

Introduction to Safety Meetings and Committees

Oregon OSHA Online Course 1101v2

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INTRODUCTION

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, management, labor, and government came together through the legislative process to reform the workers' compensation system and to make safety and health on the job, top priority. One of the key elements in this effort to prevent on-the-job injuries and illnesses, was the passing of a law that required many employers to have a workplace safety committee.

During the 2007 legislative session, Oregon OSHA requested permission to change the safety committee rules to benefit all of Oregon's employers. Some of the changes were administrative, but a critical change was the change allowing the majority of employers to have a choice. Employers are given the choice of holding traditional committee meetings or an all employee safety meeting that is less formal but still covers the critical discussion points.

Oregon OSHA's Requirements for Safety Committees and Safety Meetings

Everyone must have a safety committee or hold safety meetings to discuss safety and health concerns. The first section of this training will focus on the option for safety committees.

IF	YOU CAN HAVE A SAFETY COMMITTEE	YOU CAN HAVE SAFETY MEETINGS
You have 10 or fewer employees more than half of the year (including seasonal and temporary)	Yes	Yes
More than half of your employees report to construction sites	Yes	Yes
More than half of your employees are mobile or move frequently between sites	Yes	Yes
Most employees do not regularly work outside an office environment	Yes	Yes
You have more than 10 employees at a location, and none of the above applies	Yes	No
You have satellite or auxiliary offices with 10 or fewer employees at each location	Yes	Yes



You can't have **just** safety meetings if:

- You are an employer with 11 or more employees, *and*
- More than half of your employees do not report to construction sites, *and*
- They are not mobile nor move frequently between sites, *and*
- Most of your employees work regularly outside an office environment.



Small employers with 10 or fewer employees **not engaged** in construction have until September 19, 2009 to apply the rule in their workplace.

All others must apply the rule starting January 1, 2009.

Our goal is to help you continue to prevent accidents and keep workers' compensation costs low.

MODULE 1: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



You don't have to climb a mountain and sit on a big rock for six days to gain a vision about the safety committee or your place in it. However, it's important that you do develop a clear vision about how you and the safety committee can most effectively compliment the mission of your company.

To do this, it's important that you gain an understanding of the role and purpose(s) of the safety committee; so let's go!

The purpose of a safety committee is to bring workers and managers together to achieve and maintain a safe, healthful workplace. It's easy to start a safety committee, but to develop an effective one — one that achieves and maintains a safe, healthful workplace — requires workers and managers committed to achieving that goal. If you're an employer, you may be thinking, "That's easier said than done, because I'm also committed to achieving and maintaining a successful business." Can a safety committee help your business survive in the real world? The answer is a resounding "Yes"!

The most effective safety committees function by finding solutions to problems that cause workplace accidents, illnesses, and injuries. Fewer accidents, injuries, and illnesses mean lower workers' compensation claims costs and insurance premium rates. Successful businesses have safe, healthful workplaces.

Once you understand the role, purpose, and function of your safety committee, you will be better able to start, develop, and maintain a successful team of members. So let's look at the proper role of the safety committee in the workplace.

Look up "role" in the dictionary and you'll find something like:

- The characteristic and expected social behavior of an individual.
- A position or title.

Roles help us to understand how we should behave and what we should be doing as an individual or as a member of a group. The position you have right now in your company has some sort of title that identifies your role, duties and responsibilities, and is accompanied by a certain level of status. Attached to your role are expected behaviors and established activities that are appropriate for that position.

Each of the following is common position titles that have established sets of expected behaviors and activities: mother, father, scout leader, police officer, super hero, or president.

What's the role of the safety committee?

It's not too difficult to list and describe the personal roles you assume, but what about the role of the safety committee as a group within your company? One way of looking at the role of the safety committee is to think of it as a consultant firm that would be hired by your employer to:

- Identify workplace hazardous conditions and work practices;
- Determine the root causes for those conditions and practices;
- Develop solutions and submit recommendations to correct problems and improve systems; and
- Monitor the progress of recommendations and the quality of safety programs and activities.



It's important to note that none of these responsibilities requires the safety committee to actually control safety programs or people. When the safety committee assumes the role of a consultant group within a company, it is not expected to control a budget, provide safety training, purchase equipment, etc. These responsibilities are more properly carried out by the line organization (employees, supervisors, managers, CEO, owners).

The Purpose of the Safety Committee/Safety Meetings

Armed with insight into the role of the safety committee, let's look at what its purpose(s) might be. A quick review of our friendly dictionary once again defines purpose as a desired or intended result or effect. The purpose of the safety committee might also be viewed as its mission. Purpose reflects what the safety committee does to fulfill its role. Let's see what the rule says...

437-001-0765 Safety Committees/Safety Meetings — **Purpose:** The purpose of safety committees and safety meetings is to bring workers and management together in a non-adversarial, cooperative effort to promote safety and health. Safety committees and safety meetings will assist you in making continuous improvement to your safety and health programs.

As a consultant group, one of the most important roles of the safety committee representative is to act as a liaison: to receive and report employee safety concerns, and provide regular feedback to the employee regarding the status or response to those concerns. Not providing adequate feedback to employees may render a safety committee ineffective, in the view of employees, in its ability to communicate and effectively carry out its purpose.

The safety committee also provides consultative services upstream to management. This is done primarily through written recommendations. It's interesting that through the years, one of the most common "complaints" one hears from students in our workshops is that management fails to provide adequate support to the safety committee. The question is, "what value added activities are provided by the safety committee to ensure management commitment?"

