

Goal

This program provides information to all levels of management on basic safety and health responsibilities.

Objective

Managers and line supervisors will become familiar with the management commitment and responsibility required for creating and maintaining a safe work environment for employees.

Background

Although it is difficult to create a hazard-free work environment, good managers who are committed to safety and who involves their employees in an effective safety program can work to provide an accident-free workplace.

Commitment to safety begins with management. Managers and frontline supervisors are accountable for the safety of their workplace and are responsible for the prevention of accidents.

The importance of management commitment to a safe work environment will be discussed in this training guide. The topics include communication, commitment, involvement, and implementation.

Communication

A manager or supervisor who has an open door policy encourages a close working relationship with his and or her employees. It is important that employees feel comfortable in informing the supervisor about potential safety hazards. A good manager and or supervisor needs strong communication and good listening skills, and should practice these skills regularly. Teamwork and a harmonious working atmosphere help to maintain good working relationships. Managers who encourage responsibility and allow employees adequate job control create a supportive environment.

When management demonstrates a commitment to safety in the workplace, employees respond by taking a more active interest in safety. Employees need to be encouraged by their managers and frontline supervisors to make suggestions for improvements in workplace safety and hazard reduction. Managers and supervisors need to respond quickly and positively to those suggestions to show employees that their concerns are not only being heard but also acted upon.

A manager who regularly walks around the workplace, who knows employees by name, and expresses a genuine interest in the day-to-day operation of the business, inspires confidence in his and or her employees. Problems and hazards are likely to be identified more quickly and employees are more apt to keep their workspace hazard-free.

Informal inspections are the best method of identifying and correcting hazards on the spot. An informal inspection should be a routine occurrence, especially in small businesses. Five-minute safety meetings can address housekeeping, emergency procedures, common accidents like slips, trips and falls, and back injury prevention. A useful and open exchange of information between supervisors and employees can occur in this more relaxed and informal atmosphere.

Formal safety meetings and trainings should be conducted on a regular basis. In this setting, new employees are trained in safe job procedures and experienced employees receive refresher courses related to their job. The workers who participate in formal safety trainings should have their safety skills and knowledge evaluated after the presentation, have their attendance documented, and this information kept on file for possible Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) inspection.

Commitment

Management commitment is the driving force for organizing and controlling activities within an organization. A safety and health program will be effective when management views a safe and healthy work environment as fundamental and applies its commitment to protect employees as vigorously as its commitment to organizational goals and strategies.

OSHA recommends the following actions be taken to show management commitment to the health and safety program:

- State the worksite safety and health policy clearly so all personnel can understand its importance in relation to other organizational values.
- Establish and communicate the goal. Objectives should be clearly defined so all levels of personnel understand the desired results and the required measures to achieve those results.
- Involve employees in decisions that affect their safety and health. If involved, employees will likely commit their insight and energy to achieving the program's goal and objectives.

- Provide visible top management support. Visibility gives employees the sense that the top-level management cares and is truly committed to the safety of the employees.
- Assign and communicate responsibility to all personnel levels. Everyone should know what performance is expected and the consequences if performance levels are not achieved.
- Give those assigned responsibilities the authority to act on situations that affect the goal and objectives.
- Hold employees accountable to meet their responsibilities so that essential tasks will be performed.
- Review the safety program periodically to evaluate problems within the program and revise the objectives if the goal is not met.

Employees express their commitment to safety and health protection for themselves and their fellow workers through their involvement. An employee can enhance the program with a positive attitude toward safety.

Involvement

It is important for all levels of management to know and understand the safety rules that employees must follow. Contractors and consultants who work on-site must follow the same safe and healthy work practices required by all full and part-time employees. Management must also follow the same rules when walking through with visitors or conducting an inspection. Commitment to workplace safety begins with the visible involvement and practice of the safety program by management itself.

Implementation

In larger organizations, safety committees are one way to involve employees and management in the production and maintenance of a health and safety program. A committee can establish guidelines for activities that involve divisions and departments in the active pursuit of safety. Contests can be initiated and awards given to those individuals or groups who demonstrate a reduction in accident levels or maintain a hazard-free worksite.

Conclusion

Safety is a corporate objective like sales and profit. The bottom line for safety is its profitability in terms of increased quality in products, decreased workers' compensation claims,

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savings when workers do not have to be replaced or retrained due to accidents, and potential reductions in health and insurance costs.

Review

1. A good manager will maintain an open door policy to ensure employee involvement in the safety process.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Anyone assigned safety responsibilities must also be given the authority to take action.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Managers who walk through work areas don't always need to wear protective equipment because they are only there for a short period of time.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. An informal safety inspection is the best way to correct hazards on the spot.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Answer Key:

1. T
2. T
3. F (They must always wear what is required to set the example.)
4. T
5. T

Resources

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI, DWC) Resource Center offers a workers' health and safety video tape library. Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit our web site at www.tdi.state.tx.us.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this training program is considered accurate at time of publication.

Safety Violations Hotline
1-800-452-9595
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