

1 LOOKING TO FORM A
SAFETY COMMITTEE?

Have you been thinking about starting a safety committee in your business? Hortica Insurance offers ways to get you started.

3 CONDUCT A SAFETY
SELF-AUDIT TO PROTECT
YOUR BUSINESS

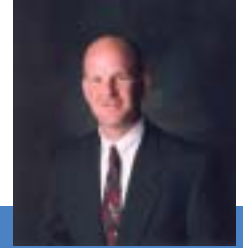
An internal safety audit is a first step toward a safer business. Find out more details here.

4 DRIVE SAFE DURING
THESE WINTER MONTHS

Driving in the winter weather can be tricky—and sometimes hazardous. Keep workers safe with these winterwise ideas.

THE ONE-STOP SOURCE FOR GREEN INDUSTRY SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Ways to Develop an Effective Safety Committee



by Andrew Mauschbaugh, Ass't VP
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The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has concluded that effective management of worker safety and health protection is a decisive factor in reducing the extent and severity of work-related injuries and illnesses. One of the most effective means of accomplishing this is through the use of a company safety committee. The difference between success and failure of the committee lies with the original purpose, staffing, structure, and management support received while carrying out its responsibilities.

A safety committee's purpose

The purpose of a safety committee is to bring workers and management together in a cooperative effort to promote safety and health in the workplace. The safety committee is a group of individuals who aid and advise both management and employees on matters of safety and health pertaining to company operations.

Benefits of a safety committee

There are many positive side effects from a strong safety and health program, not the least of which is improved employee morale and productivity. Another benefit to an effective safety committee is the significant reduction in your worker compensation costs and other less obvious costs of work-related injuries and illnesses. The most important benefit of a company safety committee though is enabling the company to continue providing a safe and healthful place for people to work.

Selecting members

The members of your safety committee should represent all facets of your operation, such as management, supervisors, laborers, maintenance and office personnel. There should be at least one representative from each department within your organization on the committee.

The committee serves as a forum for discussing changes in regulations, programs or processes, and potential new hazards. Employees on the committee should be able to communicate problems to management openly and face to face. The knowledge and experience of many persons can combine to accomplish the objectives of creating a safe workplace and reducing accidents. With many minds addressing a problem simultaneously and with so much thought power concentrating on an issue, effective solutions are more easily produced.

Safety committee responsibilities

Here are some potential responsibilities for a safety committee, which can either meet monthly or quarterly.

- Conduct employee safety training
- Recommend suitable hazard elimination or reduction measures

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Committee - continued from page 1

- Promulgate new safety rules, and review existing rules for effectiveness
- Investigate any workplace accident
- Study and analyze accident and injury data
- Compile and distribute safety and health information to all employees
- Review and update existing work practices and hazard controls
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of health and safety recommendations and improvements
- Develop safety promotional programs

Establishing a quality safety and health program will take time and resources. But you should be pleasantly surprised with the results by having happier employees, increased productivity, reduced worker compensation costs, and an improved bottom line.

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Sample One-Hour Safety Meeting Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Record members present
3. Read the minutes from the last meeting
4. Review any unfinished old business
5. Discuss safety promotional ideas and suggestions
6. Discuss training needs for committee members and/or employees
7. Review any accidents or near-misses since last meeting
8. Discuss any inspection findings
9. Review any recommendations, suggestions or complaints
10. Review any new rules, regulations or communications
11. Ask for any new business to be discussed
12. Set a date for the next meeting
13. Adjourn

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OSHA recordkeeping handbook available online

A new publication aimed at helping employers and workers understand OSHA's recordkeeping policies, procedures and requirements is now available on the agency's Web site.

The OSHA Recordkeeping Handbook combines information from the agency's recordkeeping rule and its recordkeeping policies and procedures manual, and also provides tools and guidance materials from various pages of the agency's Web site.

According to OSHA, the handbook allows the user to easily locate specific information pertaining to each section of the rule, and also contains recordkeeping-related Frequently Asked Questions and OSHA's enforcement guidance that has previously been presented in various agency Letters of Interpretation.

The publication is available online at www.osha.gov/publications/recordkeeping/index.html.

What to Look for During a Safety Self-Audit

So you've decided to turn over a new leaf in 2006 and make your operation safer. How should you start? Where do you begin? Since an external auditor's inspection of your business can be very expensive, why not begin by conducting a self-audit. An internal, self-audit of the safety environment of your business can be very enlightening. It could indicate a need for some drastic changes in the way you do business.

Slips and falls are No. 1

For example, insurance and industry data indicates that slips and falls are the number 1 cause of injuries in the green industry. Shops and equipment maintenance areas are prime locations for this type of injury and may need skid-proof surfaces to reduce an accident.