Just because the employer is required by law to form a safety committee, does not necessarily mean the employer is going to invest much time and money in the committee. To get top management's respect and commitment, the safety committee must demonstrate their value. The safety committee can provide management with useful information so that they can make informed business decisions. Effective recommendations educate management and result in greater respect and commitment to the safety committee.

What are some of the major functions of the safety committee?

Let's take a brief look at some of the safety committee's most important functions. They do the following:

- Help protect the employee by receiving, reporting, and responding to their safety concerns in a timely manner, and by being safety leaders through example;
- Help protect the employer by writing effective recommendations that propose solutions to correct safety and health hazards, promote timely corrective action by emphasizing the costs vs. benefits...the bottom line;
- Help the employer maintain a safe and helpful workplace by evaluating and assisting in developing an effective comprehensive safety management system;
- Help the employer create a "culture of consequences" both positive and negative, by evaluating and assisting in developing effective accountability and recognition/reward processes; and

- Bring labor and management together in a cooperative effort and on a regular basis to discuss and solve safety and health problems.

All of these functions emphasize the safety committee's responsibility to assist the employer in promoting health and safety in the workplace. Management may be able to delegate responsibility for safety programs to the safety committee, but legally, accountability for workplace safety is placed firmly on the shoulders of the employer. It may be helpful for safety committee members to be familiar with employer's responsibilities according to the rules.

Employer's Responsibilities OAR 437-001-0760

- (a) The employer shall see that workers are properly instructed and supervised in the safe operation of any machinery, tools, equipment, process, or practice which they are authorized to use or apply. This rule shall not be construed to require a supervisor on every part of an operation nor to prohibit workers from working alone.
- (b) The employer shall take all reasonable means to require employees:
 - (A) To work and act in a safe and healthful manner;
 - (B) To conduct their work in compliance with all applicable safety and health rules;
 - (C) To use all means and methods, including but not limited to, ladders, scaffolds, guardrails, machine guards, safety belts and lifelines, that are necessary to safely accomplish all work where employees are exposed to a hazard; and
 - (D) Not to remove, displace, damage, destroy, or carry off any safety device, guard, notice or warning provided for use in any employment or place of employment while such use is required by applicable safety and health rules.

Oregon OSHA cites employers, not safety committees or employees. The responsibility and accountability for safety and health rests with the employer because they control the workplace.

Again, to be most effective, the safety committee should not control programs, activities, budgets, etc. The committee's primary purpose is to assist the employer by problem solving and communicating recommendations. This is the purpose and function of the safety committee.

Good Intentions Do Not Guarantee Results

If the safety committee does not effectively carry out its intended purpose, it may actually (and unintentionally) function in a way that does not promote the company's safety and health efforts.

For instance, the safety committee may intend to communicate effectively with management, but if its members do not have the knowledge, skills, or abilities to accomplish this purpose, the unintended or actual result may be a dismal failure to communicate with management.

The safety committee may have the best intentions, but if it cannot follow through effectively with its plans, it may have a negative effect on a company's safety program. Without education and training, safety committee members may not have the basic knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their responsibilities. Given proper education and training, the safety committee is more likely to effectively carry out its intended purpose.

As a member of a safety committee, you may wish to ask yourself some questions to help determine if the committee is meeting the intent of the rules. **Ask yourself the following:**

- Is your company meeting the purpose of the safety committee or safety meetings by bringing workers and management together in a non-adversarial, cooperative effort to promote safety and health?
- Are the safety committee or safety meetings assisting the employer in making continuous improvement to the safety and health programs?

The information in this module should give you a better understanding of your role as a member of the safety committee. Understanding the concepts presented here is essential to safety committee effectiveness.

MODULE 2: HOW TO START A SAFETY COMMITTEE

Introduction



Suppose your company does not currently have a safety committee. Besides the fact that you know your company is required by Oregon OSHA rules to have safety meetings or a safety committee, you're convinced that the company would benefit if it started one. But how do you "sell" the idea to management? It's a certainty you'll have to talk about the bottom line benefits to get management's attention.

Some employers think of safety as merely one of the costs of doing business. They believe the safety committee is a "cost center" activity that drains the company of money it needs for other production-oriented purposes.

If this is the case where you work, think about selling management on the safety committee by first making a commitment to the employer that you intend to make sure the safety committee is a "profit center" activity. Let your employer know that you will only conduct activities and make recommendations that can be shown to somehow save money for the employer. Let them know you do not intend to do things that waste time and money or otherwise duplicate what employees, supervisors, and managers should be doing as part of their jobs. For private-sector companies, this helps improve the overall profit margin. For public sector organizations, this helps conduct services within a budget.

Let's take a closer look at this idea.

The Dillard Plywood Division of Roseburg Forest Products, a SHARP graduate facility in Dillard Oregon, is a plywood manufacturer that produces Softwood, Hardwood, and Specialty panels. The division is a labor-intensive union shop that employs approximately 495 people, housed in four buildings, and sells product all over the world. Dillard Plywood has 32 active safety committee members (15 admin & 17 union members) and uses 14 Work Action Teams and many non-safety committee personnel to facilitate their safety program. The following letter shows how an effective safety committee can make a huge impact on a company and help shape whether it thrives or merely survives.

