

# ARE YOU GOOD OR ARE YOU LUCKY?

## How many times have you said to yourself, “Wow! That was a close one. I was lucky!”?

*Maybe you started to change lanes without looking over your shoulder and spotted a vehicle emerging from your blind spot. Perhaps you crossed the street while looking down at your cellphone as you heard a car come to a screeching halt. Or you realized that pot was still boiling on the stove as you smelled smoke.*

Whether it’s at home or at work, our brains often shift into autopilot when we perform familiar tasks, and we only think about potential consequences after the fact. In the construction industry, we take close calls so seriously that we have a dedicated term for them: near misses. A number of leading construction firms like Balfour Beatty enforce strict safety guidelines to ensure that safety is never left to chance. Despite our collective best efforts, however, incidents continue to occur across the industry.

At Balfour Beatty, we believe that even one injury is too many. In fact, our safety program is known as Zero Harm, which we take to mean zero deaths, zero injuries to our people or the public and zero ruined lives. Our safety, health and environment experts continually study industry trends about incidents in order to prevent them on our jobs. Across the board, a recurring theme is almost always present. The original plan that was developed for an activity was not followed due to a new condition or obstacle that was not previously present, planned for or known.

The possibilities of changes that happen on-site are seemingly endless. Material staged where it should not have been, work performed out of sequence or unanticipated ground water—just to name a few. One of the reasons our business faces such an uphill battle to keep workers safe is that changes also originate off the jobsite. These can stem from design changes, subcontractor management decisions or even local government ordinances.

Construction workers must adapt to incredibly complex, changing conditions every day, and in most cases, do

so without suffering any incidents or injuries. But how many times do workers alter the original plan without considering the collateral safety implications? Odds are, just like the driver casually changing lanes, they’ve done this for years without thinking twice. Which leads us to a critical question. When it comes to safety, **are you good or are you lucky?**

It’s a topic every team who’s investigated a safety incident has asked themselves. “Was our previous performance the result of a proactive safety culture or simply blind luck?” Luck looks back in hindsight and assumes good, because no one got hurt. Good seeks to discover and prevent the circumstances under which incidents might occur. Good is leading, luck is lagging.

Balfour Beatty teammates know that safety is not an accident but is achieved by examining changing conditions and other potential hazards with unwavering focus. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Shallow men believe in luck or in circumstance. Strong men believe in cause and effect.” On and off the jobsite, are you good or are you lucky? The choice is up to you.

