



Building an Effective Safety Committee

A safety committee is an effective way to bring employees and management together to achieve and maintain a safe and healthy workplace. Some states even mandate that employers establish and administer a safety committee, or hold safety meetings, to communicate and evaluate safety and health issues. The tips in this document will help your organization establish the groundwork for an effective safety committee and avoid common mistakes.

Getting Started

1. Select a number of committee members relative to the size of the company. Typically, 5-12 members works best.
2. Designate a chairperson to lead the committee and a secretary to record meeting minutes.
3. Develop a mission statement to define the specific purpose of the committee.
4. Set the meeting time, place and frequency and establish attendance requirements.
5. Define committee member roles and responsibilities.
6. Develop guidelines for committee member terms, handling of confidential information and communication of committee activities.

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Committee Member Qualities:

- Interested in workplace safety and health issues
- Respected individual with leadership skills
- Familiar with company operations, policies and procedures
- Interested in finding solutions that meet the needs of the entire workforce

What purposes does a safety committee often serve?

- Advise management and employees on safety matters pertaining to the organization's overall operations.
- Improve communication with management about safety concerns and operational issues.
- Help management identify, assess and control hazards.
- Reinforce management's commitment to employee safety.
- Help management develop and monitor policies, plans and programs.
- Reduce inefficiencies and prevent injuries by implementing better work practices.
- Decrease overall number of injuries and incidents.
- Increase employee safety awareness and knowledge.
- Empower employees to identify problems and recommend solutions through conversations with workers about their health and safety concerns.
- Promote positive safety culture.

What are some things Safety Committees do?

- Provide a forum in which labor and management can discuss health and safety issues and collaborate on solutions.
- Review safety inspections/incident investigations and carry forward new issues brought up from a variety of sources (new laws, new processes, injury trends, etc.)
- Develop safe work practices and written safety programs.
- Review safety rules and procedures annually and after any operational changes.
- Lead safety training and education for employees, supervisors and members.
- Complete job hazard evaluations, visual safety inspections and behavioral safety observations to evaluate new processes/employees, follow up on accident investigations, identify unsafe conditions or areas that need improvement and follow up on past recommendations.
- Promote employees' interests in health and safety issues and receive employee suggestions/ideas for controlling hazards and improving safety.
- Promote the importance of injury reporting.
- Create an injury/loss review committee to determine injury causes in a group setting with the injured employee and supervisor.
- Review incidents, near misses, accident investigation reports, claim summaries and loss analyses to determine corrective actions that will prevent future losses.
- Identify modified duty jobs and establish procedures for their use.



Tips for Success

- Publicize the committee's formation and offer an introductory training meeting for all employees.
- Make a directory of the committee members and the departments they represent. Consider including photos.
- Consider rotating members after they have served for a set term and have departing members train new members.
- Provide a special award for safety committee involvement/ membership or plan a dinner/luncheon for employee members to acknowledge their contributions.
- Set short-term and long-term goals for the year. Focus on injury prevention and eliminating known or potential loss sources. Review the goals periodically to determine their effectiveness.
- Set clear meeting agendas, distribute them in advance, review them at the beginning of each meeting and follow them.
- Plan the agenda for the next meeting before adjournment and avoid overloading it or carrying over items unnecessarily.
- Take meeting minutes that summarize the issues discussed, proposed actions, specific people responsible for following up on each item and target dates for completion.
- Provide copies of meeting minutes to employees and management in newsletters, emails, posts on workplace billboards, etc.
- Look for innovative ideas/solutions to action items.
- Stay focused on legitimate safety issues. Don't let the committee become a general complaint forum.
- Make inspections a cooperative task for workers and management representatives.
- Share the actual costs of injuries with committee members.
- Communicate and recognize achievements, incoming and outgoing members and improved performance in injury/incident trends.

10 Safety Committee Killers

1. Undefined committee functions and member duties
2. Lack of member training on technical safety and health issues, familiarity with data gathering and experience with group dynamics and meeting participation
3. Insufficient budget for safety and health activities and incentives
4. Inadequate size committee for the size of the organization and its hazard potential
5. Lack of formal meeting agendas
6. Lack of communication of the committee meeting minutes and actions to employees and managers
7. Lack of follow up on action items.
8. Lackluster participation from some members or departments/ workgroups
9. Management over-participation that stifles meetings and decisions
10. Committee members not empowered to make changes for the health and safety of all employees

Sample Meeting Minutes and Agenda

Company: _____

Address: _____

Date of Meeting: _____ Time Opened: _____ Time Closed: _____

Date of Next Meeting: _____ Time of Next Meeting: _____

Members Present:

Agenda

- A. Call to order
- B. Roll call by the secretary
- C. Review minutes of the previous meeting
- D. Discuss any unfinished business
- E. Review inspection reports
- F. Review recent incidents and determine corrective actions
- G. Safety education (a member will discuss a new topic at each meeting)
- H. New business
- I. Assignments for next meeting
- J. General comments
- K. Adjourn

Minutes

A copy of this should be kept on file and available for review.

Committee Chairperson

(Use reverse side of this sheet or blank sheet for extension of minutes)