Benefits of an Effective Safety Committee

Why is it important to have an effective safety committee? Because every employer and employee owes it to themselves and their loved ones to work in the safest environment possible! A safety committee that works as a team (management and employees) will be able to make this statement possible for their organization. We at the Dillard Plywood Division of Roseburg Forest Products live this value every day.

How could one division of Roseburg Forest Products change a safety culture with an OR-OSHA Recordable Injury Rate of 33.31 (289 recordable claims) in 1993 to 1.89 in 2007? We did this by developing a strong, effective safety committee that works as a team and is respected by its peers. As we developed and put into action our safety plan in 2000, we were able to reduce our injury rates and costs significantly every year thereafter. Lowering our injury costs produced a stronger bottom line profit, while injuring fewer employees helped build moral and through these efforts at work, allowed our employees to have a better over all quality of life. The more effective our safety committee became, the more active all our personnel became in the overall safety program.

Today we have very efficient meetings which are a positive use of our time. Every employee is an active member of our overall safety program and with a lost time injury rate of .34. We have become a respected leader, not only in our company and community but in the safety community as well.

An effective safety committee must start with a strong Safety Plan! It must have the following elements: vision, management commitment, purpose, committee structure, goals, action plans, employee involvement, training, planning, and evaluation. Remove one or more aspects of the plan and your program will founder. Management and employees must work together as a team for the good of the whole organization in order to have an effective safety committee and program.

By employing OR-OSHA's Seven Elements of the SHARP program any organization can have an effective and successful safety program.

Rick Long
Safety Chair,
Dillard Plywood Division
Roseburg Forest Products

Bottom Line Benefits of a Safety Committee

The safety committee performs the role of a consultant to the employer. If your employer hired an external consultant, it would cost thousands of dollars long-term for the same service the safety committee can provide in-house.

The safety committee acts as a forum for management and labor to communicate safety related concerns. The benefits from improved communications may be hard to quantify, but they can be substantial.

Every hazard the safety committee identifies, and is directly involved in eliminating, results in significant savings in potential accident costs. The identification of hazards and the avoidance of accident costs are discussed in detail in Oregon OSHA's workshops on hazard identification and accident investigations.

The safety committee can serve as a valuable problem-solving group that addresses workplace conditions, morale and product quality. By developing solutions, the safety committee improves the company's competitive advantage.

Serving on the safety committee provides an excellent opportunity for employees to improve their professional skills in communications, human relations, problem solving, meeting management, and analysis. Since supervisors and managers should be informed about occupational safety and health issues, the safety committee is a natural "school" of preparation for future company managers. In fact, some companies even make it a prerequisite.

The Safety Committee Protects the Employer As Well As the Employee

As we just learned, by identifying and being involved in eliminating hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices, the safety committee may save the company thousands of dollars in potential accident costs. In fact, for each eliminated hazard, that could have caused a serious injury, many thousands in savings are realized. Safety committees can develop statistics for their own companies that demonstrate to the employer any savings realized because of their commitment to safety.

In Oregon, the 2009 direct costs...the out of pocket costs to close a worker compensation claim...averaged \$22,570: Indirect costs can easily be two to four times that amount. To close a fatality claim will require significantly more.



Write Strong Recommendations by Emphasizing Costs Vs. Benefits

What does this mean to you? To write strong recommendations that emphasize the bottom line by contrasting the costs vs. the benefits, the safety committee can use statistics like those above. Including cost vs. benefit analysis with each recommendation, shows how much money your safety committee helps to save the company every time it uncovers and improves a hazardous condition, unsafe work practice, or inadequate procedure.

You can take advantage of statistics like this from the National Safety Council or Oregon OSHA to sell the benefits of the safety committee.

For every dollar spent by your employer on safety committee activities and recommendations, hundreds of dollars may be returned. You have to convince management that an effective safety committee not only saves lives, but saves money too. It's a profit center.

Once you have received management's support for your safety committee, it's important to make sure you have a written plan that includes all of the following sections:

- Role, purpose(s) of the safety committee.
- Reasons for establishing the safety committee.
- Need for management and employee participation.
- Managements' commitment to the committee.
- Need for support by all departments.
- Responsibilities of the committee.
- Duties of committee members.

Here's an example of a written plan that you can use as a template for your safety committee. Be sure you modify it to meet the unique needs of your safety committee.

XYZ Safety Committee Plan

Introduction XYZ Corporation is committed to accident prevention in order to protect the safety and health of all our 125 employees. Injury and illness losses due to hazards are needless, costly and preventable. To prevent these losses, a joint management/worker safety committee will be established. Employee involvement in accident prevention and support of safety committee members and activities is necessary to ensure a safe and healthful workplace.

I. Purpose

The purpose of our safety committee is to bring workers and management together in a nonadversarial, cooperative effort to help our employer promote and maintain a safe and healthful workplace.

II. Organization

There will be at least two management representatives to XYZ's safety committee. One employee representative from each department will also be elected or encouraged to volunteer as a safety committee member. Managers and employees are encouraged to volunteer as members of the committee.

III. Membership

The safety committee chairperson will be elected from the committee membership and will serve at the pleasure of the committee. Safety committee members will serve a continuous term of at least one year. Length of membership will be staggered so that at least one experienced member is always serving on the committee.

Membership in the committee will be considered professional development and annotated to each member's performance appraisal. XYZ considers membership in the committee as a prerequisite for advancement to management positions.

