



Lawrence Berkeley National Lab

# Evolution of Safety Culture at a National Laboratory

Dr. Michael Brandt, CIH  
Deputy Lab Director and  
Chief Operating Officer



# Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

## *Bringing Science Solutions to the World*



### Berkeley Lab

University of California - DOE Contractor

Founded in 1931

-- 91 years of scientific discovery & achievement

Adjacent to UC Berkeley campus



### ... by the Numbers

**202 acres** (of which 84 acres are leased to DOE)

**\$1.5 billion** funding

**5 national user facilities** with **10,000+** users

**93 buildings**, 81 trailers and containers

**4,000+** employees

**16 Nobel Prizes**

# Berkeley Lab's Safe Work Culture — Based on our Stewardship Values

## Our Mission

At Berkeley Lab,  
our collective purpose is  
to serve humankind  
through science.

## Our Responsibility

As leaders and citizens of the Lab,  
we are **entrusted** to care  
for the people, research, and  
resources that  
make our mission possible,  
a responsibility we call  
**stewardship**.

## Our Commitment

In taking care of the Lab  
and each other,  
we commit to these core  
values  
that guide our decisions and  
behaviors.



service

WE SERVE HUMANKIND



innovation

WE IMAGINE AND INNOVATE



team science

WE COLLABORATE ACROSS BOUNDARIES



respect

WE CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER



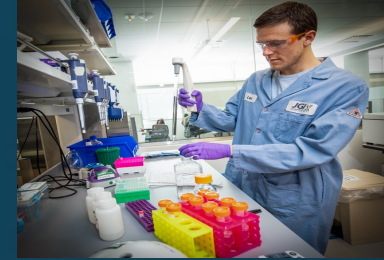
trust

WE EARN TRUST

Our safe work culture has always been strong,  
adaptable and ready to respond to challenges.

# Pre-Pandemic Berkeley Lab: Foundational Elements of a Healthy and Safe Work Culture

- 1. Line managers plan and execute work**  
Responsible and accountable for work outcomes
- 2. Workers are also involved in work planning and execution**  
Raise safety concerns, ask questions and pause work
- 3. Work teams use risk management to anticipate and evaluate hazards and implement control measures**  
Always using hazard controls — no shortcuts

