

## Organizing Your Safety Committee: Function and Responsibility

Company-sponsored safety committees can have significant positive results for your overall loss control program. When well designed and planned functions focus on reducing workplace incidents and exposures to injuries, your people reap the rewards of improved working conditions. But there are some key points to bear in mind when planning and executing what many feel is a fundamental part of any successful safety plan.

### Appointing a Committee

The primary function of your company's safety committee is to create and maintain incident and injury prevention. For starters, include at least one management representative and others combined from supervisors and workers, and include a representative from each department. Rotate membership periodically to give more employees an opportunity to participate.

### Principle Activities and Responsibilities

- Perform monthly hazard surveillance tours intended to identify hazardous conditions or unsafe work practices and recommend corrective action. Include an evaluation from observation of safe work behaviors to improve safe work performance. Use a self-inspection checklist to guide the examination of your workplace.
- The safety committee should act as a clearinghouse for all safety ideas, activities and needs. This may involve analyzing appropriate safety and health standards or regulations that apply to your operations. The committee may be called upon to help outline a plan for regulatory compliance after researching how a particular standard affects your business. For example, when changes occur with personal protection for the work force, the committee may need to

evaluate those changes and the impact on the organization and the training it implies to the work force. Be prepared to field safety and health questions or concerns that arise from employees. Some concerns may involve management and labor issues, and others may focus specifically on workplace safety. The committee will need to keep others involved in their findings, including any problems as they surface.

- Review workplace incidents and investigation reports. This includes near misses that have occurred in order to help determine what corrective actions can be taken to prevent recurrence.
- Assist in developing appropriate baseline safe work performance expectations and work practices. The committee will need to prepare recommendations for improvement if they determine that current practices put employees at risk.
- Coordinate training programs to maintain employee knowledge and skills in safety and health practices.
- Keep records of committee meetings to keep management informed so that activity can progress. Prepare an agenda of activities or topics to be covered and distribute to members well before the meeting. Follow the meeting with minutes of findings and progress, and send or post a copy for management and employees.
- Help new employees become competent and familiar with company safety practices. The committee may need to develop sample safe work rules consistent with best safety practices.

- Encourage prompt claims reporting and help identify return-to-work opportunities with your treating physicians or specialists within the preferred provider (PPO) network. The committee may need to be involved with outlining various responsibilities for supervisors and workers to fully understand their role in the disability management plan.
  - Evaluate new equipment and/or processes that may have safety and health implications. When new operations are planned, for example with new machinery, the safety committee should evaluate the safeguarding features in context with how they will be used within your operations. If contractors are hired to do work at your facility, the committee should make sure they understand risks unique to your operations.
  - Appoint special needs subcommittees to investigate priority areas of safety improvement that have been key loss drivers and/or a potential source of lost time inquiries. Examples may include a special task force for examining ergonomics risk from areas experiencing repetitive trauma injuries, or a focused campaign to attack the trend of slip and fall injuries to patrons or employees in the parking area, or helping to formalize a policy to have all new chemicals introduced into production, go through a structured hazard analysis first. The subcommittee meetings and findings will need to be discussed at the normal safety committee meeting and a final course of action discussed at that time.
  - Coordinate safety education and program alterations based in part, on needs identified from audits, evaluations or special investigations. Audits or evaluations are critical to implementing necessary changes that gain the most benefit.
- Are committee recommendations being implemented?
  - Does the committee have adequate management support and authority for changes?
  - Has the incidence rate of lost time or first aid cases reduced as a result of the committee's involvement?
  - Are findings and changes being communicated to management and the work force?
  - Are all members and subcommittees contributing to the process?
  - Are the functions, members and activities of the committee accepted by the work force?
  - Does the overall company safety culture seem to be improving?
  - Has the safe work performance of your work force improved?

Some states have specific regulations governing the formation, organization, membership and responsibilities of a company safety and health committee.

## Summary

The ultimate objective of a safety committee is to have a positive affect on the loss experience of your company and to maintain that success and contribute to the well being of your work force. A committee with no sense of direction or support from management lacks the capability of making a difference.

The primary task for any safety committee is to act on behalf of the organization's work force for their safety and health interests. It is through the committee that the work force concerns are heard and responses are strategically planned, communicated and implemented to both management and labor.

Use the following form to give your committee a method to document and follow-up on safety committee findings and upcoming activities.

### Ask These Key Questions to Help Your Committee Plan It's Direction and Goals

- Are projects and action plans being completed in a timely manner?

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# Safety Committee

MEETING DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTENDEES (PRINT NAME/TITLE OF DEPARTMENT)

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SUBJECT COVERED

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INCIDENTS REVIEWED/STATUS OF EMPLOYEES OR INJURED PARTY(IES)

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INJURY COSTS FOR MONTH \_\_\_\_\_ INJURY COSTS YTD \_\_\_\_\_ # MEDICAL CASES \_\_\_\_\_

# LOST TIME CASES \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL # OF WORK HOURS: \_\_\_\_\_ MONTH \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR \_\_\_\_\_

HAZARD SURVEY FINDINGS AND PRIORITIES (SEE CHECKLISTS AND/OR SUMMARY OF TOURS):

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**PLANS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENT**

| PROBLEM TO ADDRESS | RESPONSE ACTIONS/ASSIGNMENT | TIMETABLES |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| _____              | _____                       | _____      |
| _____              | _____                       | _____      |
| _____              | _____                       | _____      |
| _____              | _____                       | _____      |
| _____              | _____                       | _____      |
| _____              | _____                       | _____      |

**ADDITIONAL TRAINING NEEDS:**

(SPECIFY WHAT AREA NEEDS ATTENTION, WHY, AND WHO MUST BE INVOLVED, FOLLOW UP NEXT MEETING)

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**SIGNATURE OF SAFETY COORDINATOR** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE OF TOP MANAGEMENT** \_\_\_\_\_

**Copies of this report go to:**

1. Safety committee file and members
2. Safety coordinator
3. Management representative
4. Supervisors
5. Employee bulletin board or distribute as uniform announcement/bulletin.

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