

Safety Committees

Every organization's loss control program can benefit from a properly constructed and functioning safety committee. The success of the committee will depend on the purpose, makeup, responsibilities assigned, and support received from top management.

The basic function of the safety committee is to help create and maintain all employees' active interest in safety. To achieve this goal, there must be a spirit of cooperation and a commitment to safety as a shared responsibility between top management and the employees. The proper safety attitude of the members will have a positive influence on others. Display of interest in safety by committee members promotes employees to show an interest in safety.

The makeup of the committee can vary depending on the needs, size, and type of organization. Consider the following when forming a safety committee:

- 1. Chairperson** – The person appointed must display leadership and command abilities. They should obtain respect from other members through their positive actions.
- 2. Type** – Committee type can be comprised of management personnel only or management and employees. It can also be formed specifically for special safety projects.
- 3. Membership** – Membership is usually limited between four and ten members. These members must be knowledgeable of hazards, have experience with operations, and possess a cooperative attitude.
- 4. Meetings** – These should be scheduled at least monthly. They need to have a planned agenda and meeting length should not exceed one hour.

The agenda of a meeting will vary but a typical one is outlined below.

- Record of attendance.
- Consideration of unfinished business.
- Review of recent accidents and trend analysis.
- Reports on special projects of the committee.
- Report on inspections performed by committee.
- Special program features- films, speakers, demonstrations.
- Presentation of new business.

A written record of the meetings' proceedings should be prepared by the committee secretary. Minutes of the meeting should be distributed to all members, key management personnel, and copies posted on employee bulletin boards. Maximum benefit will be obtained by publicizing the committee's efforts.

The duties and functions of the committee will be determined according to the responsibilities assigned to it by top management. Typical responsibilities of the safety committee and its members include:

- Conducting periodic safety inspections.
- Reviewing the circumstances and causes of accidents. Develop recommendations for corrective measures to reduce recurring accidents.
- Offering suggestions to management for improvement to the safety program.
- Increasing the knowledge and understanding of safety for all personnel through promoting educational activities such as films, talks, etc.
- Observing unsafe conditions and work practices and reporting them to supervisors.
- Listening to suggestions by employees, reporting them to the committee, and making appropriate recommendations to management.

Top-level management support of the committee is critical to its success. Deciding to make a committee and assigning it responsibilities are not enough. Adequate facilities and sufficient time must also be provided to conduct the committee business.

Safety committees involve the employees who make positive contributions to the safety effort. They aid and advise both management and employees through monitoring, educating, investigating, and evaluating safety efforts.

Structure and Function of a Joint Health and Safety Committee

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a simplified procedure for implementing a joint health and safety committee in your workplace.

The goals of the committee are to:

- **Create and maintain an active interest in health and safety and reduce accidents.**
- **Discuss and recommend effective action on the workplace accident-causing conditions.**
- **Promote an awareness of health and safety issues and an atmosphere of cooperation between management and workers.**
- **Help in identifying problems, formulating policy and procedures, monitoring and improving workplace health and safety.**

In order for the committee to be effective in practice, some parameters need to be established by the committee. The following items will help guide the committee to establish the parameters of its authority, discussion agendas, meeting frequency, and who has oversight of the committee from a corporate standpoint. The make-up of the committee should include members of both management and labor and represent the divisions of your company. Members of the labor side of the committee should represent each area of the operation and have some basic knowledge of the OSHA standards applicable to their work.

2.0 Authority

The degree of the committee's authority should be clearly defined and permanently recorded. When an individual or group is to be responsible for a set of activities, authority to carry

out those responsibilities must also be stipulated. A degree of responsibility is still necessary if the committee acts only in a consultative role. Examples would be the right to carry out or participate in inspections and accident investigations, hold regular meetings, and monitor compliance with regulations.

3.0 Role of the Committee

The committee's role is to make recommendations for action. The joint nature of the committee allows for input from the employees impacted by changes being made for worker protections. The employee input allows for their buy-in and by participation in the process, gives them a say on how safe work procedures can integrate with the tasks at hand.

The authority for action and/or accountability for non-compliance stays with the employer. Establishing a committee does not lessen the employer's accountability for health and safety. Used effectively, the committee can enhance the employers health and safety program and help establish a culture within an organization that truly believes in accident reduction and continual improvement in safe work procedures.

4.0 Structure of the Committee

The committee should have at least two management and two labor members. The chair of the committee can be jointly held and meetings conducted on an alternate basis or however the committee decides. An alternate member for each side can be named as replacements as necessary. The committee members should be named and have the committee member list posted so individual employees know who their representative is. Issues may be brought forward by employees to their representative for discussion at the committee level.

5.0 Frequency of Meetings

The committee can decide on the frequency of their meetings, but it is recommended that at least six meetings per year be conducted. In the event it becomes necessary to call a meeting between scheduled meetings, the co-chairpersons can decide whether a special meeting is necessary. Meetings should be held with some regularity, meaning an established day and week of month to be noted in the meeting minutes.

6.0 Meetings and Function of Committee

The function of the committee is to identify, evaluate and recommend solutions on all matters of safety, accident prevention and return to work. The committee may also conduct workplace safety audits and evaluate compliance, make recommendations for improvement and follow up on recommendations.

An agenda should be prepared for each safety committee meeting. Non-safety items need to be recognized and deflected from becoming part of the meeting.

6.1 The agenda should have several consistent items from meeting to meeting for the committee to review; such as:

- Any injuries since the last meeting
- Review of insurance loss runs year-to-date
- Look-ahead to upcoming work with potential for JHA development
- Establish tool box safety talk topics for installations and call center
- Review safety compliance and associated issues
- Provide feedback to contributors of safety items (may have come from field)

Minutes of meeting should be posted where employees can see them and see that the committee is there for their benefit. Items from the safety committee can be used for tool box talk meetings.

6.2 Forms of Safety Committee participation engaging employees more fully in systematic prevention include:

- Inspecting for hazards and recommending corrections or controls;
- Analyzing tasks to locate potential hazards and develop safe work procedures;
- Developing or revising general rules for safe work;
- Training newly hired employees in safe work procedures and rules, and/or training their co-workers in newly revised safe work procedures;
- Providing programs and presentations for safety meeting; and
- Assisting in accident investigations.

7.0 Accident Investigations

While the committee does not have a primary function for conducting accident and injury investigations, the committee should review investigations to ensure root causes have been identified and what, if any, action will be needed for prevention in the future.

8.0 Annual Review

The effectiveness of the committee should be reviewed annually. In keeping with the 'continual improvement' philosophy, the committee can look inward to evaluate its work and identify where improvement can be made. Recommendations by the committee should be reviewed by senior management for approval and implementation.

Used effectively, the committee can enhance the employers health and safety program and help establish a culture within an organization that truly believes in accident reduction and continual improvement in safe work procedures.