
Developing a Safety Program — Begin With the Basics

Many organizations have reduced their injury rates by implementing safety programs as an integral part of their overall risk management operation. Top management *support, commitment* and *involvement* are the keys to a successful safety program.

1. Each location must develop a written safety and health policy statement that clearly communicates to the staff top management's commitment and vision for a workplace free of recognized hazards.

The written statement should include top management's philosophy, commitment and expectations — to serve as a guide for showing that:

- ◆ All occupational injuries/illnesses can be prevented
- ◆ All operating risks can be eliminated or adequately safeguarded
- ◆ Superior safety is crucial in improving the work environment
- ◆ All levels of management will be responsible and held accountable for staff safety
- ◆ All employees will be trained in — and be expected to follow — safety and health practices established by the organization as a condition of employment

2. Each location must have in place a formal organization to manage its safety and health program. Everyone within the organization must understand his or her role and responsibility for an effective safety and health program for staff. Regardless of who is spearheading the safety and health program, that individual (or individuals) must be placed high enough in the organization's structure to ensure access to top management.
3. Use annual planning to establish written goals, objectives and action plans based on current performance; however, numerical goals alone are not enough. Activities, programs and development of internal controls are needed to maintain a thriving and active safety and health program.
4. Written policies and procedures must be established and reviewed with both full-time and part-time staff. Line management must oversee compliance with established policies, procedures and rules.
5. Establish an incident investigation procedure, which at the very least must be performed for all occupational fatalities, lost-time injuries/illnesses, and near misses.

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6. Managers and supervisors of all departments must be held responsible and accountable for the safety management practices implemented in their area of responsibility. This includes at the very minimum the following: investigation of employee injuries and near misses, area inspections and staff training. Job descriptions are a key management tool for assigning safety responsibility and accountability.
 7. Develop tools to “assess, prevent and control,” and provide ongoing surveillance of all facility operations as they relate to safety activities. These principles and practices must be applied in the planning, design and layout of any new buildings, grounds or operations. These factors must also be included in preventive maintenance activities and/or changes in any existing building, ground or operation.
 8. On a periodic basis, staff and management from each department or area shall conduct routine department or area inspections. Top management should perform additional spot check audits. Because a sound inspection is based on the knowledge possessed by the inspector, before implementing a self-inspection program provide training on how to identify and correct hazards. The inspector may use a variety of inspection checklists.
 9. Continual education and training must be provided and effectiveness reviewed annually. Initial training must include an orientation to the organization’s safety program, philosophy and culture, along with job-specific training. Training must also be initiated when a staff member transfers to a new job, or when there is a change in an operation. Establish a yearly training program that outlines who will conduct the training, as well as the topics and dates. Invite guest speakers for variety, and include both on- and off-the-job safety topics. Regardless of the length of the training, document it with the following information: sign-in sheets, a training course syllabus, date of training, and name of the instructor. Verify that learning has occurred through testing or on-the-job observations.
 10. Establish an ongoing means of communicating safety and health issues and information. At a minimum, the communication system should include:
 - ◆ Scheduled safety meetings held by management (include videos and handouts)
 - ◆ Short safety meetings in the work area
 - ◆ Newsletters
 - ◆ Contests, promotions, performance awards and posters

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11. Each location must establish a means for managing the safety and health documents. The following issues should be addressed:
 - ◆ Medical confidentiality
 - ◆ Security
 - ◆ Access
 - ◆ Retention
 - ◆ Distribution

 12. Evaluate the entire safety and health program's performance on an annual basis.