IV. Responsibility

The safety committee has the following responsibilities:

- Meet regularly to discuss safety and health
- Communicate with employees and the employer
- Identify hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices
- Recommend strategies to eliminate hazards

V. Recommendations

Safety committee written recommendations will be submitted to management. Management will respond to recommendations according to the following schedule:

Identified Hazard	Severity of Injury	Response
Fatal Fatality		Immediate
Serious	Serious physical harm	Immediate
Minor	Minor injury	14 days
Administrative	Not applicable	30 days

VI. Procedures

The committee's plan of action requires procedures by which the committee may successfully fulfill its role. Procedures developed should include:

- Meeting date, time, and location.
- Election of chairperson and recorder.
- Order of business.
- Records.

Duties of each member should include:

- Report unsafe conditions and practices.
- Attend all safety and health meetings.
- Review all accidents and near misses.
- Recommend ideas for improving safety and health.
- Set an example by working in a safe and healthful manner.
- Observe how safety and health is enforced in the workplace.
- Complete chairperson/committee assignments.
- Represent employee safety interests.

VII. Summary

Only the planning and effective leadership of management and the safety committee can build a program that lasts. The safety committee should be an effective problem-solving team, providing guidance and leadership in safety and health matters.

Ima Goody
CEO

Getting Organized

One of the purposes of the safety committee is to bring management and labor together in a cooperative effort to improve the safety and health of workers. The rules for safety committees require equal numbers of employer and employee representatives. Employee representatives may be elected or they may volunteer for the committee. Employer representatives are selected by the employer. If one side is to outweigh the other, the weightier of the two shall be from the ranks of employees and the numbers shall be agreed upon by both management and labor alike.

Management and labor can sit together and discuss their unique and common concerns regarding safety. The safety committee becomes a forum for arriving at mutual solutions to resolve problems that help ensure both management and labor acceptance. You should establish ground rules, techniques for making joint decisions, and the means for communicating between the committee, employees, and your employer.

What kind of structure should the safety committee take? That really depends on the mandate the committee has received from the employer, the management system, size of the organization, and the corporate culture. However, generally safety committees are composed of the following positions:

- Volunteer or elected employee representative(s)
- Selected employer representative(s)
- Chairperson agreed upon by the majority of the committee
- Recorder

Here are examples of their responsibilities:

Safety Committee Roles for Individuals

The **chairperson** has some very important duties to fulfill including:

- Arranging for meeting room
- Notifying members of meeting dates/times
- Delegating responsibilities
- Making assignments
- Presiding over and conducting the meeting
- Enforcing committee ground rules
- Communicating with the employer
- Reporting the status of recommendations

Duties of the safety committee **recorder** may include:

- Recording minutes of the meeting
- Maintaining the minutes for three years for review
- Distributing and posting the minutes
- Assuming chairperson's duties if necessary

Duties of all safety committee **members** may include:

- Receiving suggestions, concerns, and reports from employees
- Reporting employee suggestions, concerns, and reports to committee
- Providing feedback to employees on their suggestions, concerns, reports
- Attending monthly safety committee meetings

- Receiving training on safety and health subjects such as the principles of accident investigation and hazard identification
- Reviewing injury and illness reports
- Monitoring safety and health programs and systems
- **Setting an example by working safely**
- Establishing procedures for conducting quarterly safety and health inspections
- Making recommendations for corrective action to the employer
- Communicating committee activities to all employees

In Summary

Well, you've sold the CEO on the value of the safety committee, written an effective safety committee plan, and recruited members. You're organized, but don't relax...there's quite a bit more to do if you expect long-term success.

Ask the committee the following questions:

- For employers with 20 or fewer employees, are there at least 2 members on the safety committee?
- For employers with 20 or more employees, are there at least 4 members on the safety committee?
- Are there an equal number of employer-selected members and employee-elected or volunteer members on the safety committee?
Note: If both parties agree, the committee may have more employee-elected or volunteer members than employer-selected members.
- Was the chairperson of the safety committee agreed upon by the majority of the members?
- Are the safety committee members serving a minimum of one year when possible?
- Are the safety committee members being compensated at their regular rate of pay?
- Are written records of each safety committee meeting kept for three years?
- Do the written records include the following elements:
 - Names of attendees?
 - Meeting date?
 - All safety and health issues discussed, including tools, equipment, work environment, and work practice hazards?
 - Recommendations for corrective action and a reasonable date by which management agrees to respond?
 - All reports, evaluations and recommendations made by the committee?

MODULE 3: HOW TO INCREASE INVOLVEMENT

Introduction

To ensure a high level of motivation in the safety committee, it's important that the committee be composed of both managers and employees who understand their roles and responsibilities, and are interested in its success. It's equally important, if not more so, that the corporate culture support committee activities. However, for one reason or another, companies may experience difficulty-generating enthusiasm for the safety committee. We'll look at the possible reasons for this, and then try to come up with some solutions to the problem.

Perceptions are Reality

There are many reasons that might explain why managers and employees have no interest in serving on a safety committee. Do any of these sound familiar?

Why join the safety committee? Who cares? Apathy towards the safety committee is common in many companies. There may be many reasons, but usually it's due to some form of non-support or a lack of interest by top management. Lack of top management support is a common complaint forwarded by safety committee members. However, as discussed in earlier modules, the safety committee may want to first reflect on their own ability to carry out their purposes before they "blame" management. Who's going to be interested in attending and actively participating in safety committee activities when those activities may actually somehow threaten a person's job security.

