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**Silent Danger: 93 percent of organizations are at risk of avoidable workplace accidents**  
*New research shows employees' silence in crucial moments leads to workplace injuries*

PROVO – February 22, 2010 – A new study released today by VitalSmarts found that five threats to workers' safety are commonly left undiscussed and lead to avoidable injury or fatalities.

The study, named [\*Silent Danger: The Five Crucial Conversations that Drive Workplace Safety\*](#), surveyed more than 1,600 frontline workers, managers, and safety directors across 30 safety-conscious organizations in 2009.

According to the data, 93 percent of employees say their company is currently at risk and nearly half are aware of an injury or death caused by one of five avoidable workplace dangers. However, despite being aware of these five threats, only one in four employees speaks up and tries to correct unsafe conditions.

*"Silent Danger* shows the tragic secret behind most workplace injuries is that someone is aware of the threat well in advance, but is either unwilling or unable to speak up," said [Joseph Grenny](#), cofounder of VitalSmarts and leading researcher of the study. "The greatest dangers to workplace safety are the norms, habits, and assumptions embedded in our corporate cultures that stifle employees' ability to speak up and confront unsafe practices."

Each of the five threats to workplace safety outlined in *Silent Danger* was identified as being costly, common, and undiscussable. The five threats are:

- **Get It Done.** Unsafe practices that are justified by tight deadlines.
- **Undiscussable Incompetence.** Unsafe practices that stem from skill deficits that can't be discussed.
- **Just this Once.** Unsafe practices that are justified as exceptions to the rule.
- **This Is Overboard.** Unsafe practices that bypass precautions considered excessive.
- **Are You a Team Player?** Unsafe practices that are justified for the good of the team, company, or customer.

However, not all employees remained silent bystanders when confronted with these and similar threats. A small minority, ranging from 25 to 28 percent, say they are able to speak up effectively in these crucial moments and address unsafe conditions. More than 82 percent of this vocal minority says that when they speak up, their actions result in a safer work environment for everyone.

Grenny says additional training, safety audits, and other tools, while important, will never be enough to create a truly safe environment.

"The reason we are seeing safety improvements begin to stall is not because the systems and policies we have implemented don't work, it's because people don't speak up and hold one another

accountable,” says Grenny. “Accidents in the workplace will not be prevented until senior leaders eradicate cultures of silence.”

Grenny outlines recommendations senior leaders can follow for teaching their employees to speak up in crucial moments. One year after implementing Grenny’s recommendations, [Pride International](#), an offshore drilling contractor, decreased its total incident rate by 55 percent and reported zero accidents that required employees to miss time on the job.

The full *Silent Danger* research results and recommendations for leaders are available for download at [www.vital-smarts.com/safety](http://www.vital-smarts.com/safety).

### **About the Silent Danger Study**

In early 2009, VitalSmarts began identifying ways to improve workplace safety incidents that led to 4 million injuries and 5,600 deaths per year. The *Silent Danger* study began with interviews and focus groups with 130 people from eight organizations. Trends unveiled in the interviews were verified through a survey administered to 1,500 employees from 22 organizations to test the impact communication breakdowns had on workplace safety. Full results available at [www.vital-smarts.com/safety](http://www.vital-smarts.com/safety).

### **About VitalSmarts**

An innovator in corporate training and organizational performance, VitalSmarts is home to award-winning training products that deliver powerful tools for enriching relationships and improving end results. The company has three *New York Times* bestselling books, *Crucial Conversations*, *Crucial Confrontations*, and *Influencer*. VitalSmarts has taught more than 2 million people worldwide. [www.vital-smarts.com](http://www.vital-smarts.com)

**Note to editor:** Joseph Grenny is available for interview. Full study results, a research summary, and additional information are available at [www.vital-smarts.com/safety](http://www.vital-smarts.com/safety).

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