

Injury and Illness Risk Prevention Programs: Zenith's Guide to Developing an Effective Safety Program

INTRODUCTION

Some may ask "Why do I need a safety program anyway?" There are two main reasons:

Most importantly, safety programs are effective if written and instituted properly. It is morally right to prevent injuries and a financially wise business practice.

There may be specific state requirements regarding your safety programs. The following comments are being provided as a guideline of the minimum elements that should be included to have an effective program. We suggest you check with the individual states in which you do business for any specific requirements.

PURPOSE

This guide reviews the elements that make up an effective program. You will have to shape each element to fit your company's structure and culture.

Things to remember as you develop your program:

Your program's effectiveness is not measured by length. Keep it short, simple and to the point.

If you need assistance, Zenith has a staff of trained safety professionals to help you through this process. Please call your local Zenith office.

Once you have completed your program, you should review it annually and make changes as needed. You should also review your program if you have significant process changes, etc.

Here are the elements to consider developing for your program. Check off your progress as you complete each one:

WRITTEN PLAN

Your program should be in writing and include the name(s) of the person(s) responsible for implementation of it. You should have a written policy statement to show employees that you are serious about their safety. Keep it brief. For example:

Employee safety is important to our company. We feel preventing injuries is as important as production. It is our policy to:

Maintain a safe and healthful work environment.

Establish work practices that will keep employees from getting hurt or sick on the job.

You have a responsibility to yourself, your family and fellow employees. You must always work safely, report unsafe work conditions, and ask if you have a question about your personal safety or that of a fellow employee.

We rely on you to always keep safety in mind and be a part of our effort to reduce the possibility of an occupational injury and/or illness occurring at our company.

John Doe, President

**The Experienced
Workers'
Compensation
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EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

This section is generally referred to as “discipline” or “compliance”. Discipline, however, can be negative or positive. Studies show that you will get far more mileage out of positive reinforcement than the more often used forms of “discipline”, such as verbal and written reprimands.

- How do I get employees to cooperate and follow rules?
- Let your employees know what you expect of them. Safety rules are mandatory.
- Be consistent in your enforcement of safety rules (i.e. reprimands for non-compliance).
- Maintain written documentation for each level of discipline, even verbal warnings.

Reference:

- Digest of Personnel Practices (AD-1)

COMMUNICATION

You should communicate the program and responsibilities to your employees. Verbal communications are often most effective.

How do I choose the type of communication?

Communication can be either **passive** or **active**:

Passive Communication - You can use bulletin boards, posters, flyers, cartoons, newsletters, envelope stuffers, etc. There might even be someone working with you who would love to practice some of his or her creative talents. Make sure to have a suggestion box so that employees may submit suggestions anonymously.

Active Communication - An effective strategy is frequent 5 to 10 minute safety meetings where you talk about a recent accident, a near miss, or safe work practices. You could even recognize employees for a “job well done”. To be successful, communication must be two-way. Encourage everyone’s involvement.

Safety Committees - an option:

You may want to consider a safety committee if your activities and/or company size warrant one. This can be an effective means of communication.

Reference:

- Workers’ Compensation Media Guide posters, videos, safety training topics.
- Risk Management Bulletin - Safety Committees (RMB125)
- Safety Committee Minutes

PERIODIC INSPECTIONS

Regularly scheduled inspections should be conducted to observe people, equipment, materials and the workplace for the purpose of identifying unsafe acts and/or unsafe conditions. A checklist customized to your operation should be used to guide the process and document the effort to ensure corrective action is taken.

I am in the workplace every day. Do I still have to conduct scheduled inspections?

Yes. Scheduled inspections ensure that the workplace is looked at on a regular basis. That is why a checklist is handy. It reminds you to look at specific hazards and practices.

How often should we do inspections? And who should do them?

The frequency of inspections will vary depending upon the type of work your company does. Generally speaking, the minimum is once per quarter. This may be appropriate for a clerical office setting, but is not often enough to be effective for an industrial or agricultural workplace.

Anyone you designate can do an inspection. There’s a lot of value in having a different person do each inspection.

Reference:

- Risk Management Bulletin - Safety Inspection (RM126)

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

All accidents should be investigated regardless of severity. The incident itself may have been preventable. It is the result of the incident that we cannot control. The purpose of an accident investigation is to:

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- Determine the causes of the accident. Take care to let the injured employee(s) and witness(es) know that you are not attempting to place blame. You are on a fact-finding mission.
- Identify what can be done to reduce the chances of a similar accident happening again.
- Take corrective action and monitor the results.

Reference:

- Risk Management Bulletin - Accident Investigations (RMB101)
- Supervisors Report of Injury-4-1/2" x 9"
- Management Incident Investigation Report - 8-1/2" x 11"

HAZARD CORRECTION

A system should be established to make sure the hazards you uncover are properly addressed and controlled. You should consider the following so that hazards are corrected effectively and promptly:

- Document hazards following each accident investigation, inspection, employee notification, etc.
- Prioritize each hazard and take corrective action. Base your priority on the severity of the hazard and frequency of exposure.
- Document the date of corrective action.

You should always consider eliminating a hazard first. Substituting a less hazardous process or material is also an alternative. Providing personal protective equipment (PPE), in addition to the other control methods, is also an option. While providing PPE should be the last choice, it can be an effective alternative, depending on the type of hazard. Always train employees properly on its use and monitor the controls after implementation.

TRAINING

Just as you train someone to drive a car, so should you train employees on how to perform their job efficiently and safely. Job-specific training should be given by you or your supervisors. You do not need to be "certified" in most cases. First aid and CPR training are examples of exceptions.

Provide training when you:

- First hire employees (include both general and job-specific training)
- Transfer employees between departments, or assign new responsibilities
- Change or implement new processes, substances or equipment
- Uncover special hazards (e.g. confined spaces, emergency action plans, lockout, etc.) or hazards that were previously not noticed

Providing training is nothing more than making sure your employees know how to do the job correctly and effectively. Quality and productivity may improve as well as safety.

Reference:

- Workers' Compensation Media Guide videos
- Safety topics
- Supervisors Five Star Safety Management Program (Provided by Zenith Safety & Health consultant)

RECORD KEEPING

Record keeping is where many programs fail. Many companies perform all of the necessary elements but are unable to show compliance because they keep few, if any, records. The length of time records must be maintained varies from state to state. In order to keep things simple, we recommend you keep safety documentation centralized. You may want to use a 3-ring binder with the following tabs:

- Policy statement/disciplinary policy
- Safety meetings
- Inspections
- Accident investigations
- Hazard correction

Tab for each specialized training you provide (include safety rules)

CONCLUSION

You can order the references cited in this guide from the Workers' Compensation Media Guide located in your Zenith service kit. Or, you can order them by

calling your local Zenith office directly. The use of forms is not required, but they can facilitate some activities, and are useful for documenting your efforts. Some are available from Zenith media guide, or you can utilize forms from other sources. You may decide to make your own.

Remember, keep the program:

- Short
- Simple
- Specific to your business

As changes occur, the written plan should be modified accordingly.

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