Some common complaints that are heard about meetings include the following:

I was "volunteered." It is understood that safety committee members should be volunteers. We will always be more effective as a group of interested volunteers who are participating because we want to...not because we have to. However, when employees do not volunteer, management feels obligated by Oregon OSHA rules to do something. Consequently, management volunteers employees as members of the safety committee.

We don't have any money. How can we get anything done when management doesn't give us any money to do it? This is a common misconception made by safety committee members. As we learned earlier, safety committees are consultant groups that help develop and implement, but do not need to control safety programs.

Meetings are boring. It's the same uninspired gripe session every time we meet. All we do is report hazards to the Chair and the maintenance representative starts writing work orders.

I'm not properly trained. We're expected to help in safety, but management doesn't make a commitment to training.

Safety committee duties cut into my busy schedule.

One person dominates meetings. The safety manager (or some other person) always gets his/her own way. Why bother getting involved when my opinions or ideas don't count?

We never get anything done. Sure, we have some good ideas, but outside the meeting, no one thinks about actually following through. When someone submits a suggestion, we take months to finally get it addressed.

We're just a pack of watchdogs. In addition, "snitch" is the name of the dog. People don't trust us. Management expects us to tell supervisors when we see people violate safety rules. Why, we even carry "ticket" books and write citations!

Now, you may already have a great safety committee, but it's likely that at least one of the perceptions listed above is present to some degree in your company. So, what's the secret to eliminating these objections? Consequences. We do what we do in the workplace because of consequences, not just because someone tells us to do it.

If Management "Builds It...They Will Come."

The key to counter apathy and other objections is to design positive consequences into the safety management system, and more specifically, in relation to safety committee participation. That means developing a culture that recognizes and rewards positive behaviors towards working safely. Job security is enhanced, not threatened, when people participate in safety activities. If you do this effectively, employees will be knocking down the door to join the safety committee.

Serious Top Management Commitment (TMC) is manifested in the workplace by the dedication of serious time, money and concern to resolving safety and health issues. Real commitment requires that management invest time and money into safety activities. Real concern for safety is expressed formally through the mission statement, policies, job descriptions, and performance appraisals. Commitment is expressed informally through word of mouth. Supervisors and managers set the highest examples. They insist that everyone else does also and they apply appropriate consequences when employees fail or excel. When management expresses a concern for safety, but hesitates or fails to invest time and money, they're demonstrating nothing more than moral support.

How is commitment to the safety committee demonstrated? It is demonstrated when management is:

- Allowing members of the safety committee adequate time each month to carry out their safety responsibilities;
- Promoting those who serve on safety committees because they have increased knowledge and skills in safety and health;
- Responding timely to the recommendations made to correct hazards; and they are attending (as observers) safety committee meetings frequently.

When a safety committee member says that they lack "top management commitment", they need to just look in a mirror and tell themselves, "here's the answer to my problem." The cause of the problem may be that the safety committee, through lack of ability or action, lacks credibility.

This raises the question of what can the safety committee do to increase its believability and expect confidence in its recommendations?

To be believable, it's important that members of the safety committee have a clear understanding of their role, purpose, duties, and responsibilities. They need to understand where their responsibility ends, and where management's responsibility takes over (helping vs. doing).

When members of the safety committee realize they play the role of an internal consultant to the employer, they know that their credibility depends on the expertise they bring to the role. How do you gain expertise? By increasing your knowledge, skills, and abilities through experience.

Proposing effective recommendations to management is crucial if credibility is to be gained. The most effective recommendations will discuss costs and benefits, identify the "bottom line" to management, and offer

reasonable options for correcting workplace hazards, unsafe work practices, and ineffective management controls.

Find out who has the ear of the CEO, and develop positive communications with that individual. The safety committee becomes more credible when the Chairperson regularly meets with the person at the top who is making the decisions for the workplace.

Communication is the key here. Employees see the safety committee as a communications conduit to management. When an employee informs or makes a suggestion to the safety committee representative, he or she expects to get some sort of feedback soon after. They want to see action. To the employee, it's an immediate need. If the safety committee representative takes the information to the safety committee, but neglects to give the worker feedback, or no action takes place, the safety committee will not be viewed as credible.

Therefore, to foster interest and gain credibility with employees, communicate regularly and often with them. If a hazard can't be fixed for a while, let the workers know why. They will appreciate it, even if it's not the answer they want to hear. The safety committee will be viewed as having done its job.

Another good idea is to "brag" about safety committee accomplishments formally and informally. That doesn't mean that members of the committee should go out and literally boast about how great they are.... just let the workforce know about safety committee accomplishments, and do so with some excitement and pride.

How can employees be encouraged to volunteer?

The answer to that question is simple...and you guessed it...it's done by providing WIIFM, the "what's in it for me" factor by rewarding members of the safety committee.

Rewards might consist of monthly merit pay increases or bonuses for taking on additional professional responsibilities. Membership on the safety committee might be recognized informally, with a pat on the back "thanks," or more formally on performance appraisals under "professional development." Management might let it be known formally and informally that it is to an employee's advantage for career advancement to have had experience on the safety committee. After all, doesn't a member of the safety committee gain additional professional skills in communications, meeting management, problem solving, occupational safety and health programs, hazard identification, accident investigation, recommendation writing.... etc. That's quite a list.

Consequently, safety committee membership should make an employee more qualified for advancement. In addition, members may experience increased self-esteem, pride, and a feeling of satisfaction for a job well done.