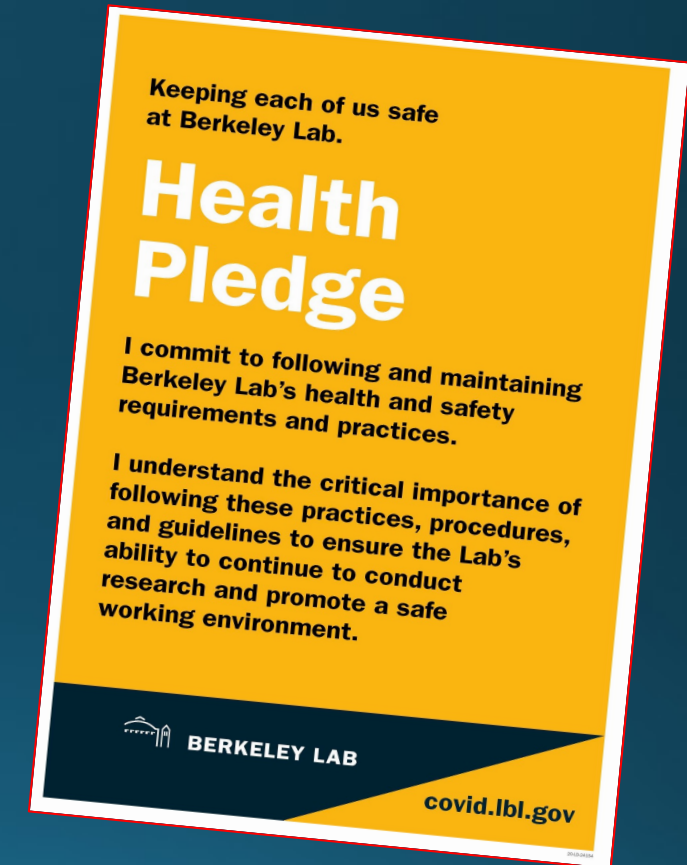


**Managers and workers are committed to keeping each other safe.**



# In Early Pandemic, Guiding Principles Maintained Safety Culture during Transition to Telework

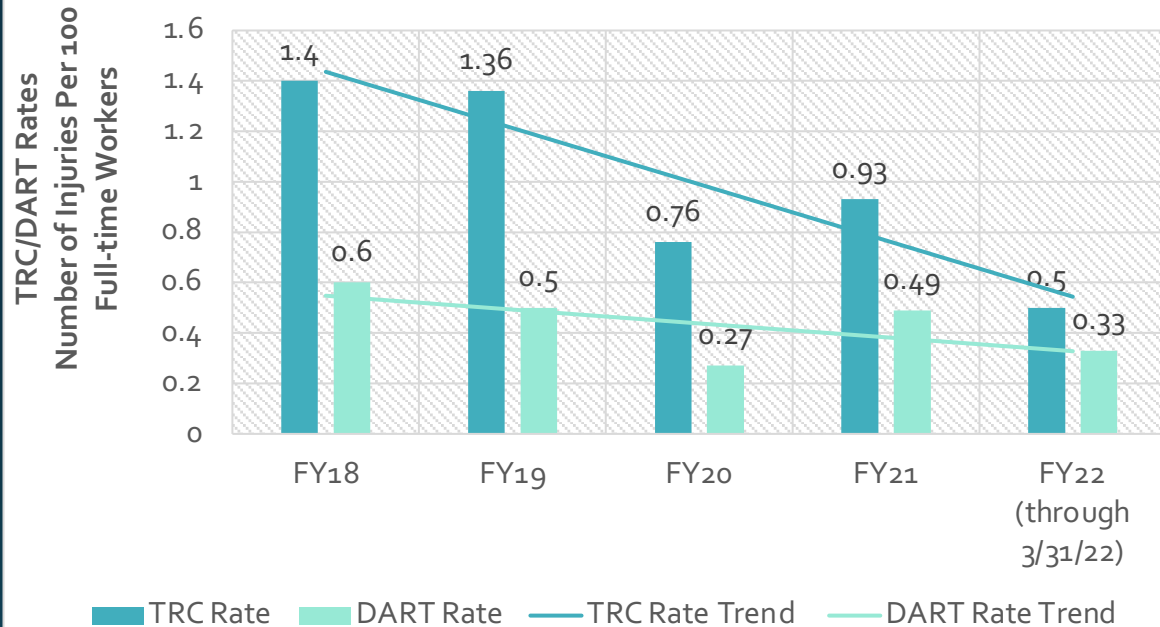
- **Protect** worker health and safety
- **Use scientific evidence** and best public health practices
- **Be adaptable** and be flexible
- **Prioritize mission-essential work** requiring site access
- **Prepare** for future work curtailments
- **Manage** suspected and positive cases
- **Protect** worker confidentiality
- **Communicate** transparently



**Our safety culture was adapted to pandemic conditions**

# Adaptable Safety Culture Increased Health & Safety Performance

Berkeley Lab TRC & DART Rates  
Trend from FY18-FY22



- Engaged line managers are present to anticipate and prevent events using hazard controls
- Everyone questions any changes from established best practices
- Everyone follows risk management processes and executes hazard controls
- Everyone takes responsibility to raise safety concerns
- Managers listen to workers' suggestions to improve the workplace and take action

The lessons we have learned reinforced our safety principles, and prepared us for our “new normal”.

