

Guide to Establishing a Safety Committee

Introduction

An effective safety committee brings employees and management together to achieve and maintain a safe and healthy workplace. The safety committee advises management and employees on safety matters pertaining to an organization's overall operations.

Objective

The objective of the safety committee is to improve health and safety in the workplace by helping to identify problems and resolve concerns. This is done, in part, by:

- A. Helping management identify, assess and control hazards
- B. Providing a channel of communication between management and workers
- C. Conducting regular inspections
- D. Talking with workers about health and safety concerns
- E. Helping management develop and monitor policies, plans and programs
- F. Meeting to discuss concerns and make recommendations for corrective action to discuss with management

Scope

The safety committee should include representation from all departments. The success of the committee depends on commitment and involvement at all levels of the organization: employees, supervisors and administration. A chairperson should be elected to meet with administration on a regular basis to provide status updates.

Purpose

The safety committee should meet regularly to proactively address safety concerns, discuss accidents and preventative measures, and assist management in evaluating safety policies and procedures. In addition, the safety committee should encourage employee involvement and promote safety in the workplace.

Guidelines

- A. Management should develop guidelines for the safety committee – including, but not limited to:
 1. Frequency of meetings
 2. Time and place of meetings
 3. Member selection
 4. Attendance requirements
 5. Meeting discussion topics
 6. Roles and responsibilities
 7. Member terms
 8. Meeting minutes and documentation
 9. Handling of confidential information
- B. The committee and management should establish priorities for the committee's activities. Items to consider are:
 1. Goals to eliminate known or potential loss sources
 2. Safety education for employees, supervisors, members
 3. Inspections/observations of processes/workstations
 4. Review of possible plant/operational changes – from a safety standpoint only
 5. Job hazard analysis
 6. Annual review of safety rules or procedures – updating

Organization

Typically, a safety committee is comprised of five to twelve employees – with management representation from all areas of the organization. Employee representatives could be volunteers or elected by their peers. Management should consider rotating employee representatives after serving on the committee for a set term. Since the safety committee needs a certain amount of authority to correct unsafe conditions, the committee should always include a member of the management team. Members may be added or supplemented at any time based on new direction or special projects.

Member Qualifications

There are many qualities to look for in a good safety committee member. An effective safety member is:

- A. Interested in safety and health issues in the workplace
- B. Respected by management and co-workers and has leadership skills
- C. Familiar with organization's operations, policies and procedures
- D. Interested in the needs of the entire work force
- E. Willing to attend meetings, work on projects and be receptive to new ideas

Conducting a Safety Committee Meeting

The following is a sample safety committee meeting process:

- A. Call to order
- B. Roll call by the secretary
- C. Minutes of the previous meeting
- D. Unfinished business
- E. Review of accidents and determine corrective actions
- F. Safety education (a member will discuss a new topic at each meeting)
- G. Inspection and recommendation review
- H. New business
- I. Assignments for next meeting
- J. Adjournment

Typical Safety Committee Duties/Responsibilities

The following is a list of typical safety committee duties/responsibilities – this list can be modified as appropriate.

- A. Safety inspections – to detect unsafe physical conditions, including follow-up on past recommendations
- B. Accident investigations – to determine specific actions that have been/should be taken to prevent future losses
- C. Safety committee meetings – to review the two items above and carry forward new issues brought up from a variety of sources, such as new laws, new processes, injury trends, etc.
- D. Injury/loss review committee – determines injury causes in a group setting with the injured employee and supervisor involved
- E. Job safety observations (JSO) – to make employee observations on a wide variety of circumstances, such as new employees, follow-up on accident investigations, new processes, etc.
- F. Job hazard evaluations – for new or existing jobs or to comply with outside standards (Example: OSHA's PPE standard)