational change.

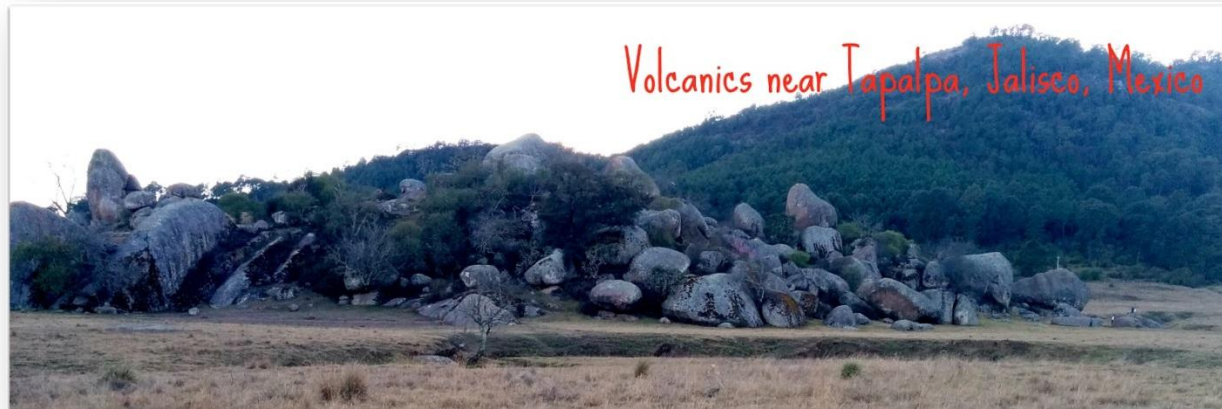


Figure 1. Photograph, taken during field trip, of volcanics near Iapalpa, Jalisco, Mexico.