

## Safety Rules

Every company, regardless of size or structure, has a moral, financial and legal obligation to assure both a safe workplace and safe work practices. In order to let your employees know what is expected of them, the safety program should include three basic elements:

### A STATEMENT OF COMPANY SAFETY POLICY

This affirms your company's commitment to accident prevention.

### SAFETY RULES-BOTH GENERAL AND SPECIFIC

These rules identify precautionary measures that management requires the work force to follow based on recognized hazards.

### DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Must be clearly defined and provided in writing to each employee.

The larger and more complex an operation, the more comprehensive a program should be. However, any size company can benefit by implementing these elements.

As we discuss these three elements in more detail, remember that simplicity is often an attribute. As operations become more complex, so will the specific safety rules.

### STATEMENT OF COMPANY SAFETY POLICY

The following is an example of the type of message that should be relayed by such a statement:

*The health, safety and well being of our employees and visitors are of prime importance to the success of our business. It is our goal at (Company Name) to provide a safe and healthful environment for all employees and visitors.*

*Effective immediately, (name or title of responsible person) is appointed as Safety Coordinator. (Name or title of responsible person) has full responsibility, authority and accountability for all company health and safety programs. His/her objective is to coordinate all health and safety activities in the operation to prevent illnesses and injuries and to ensure compliance with safety standards.*

*In addition to the Safety Coordinator, each of us has a duty to recognize, report and act on unsafe or unhealthy situations before they lead to injury or illness. You have a responsibility to yourself, your family, and fellow employees.*

The safety policy statement should be signed by the company president, CEO or owner.

### SAFETY RULES

Safety rules include what some might consider as common sense. But remember, common sense is not so common. It is important that safety rules be both realistic and practical. Consider the following:

- They must be understood by those for whom they are intended.
- They should be logical and enforceable. A rule that cannot, or will not, be enforced can seriously impair the effectiveness of other rules.
- Consider legal requirements as well. OSHA regulations, for instance, may dictate certain safety rules which should be included.
- Safety rules should be developed in a cooperative effort between supervisors and employees. Employees are much more likely to respect rules which they take part in developing.

- Consider language barriers. You may need to have rules translated to assist non-English speaking employees.

### GENERAL SAFETY RULES

Typically, safety rules are broken into two segments, General and Specific. General safety rules apply to all employees from top management on down. No one should be exempt. As an example, if a machine shop has a general rule that anyone entering the shop must wear eye protection, it is just as important, and probably more so, that management follow that policy as well as shop employees. This would, obviously, show management's support and respect for the company's rules.

### SPECIFIC SAFETY RULES

Safety rules are developed for specific jobs or departments, or both. It is not unusual to see specific department or job safety rules as ingredients in a comprehensive safety program. An objective study of your operations should make it easy to identify how specific these rules need to be. As with general rules, it is vitally important that everyone respect specific safety rules.

Examples of specific safety rules might be: *"Safety glasses and a face shield must be worn when operating the lathe."* or *"Cut resistant gloves must be worn when cleaning the meat slicer."*

### DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Recognizing safe and productive work is often accomplished by wage increases, incentive awards or even a "pat on the back". But even with the use of positive reinforcement, or when retraining fails to produce safe behavior, disciplinary action may be necessary to change that behavior. The following are important considerations when developing and implementing disciplinary procedures:

If managers or supervisors disregard the rules, employees will feel they can do likewise.

All employees should be treated fairly and equally.

Taking action against an offender sends the wrong message when his peers have been consciously ignored while committing similar offenses.

All disciplinary actions, from verbal warnings to terminations, should be thoroughly documented. This is a method of proving management's good faith and fair treatment of employees.

Prompt action is necessary when a manager feels that a worker is deliberately disobeying safety rules. The employee should not be allowed to endanger himself/herself or co-workers.

An offense or violation deemed to be of extreme severity by a supervisor or manager may be grounds for immediate termination. This may occur regardless of prior warnings.

The following is an example of a typical disciplinary procedure:

First Offense	Verbal warning (documented)
Second Offense	Written warning and/or suspension
Third Offense	Suspension and/or termination

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is recommended that company safety policy, safety rules and disciplinary procedures be typed and distributed to each employee. To document this, an acknowledgment should be developed and provided to employees for their signature verifying that they have read and understand what they have received. That acknowledgment is then kept in their personnel file.

The following is an example of a typical statement of acknowledgment:

*I have read and acknowledge the statement of company policy, safety rules and disciplinary procedures. I agree to follow these safety rules and*

*help maintain the safety of our operations. I also understand that failure to adhere to the safety rules could be grounds for dismissal.*

Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions, or need professional assistance with your safety rules, call your Zenith Safety and Health Consultant.

Zenith provides workplace safety resources at: **TheZenith.com**® RM127CONv1.1 (6/10) 3

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