In Summary

You can take the information learned thus far in the course to help your safety committee develop into a real "profit center" activity. If the safety committee is saving or making money for the company, it's paying its way. That's important in gaining commitment from management. More work ahead, but for now ask yourself these questions:

- Has the safety committee established procedures for conducting workplace safety and health inspections?
- Have members of the safety committee been trained in hazard identification?
- Is the safety committee working with management to establish, amend, or adopt accident investigation procedures that will identify and correct hazards?

- Does the safety committee have a system that allows employees an opportunity to report hazards and safety and health related suggestions?
- Has the safety committee established procedures for reviewing inspection reports and for making recommendations to management?
- Is the safety committee evaluating management's accountability system for safety and health, and recommending improvements? *Examples include use of incentives, discipline, and evaluating success in controlling safety and health hazards.*

MODULE 4: SAFETY COMMITTEE TRAINING

Introduction



Remember, you'll have people falling over themselves to be a part of the safety committee if you use the right strategies. Once they do become members, they must be properly trained to be effective members. This module discusses the various training subjects that are important to safety committee members, and covers some ways to make training interesting to them.

One of the ways to develop a motivated safety committee is to make sure they're properly trained. If you've ever been a member of a safety committee whose members were not properly trained, you can appreciate the benefits from effective safety committee training.

Safety Committee Education and Training

Safety committees that lack effective training will "spin their wheels" a lot, but rarely get much done. Lacking adequate knowledge and skills, they will not be able to fulfill their most important role as a consultant group that assists the employer in making improvements to the safety management system.

The Benefits of Training the Safety Committee

It's important that safety committee members be trained so that they understand the big picture. There is a need to know where the safety committee fits into the company's operations plan.

Training will help each member in the following ways to:

- Understand the role and purpose of the safety committee
- Understand and carry out their individual responsibilities
- Understand and carry out employer safety plans, policies, and processes
- Understand important safety and health concepts, principles, and methods
- Improve personal safety leadership skills
- Improve personal communications skills
- Improve meeting management skills
- Improve analysis, evaluation and problem-solving skills
- Improve writing skills
- Improve ability to successfully submit proposals
- Increase their value to the company
- Increase the opportunity for career advancement

Training will help the safety committee to:

- Fulfill their mission to assist the employer
- Improve its status within the company
- Work together as a problem-solving team

- Submit high quality recommendations to correct hazards
- Have a positive impact on lowering claims costs, raising profits

A well-trained safety committee will help the employer to:

- Demonstrate effective safety leadership and management
- Lower injury and illness rates
- Improve profitability, competitiveness, and morale
- Correct hazards in a timely manner
- Gain a better understanding of the positive impact of safety
- Maintain a fair system of accountability
- Develop a successful recognition program

The Minimum Training Requirements

For a safety committee to operate successfully, its members must be properly trained in at least three very important areas:

1. Safety committee operations and how to conduct meetings, etc.
2. Hazard identification and taking corrective measures
3. Principles of accident and incident investigations

Obviously, safety committee members should be trained in how the safety committee operates and what is expected of them as members.

Any training method might work for new safety committee members, but one-on-one, hands-on training is probably most effective. The chairperson can best convey clear expectations and answer any questions the new member might have if the training is done during a brief one-on-one session. It would be important to cover the general requirements contained in Division 1, OAR 437-001-0765 Safety Committees and Safety Meetings.

Hazard Identification and Taking Corrective Measures

To be effective, safety committee members must know basic hazard identification and methods for taking corrective measures. One of the duties as a member of the safety committee is to assist in establishing procedures for conducting quarterly workplace safety and health inspections. They might even be included in some of those quarterly (or more frequent) walk-through inspections. Safety inspections can be effective in spotting workplace hazards, but only if the persons inspecting know what they're looking for. Many times, safety inspections consist of a couple of people walking around with the "rolling-eyeball" syndrome. They scan the work area without any real ability to recognize most hazardous conditions. You can imagine such an inspection is probably going to be a waste of time and money.

Once hazards have been identified, safety committee members should be able to assist with corrective action to design, eliminate, or reduce the hazard. The most common strategy to eliminate hazards is to apply the following in this order:

- Use of engineering controls
- Use of administrative controls
- Use of personal protective equipment
- Use interim measures to protect the employee from exposure

Oregon OSHA provides a training class on hazard identification that may be taken by safety committee members. Often times, there are knowledgeable and experienced members of the work force that can provide hands on hazard identification training at the worksite. The best training that your safety committee can get for finding and fixing hazards in your specific workplace is by walking alongside an Oregon OSHA consultant. They get to gain from the experience of these trained safety and health professionals, confidentially and at no cost.

Accident Investigation Procedures

In many companies, safety committees will review and evaluate accident reports. In order to do so, they must be trained on the principles of accident and incident investigations. These principles are:

1. Gather the facts
2. Analyze the facts
3. Implement the solution

If your safety committee reviews the accident report then they should be looking to see that the report contains the following information:

Section One: Background information. A brief listing of the who, what, where, how, when of the accident, obtained from interviews.

Section Two: Description of the accident. A detailed step-by-step description of the events leading to, during and immediately after the accident.

Section Three: Findings. A description of the surface and root causes for the accident. Most accident reports fall short because they do not address root causes.

Section Four: Recommendations. Recommended corrective actions that will eliminate or reduce the surface and root causes of the accident.

Section Five: Summary. A summary, in the opinion of the investigator, how the accident could have been prevented and the estimated direct and indirect costs associated with the accident.

