

Safety Committees

KEY POINTS

- Safety committees are important two-way safety communications vehicles.
- Legal requirements for employer-employee safety communication may be satisfied by a committee which meets **regularly**.
- A safety committee, no matter how effective, cannot be construed as the employer's safety program; it is merely one program element.
- Employees and management should be represented on the safety committee.
- Committee responsibilities should include physical inspection, accident investigation and safety training.
- Records should be kept of all committee meetings and activities.

Among the basic elements of an employer safety programs is a documented, two-way safety communication system which allows for a consistent free-flow of safety and health information between employees and all levels of management.

Occupational safety and health professionals have long understood the value of safety committees as integral aspects of effective safety programs. As a result, many employers are already using safety committees to serve as the cornerstones in their loss prevention program efforts. This bulletin is designed for those wishing to form, reform or further increase the effectiveness of a safety committee.

The most important point for management to remember about safety committees is that, of themselves, *they may not serve as "the safety program"* in any organization. Rather, each committee should be considered a single safety program element which exists (a) to create and maintain employee interest in safety and health issues,

and (b) to serve as a safety communication and training vehicle. These and other safety program elements must also receive management's attention and priority:

- Proper employee selection procedure
- New employee safety orientation
- Employee safety and health rules
- Supervisory safety responsibilities
- Worksite inspection/hazard control
- Continuing employee safety education
- Safety disciplinary procedures
- Motivation/incentive plans

WHO SHOULD SERVE ON THE SAFETY COMMITTEE?

There may be more than one type of safety committee in larger organizations. However, a typical safety committee in an average-sized company should consist of both employees and supervision or management. To ensure decision-making authority is an available resource, committee meetings should either be chaired or attended by a member of senior management. Members should be selected based upon their familiarity with company operations and personal motivation toward safety, not simply because they may be popular among their fellow employees.

HOW LONG SHOULD MEMBERS SERVE?

This, too, can vary from organization to organization. Generally speaking, however, it is a good idea to rotate committee membership no more often than semi-annually for committees which meet monthly or annually for those which meet quarterly. After all, members should serve long enough to build good rapport with other committee members and to feel a sense of real accomplishment as a result of their term of service.

WHAT ARE THE COMMITTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

The basic functions of any safety committee should include:

- Meeting at least quarterly with an agenda and maintaining proper minutes.
- Conducting, documenting and reviewing results of physical plan safety inspections and follow-up corrective actions.
- Regularly reviewing and discussing incident investigation reports and other loss data to determine, recommend and document for management appropriate prevention methods for the future.
- Reviewing training materials and making recommendations to management as to their applications with the general workforce or with specific employee segments.
- Planning and, in some cases, executing employee safety training presentations.
- Reviewing, developing, implementing, administering and monitoring effectiveness of safety contests, incentive plans and special safety events (i.e. fairs, picnics, poster contests, luncheons, award banquets, etc.)
- Distributing safety information to the workforce.
- Administering safety suggestion programs.

SHOULD THE COMMITTEE FOLLOW ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES?

Before selecting committee members, committee procedures should be set forth in brief, narrative fashion. At minimum, the following should be covered:

- Establish a regular date and time for committee meetings.
- Establish regular meeting frequency.
- Set forth the minimum order of business for each meeting.
- Outline records the committee will keep/receive from other departments (i.e. copies of supervisory accident investigation forms, copies of insurance company loss data, safety training publications and related materials, etc.).
- Identify departments, areas or locations to be represented on the committee and set forth meeting attendance requirements for members.

HOW SHOULD MEETING RECORDS BE KEPT?

Minutes of each meeting should be recorded by an appointed secretary. Copies should be distributed to each member, to appropriate members of senior management and to employee bulletin boards. The committee secretary should establish a specific numbering system to identify and track physical inspection recommendations from meeting to meeting. Typically, this numbering system will identify each recommendation by its date (month and year identified) and a consecutive number or letter. For example, recommendations numbers 10-4-07 and 10-07-02 would identify the first two action items noted in need of correction by the committee's inspection team during April 2010. Each number should be followed by a column briefly describing the hazard or unsafe practice, a targeted completion date/person(s) responsible column and a final completion date column. A suggested format for meeting minutes is attached to this bulletin.

SHOULD SAFETY COMMITTEE MEMBERS RECEIVE SPECIAL TRAINING?

It is a good idea for senior management to provide members with training in safety management principles and hazard control management procedures. Help with this training is available from the Zenith Safety and Health Department. An additional training resource is:

National Safety Council
1121 Spring Lake Drive
Itasca, IL 60143
(630) 775-2075

For further information or assistance, contact your Zenith Safety & Health Consultant.

Safety Committee Minutes

Date: _____

Members/Guests Present: _____

Absent: _____

Review/Approval of Minutes from *(previous meeting date)* Meeting: _____

Old Business: *(record discussion concerning previous unresolved matters/recommendations):* _____

Review of Incidents/Accidents: *(record discussion regarding causes and committee recommendations for future prevention):*

Current Inspection Results/Recommendations: *(assign numbers to current action items, establish person(s) responsible and completion target dates)*

New Business: *(record discussion regarding safety education materials, contests, safety events, etc., which are under consideration or are currently administered by committee)*

(Secretary's signature/date)

Zenith provides workplace safety resources at: **TheZenith.com** RM125COMMv1.1 (6/10) 3

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