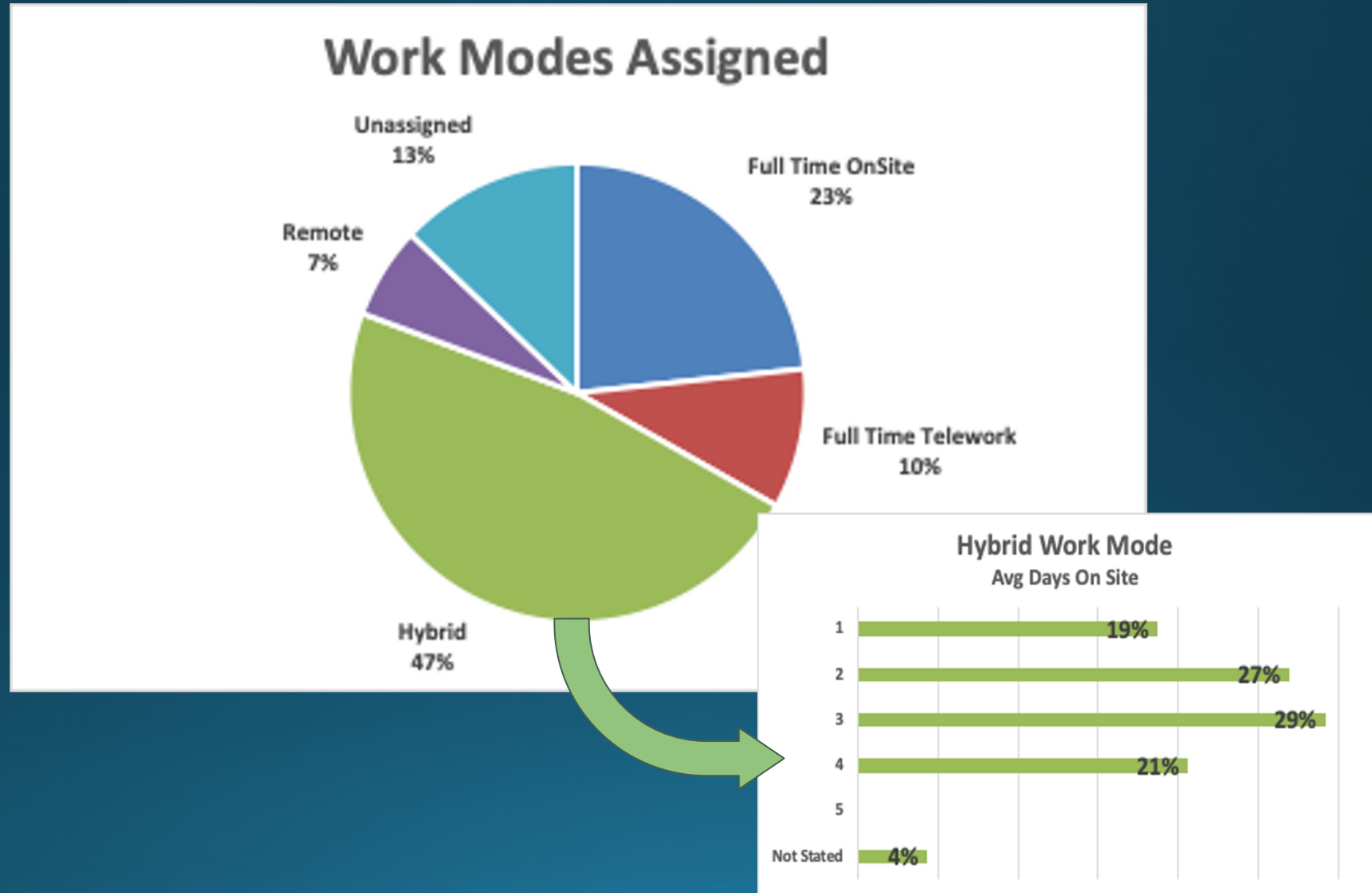
# “Spring Training” and Return to Work: Transitioning to the New Normal

## Leaders

- **Welcome** people back to work
- **Take the time** to help staff acclimate to being back onsite
- **Are available** at the Lab to help workers gradually reorient to being onsite
- **Assure** employees understand changes to work practices
- **Share** changes in health and safety requirements
- **Give** people time to build their proficiency in their work activities
- **Encourage** staff to pause work and ask questions
- **Address** employee concerns and adapt as needed

**Leadership’s expectation of high safety standards has not changed ...  
but implementation methods have shifted.**

# Hybrid Berkeley Lab: Transition to a Culture of Flexible Work



**Flexible work was uncommon ... but is now the new normal.**



# Lessons Learned: Leadership Qualities needed to Manage Risk

## Well-Being and Psychological Safety

- Prioritizes others' physical and emotional health & safety
- Welcomes candid discussions

## Team and Bridge-Building

- Facilitates teamwork & maximizes team potential
- Creates a team environment for ALL

## Listening and Adaptability

- Listens to and acts on workers' concerns and suggestions
- Listens to and respects differing viewpoints

## Responsibility

- Crucial conversations and feedback are necessary
- Mistakes are opportunities to learn and improve



# As Workplaces Continue to Evolve, so Must Safety Culture

- **LBNL's stewardship values:** central to our evolving work culture post-COVID
- **Balanced business and worker needs:** optimizing team science
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** essential to worker recruitment and retention
- **Creating real communication:** informal conversations, collaboration and brainstorming
- **Soliciting and listening to worker feedback:** being prepared to make adjustments
- **Experimenting with work schedules:** reflecting the needs of different work groups
  - Looking at user facilities, research teams, mission operations teams, and more
  - Avoiding 'single, one-size-fits-all solutions'

**In an evolving workplace... resilience and adaptability are essential to a healthy safety culture.**