Oregon OSHA provides more in depth training on the principles of accident and incident investigations.

Other Important Training Information

Knowledge of your safety committee members in the following subject matter will be an advantage but is not required in order to become a member.

Safety subjects to consider training on include:

- Hazard communication
- Lockout/Tagout
- Confined space entry
- Construction safety
- Forest activities - logging
- Agriculture safety - equipment
- Ergonomics - manual material handling
- Machine guarding

Health subjects:

- Bloodborne pathogens
- Hazardous waste and emergency response
- Hazardous atmospheres
- Hearing conservation
- Ventilation
- Asbestos abatement

Ergonomics - repetitive motion

Agriculture safety - pesticides

Training on these subjects may take a number of forms. Formal classroom training in-house or from an external source, can get safety committee members trained quickly and work well when attendees are from many different departments. Training with an emphasis on group exercises and problem solving is effective with adult participants.

Computer based training is growing in popularity because safety committee members can fit short training sessions on the computer into their busy schedules at work or at home. The drawback to computer based instruction is that it can lack the live interaction between the student and an instructor.

Informal training in hazard identification is best done by first-line supervisors. Safety committee members will learn about the hazards and specific safe work procedures associated with their job. Actually getting out and conducting a simulated inspection is probably the best way to gain the expertise needed to effectively identify hazards during actual inspections.

Mini training sessions held at safety committee meetings is another effective method. This is perhaps the best method to keep safety committee members up on the latest changes to Oregon OSHA standards and changes in company policy, procedures, and rules. Mini training sessions can be as short as five minutes or up to 30 minutes. Consider assigning a different member subjects to present at each meeting. Rotate this list every year so that a new person learns the topic each time. This ensures that every member has a basic working knowledge of the topics. Remember, they have to be able to answer questions!

Oregon OSHA has many resources to help you learn about these and many other subjects.

In Summary

Training and education will be a benefit to the employer because the more knowledge in an organization the more opportunities exist to improve the process. You don't expect a carpenter to build a house without first knowing how to swing a hammer and cut wood. Why would you expect a safety committee to give advice on improving safety and health without knowing something about how you do that?

Compliance Questions to ask:

- Do safety committee members have training in hazard identification?
- Do safety committee members have training in the principles of incident and accident investigation?

MODULE 5: GETTING STARTED AS AN EFFECTIVE, TRAINED SAFETY COMMITTEE

Introduction

Now that you are a trained safety committee member, you recognize that one of the most effective methods to collect useful data about the hazards and unsafe behaviors in your workplace is through **informal** observations. Employees may be assigned the task of completing a minimum number of observations of safe/unsafe behaviors during a given period. This data is gathered and analyzed to produce graphs and charts reflecting the status of, and trends in employee behaviors. Just posting the results of these observations tends to increase awareness and lower injury rates. More importantly, the data gives important clues about existing weaknesses in the safety management system.

Observation processes like this are important. They can effectively identify behaviors. When combined with unsafe conditions, behavior accounts for a majority of all workplace injuries. One caution: An important requirement for a successful observation process is that disciplinary action should not be linked to these observations. You do not want to be accused of trying to catch someone when what you are really attempting is to learn.

The Safety Inspection: Another effective, more formal process.

This important tool is rather obvious. It's the safety inspection or audit using procedures developed by the safety committee. Members of the committee may or may not actually be involved in the inspections. Three important points should be remembered when conducting the safety inspection. They include:

- 1) Know what you're doing. Only competent individuals should conduct safety inspections. They should be aware of the different types of hazards in the workplace. Unsafe materials, tools, equipment, workstation design, noise, atmospheres, temperature extremes, and work practices should be evaluated. The inspector should know what to look for, and how to look for it.
- 2) Allow enough time to conduct a thorough inspection. The more time you give to complete the safety inspection, the more likely you'll uncover that hazard waiting to injure someone. A short inspection conducted once a quarter by untrained employees may not be worth the time spent to conduct it.
- 3) You may wish to develop a checklist. Keep in mind that this will take some thought and some time but can be very effective in providing a structured, systematic procedure for conducting an inspection. Absent a checklist, inspections may vary widely depending upon the expertise of the one conducting the inspection.

Developing a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)

The Job Hazard Analysis or "JHA" is a less used procedure to identify and control hazards in the workplace, but it has the potential to be far more effective in reducing injuries and illnesses. In some companies, it may be known as a Job Safety Analysis or a JSA. Trained safety committee members are a good resource for providing input into the JHA.

The Job Hazard Analysis works because it systematically identifies hazardous work conditions and unsafe work practices. The safety inspector, conducting a traditional safety inspection, may not take the time necessary to watch every job being performed in the area he or she inspects. Consequently, many unsafe work procedures are not discovered. A safety committee member may be able to take the time necessary to uncover unsafe work

practices and procedures. They can contribute to the JHA procedures based on their observations. A typical procedure for developing a JHA goes something like this:

The supervisor and employee get together and talk about doing a JHA.

The employee works through about five cycles of a task.

The supervisor records what the employee does.

The supervisor and employee break the job down into distinct steps.

They analyze each step for hazardous conditions and practices.

They identify ways to correct the hazards in each step.

They implement ways to work safely in each step.

They write an improved safe work procedure for the job.

Supervisors involve the safety committee in a review of the JHA.

On the next page is a copy of a JHA form that Oregon OSHA shares. Many companies have created their own based on their needs.