Stairway treads should be carefully maintained and kept free of any stored items that could result in a tripping hazard. Lighting needs to be adequate so that stair users have a clear view of the stair and step area, as well as the landings.

Items such as grass clippings, mud, moisture or debris that creates a slippery walking area should be eliminated from traffic areas. Some material in the walk areas is inevitable, but it should quickly be removed before an accidental slip or fall occurs. Hand or grab rails are also important in these areas and will help your employees and visitors maintain their stability while accessing these work and business areas.

Chemical storage

Another critical audit area is proper chemical and fuel storage. Two items are very important when considering whether

your business has some reasonable level of compliance. All chemical and fuel storage areas should have accurate and appropriate signage indicating the dangers that are present. For example, storage for chemicals such as lawn care products including all pesticides should be marked

"Keep stairway treads carefully maintained and free of items that present a tripping hazard. Shops and equipment maintenance areas need skid-proof surfaces."

with hazard warning signs. If your workforce includes non-English speaking workers, make sure the warnings are in a language that all workers can understand, such as standard safety symbols.

Another important consideration is the ability to lock the storage area to prevent trespassers and other non-authorized persons from entering. It is not enough to unlock in the morning and lock again at the end of the day. When authorized personnel are not present, chemical and fuel storage areas need to be locked at all times. A well-designed chemical storage area is also important. Be sure it is well-ventilated, and store chemicals off of the floor.

Shop maintenance and eye safety

Shops and maintenance areas have a unique set of workplace hazards. All powered hand tools and grinders should have safety guards and shields in place at all times. Workers who are conducting equipment maintenance should have the proper safety gear made available to protect them from injury.



by Sam Steel
National Safety Council

Safety glasses or goggles are especially important since eye injuries from flying debris are common. If noise levels exceed the OSHA permissible level of 85 decibels for more than 8 hours, hearing protection must be provided to workers in the form of earmuffs or earplugs.

Electrical safety

Since electrical shock injury is also a common problem, proper grounding of outlets and well-maintained electrical and extension cords are a must. Damage to cords and outlets can occur at any time. Check electrical cords for damage and fraying, and replace if necessary. And don't overload outlets. It's a wise manager who conducts frequent checks for damaged electrical equipment and wiring and replaces any unsafe items immediately.

Don't let findings from your internal safety audit get you down. It can be a positive reflection of your desire to create a safer workplace, and it is a lot less expensive than increased insurance premiums and the costs associated with injuries to your employees.

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Stay Safe on the Road During Winter Trips

Winter storms and winter driving affect just about everyone. If you live in the Midwest, Rocky Mountains, or on the East Coast, you may experience heavy snow showers and the occasional blizzard. If you live in the Southeast or in a Gulf Coast state, you may experience ice storms and occasional snow. According to the National Weather Service, about 70 percent of injuries during winter storms result from vehicle accidents. To keep employees and drivers safe, pass along these tips related to winter storms and winter driving, courtesy of OSHA's Web site.

Winter storms

Some hazards associated with working in winter storms include:

- Driving accidents due to slippery roadways
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Slips and falls due to slippery walkways
- Hypothermia and frostbite due to cold weather exposure
- Being struck by falling objects such as icicles, tree limbs and utility poles
- Electrocution due to downed power

lines or downed objects in contact with power lines

- Falls from heights (e.g. falls from roof or skylights while removing snow)
- Roof collapse under weight of snow (or melting snow if drains are clogged)
- Burns from fires caused by energized line contact or equipment failure
- Exhaustion from working extended shifts
- Dehydration
- Back injuries or heart attack while removing snow

Winter storms and driving

If you're stuck in a winter storm, stay in your vehicle. Do not leave the vehicle to search for assistance unless help is visible within 100 yards. You may become disoriented and lost in blowing and drifting snow. Display a trouble sign by hanging a brightly colored cloth on the radio antenna and raising the hood.

Turn on the vehicle's engine for about 10 minutes each hour, and run the heat to keep warm. You can also turn on the vehicle's dome light when the vehicle is running as an additional signal that you need help.

Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow, and open a downwind window slightly for ventilation. Do minor exercises to keep up circulation and to stay warm. If you're not alone, take turns sleeping. Of course, if you have a cell phone, use it to call for help. You can either call 9-1-1, or call the emergency number that your cell phone provider instructs you to use.

Winter emergency kit

Besides a cell phone (or a two-way radio), here are some other items to keep in a winter safety kit inside your car.

- Blanket/sleeping bag
- Windshield scraper
- Snow brush
- Flashlight with fresh/extra batteries
- Extra warm clothes
- Shovel
- Tow chain
- Matches
- Traction aids (bag of sand or cat litter)
- Emergency flares
- Jumper cables
- Water
- Snacks
- Road maps

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