Using the OSHA 300 Log

The OSHA 300 Log (Prior to 2002, OSHA 200 Log) is probably the best statistical tool the safety committee has for analyzing hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices. Many important injury and illness trends have been identified using the OSHA 300 Log.

You will want to look at each column of your company's OSHA 300 Log and ask the following questions to determine trends:

- Who is getting hurt?
- Where are they getting hurt?
- What is the nature of the injury or illness?
- What are the causes of the injuries or illnesses?

Also, look for trends in:

- A particular time of the day. Early or late in the work shift?
- A particular day of the week. Mondays? Fridays?
- A particular week of the month. Just before payday? Last production week?
- A particular month of the year. December?
- A particular quarter of the year. Last fiscal quarter?
- A particular season of the year. Just before hunting season?
- A particular business cycle. Just before an annual report?

How was the worker injured? This question is directed toward hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices. Were hazardous materials, tools, equipment, being used? Was the worker not using required personal protective equipment? Are work shifts too long? Were workers using unsafe practices? Are workers getting hurt because of factors within or outside of work? Are they factors the employer controls, or can't control?

Take the information you gain from this analysis to draw conclusions about where the safety committee's greatest efforts need to be directed. Most lost workday claims are due to strains and sprains. Your log may reflect this trend. At any rate, analyzing the OSHA 300 Log allows you to act on facts, not hunches.

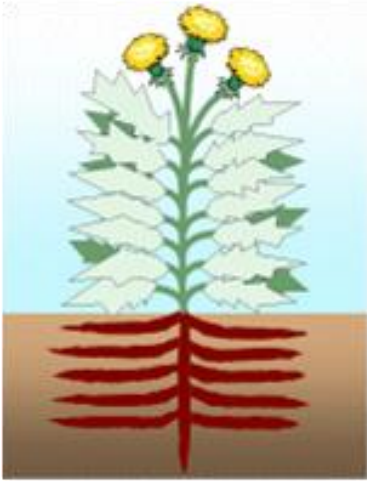
In Summary

Compliance Question:

Are safety committee members trained in hazard identification? Have procedures been developed for conducting inspections as follows:

- Quarterly for primary fixed locations by both employer and employee representatives?
- Quarterly for office environments by both employer and employee representatives?
- Quarterly for auxiliary and satellite locations by both employer and employee representatives?
- As often as the safety committee determines is necessary for mobile work locations, infrequently visited sites, and sites that do not lend themselves to quarterly inspections by employer and employee representatives or a designated person?

Part of being effective is to make certain that the safety committee is reviewing inspection reports and making recommendations to management. There needs to be a system that allows employees an opportunity to report hazards and make safety and health related suggestions.



Compliance Questions:

- Do the safety committee members represent the major activities of the business?
- Is the committee meeting quarterly on company time where employees do mostly office work?
- Is the committee meeting monthly on company time for all other situations? (except the months when quarterly worksite inspections are performed.) What option has the company chosen to meet the rule requirements? Safety committee or safety meetings?
- If safety meetings are being held by a construction company, are they meeting at least monthly and before the start of each job that lasts more than a week?
- Have the committee members been trained in hazard identification?
- Have the committee members been trained in the principles of accident investigation?

MODULE 6: WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR SAFETY MEETINGS

Safety Meetings

Thus far, we have been focused on the establishment and administration of safety committees. There is another option open to employers for addressing safety and health in the workplace. That option is to conduct safety meetings with all available employees in attendance. There should be at least one management person who is authorized to ensure the resources are available to take corrective action when safety and health hazards are identified. As with safety committees, these meetings must be held on company time and the attendees must be paid at their regular rate of pay.

Frequency of Meetings

Construction companies must hold safety meetings monthly and before the start of each job that lasts more than one week. This may mean that under some circumstances, a construction employer will be holding safety meetings more than once a month.

On the other hand, if your employees do mostly office type work, you may hold safety meetings quarterly. Office type work does not include work done in clinics, dentist offices or offices where employees are regularly required to drive. Office work was intended to mean those employers engaged in the lowest hazard environments. This includes those businesses where the most anticipated injury might be a paper cut, tripping over file cabinets or the stress of office politics. All other employers who choose the option of conducting safety meetings must meet monthly.

Documenting Safety Meetings

The intent of conducting safety meetings is to provide employees with an opportunity to discuss safety and health issues present in their workplaces. There should also be discussions about accidents that have occurred. Employees are sometimes the best source for identifying root causes of accidents and for suggesting corrective measures. Employers engaged in construction, utility work and manufacturing must document their meetings and retain the documentation for three years. Documentation should include:

- Any hazards or unsafe work practices identified
- Meeting date
- Names of attendees

Even though the rules allow all other employers to not keep any records if all employees attend, we strongly suggest you do. It is documentation about what was discussed and who was there. In short, it is a good management tool. When employees are absent, documentation is required to be used in informing the absentees what was discussed during the meeting.

When determining which option will best suit a company, employers must take a number of variables into account. What will be the most effective way of addressing safety and health in our workplace? How large is the workforce? Are there multiple locations to consider? Familiarize yourself with the rules prior to making this decision. Keep in mind that the principles discussed in the section on safety committees are generally applicable to those who choose the option of safety meetings. The difference may lay in the formatting and frequency of the meetings, whether they are safety committee meetings or all employee safety meetings.

The complete rules for Safety Committees and Safety Meetings can be reviewed on our website in the A-Z topic list.