



Encouraging Employee Involvement Through Safety Teams

Employee involvement can be a valuable management tool. In safety, an organized and well-managed employee program can aid in an organization's efforts to reduce injury and illness, increase productivity and boost morale.

One example of employee participation is a safety team. The following are some recommendations for establishing this type of program within your organization:

- Include member representatives from all relevant areas and shifts within the workplace, such as operations, maintenance, purchasing, security, medical, human resources, production (all shifts), and safety. Establish an equal representation of management and hourly employees. (If unionized, an equal representation of management and labor groups.) Volunteers, rather than appointees, are more likely to become active participants.
- Select key positions of co-chairperson (one management and one hourly employee) and secretary. Rotate all team members (1+ year terms) to ensure a fresh perspective and expose a variety of employees to important safety and health issues. Consider staggering start and end dates of service.
- Train safety team members for their roles. Formal orientation and training should be provided by other team members.
- Clearly define and document the team's authority, including budgetary guidelines and procedures. All team members should understand the manner in which decisions, recommendations, or future team activities are made.
- Meet on a regular basis. Meetings should be structured through the use of an agenda (distributed beforehand). Minutes should be recorded, including the date/time of meeting, members present, issues discussed, recommendations and responsibilities for action items. Post or distribute minutes to all employees and encourage feedback.
- Publicize the safety team. Make sure all employees know the role of the team and its current members.

In general terms, the safety team's duties are to create and maintain a high level of interest and awareness of safety to employees at all levels.

The specific duties of the safety team should accurately address the goals and objectives of the team. Specific duties should change as the goals and objectives of the safety team change over time.

Examples of specific duties include:

- Recommending safety and health policy
- Conducting inspections and audits
- Creating employee awareness
- Coordinating safety training
- Acting as an information resource
- Forming sub-committees for special projects (such as machine guarding, ergonomics, incentive programs, etc.)
- Conducting target inspections to verify safety systems
- Correcting hazards
- Developing safety and health programs



If properly utilized, safety teams can be of great benefit to an organization. However, it's important to remember that a safety team, or other joint worker-management systems, is just one element of a comprehensive safety program.

For additional information:

National Safety Council, Members-Only Website,
www.nsc.org/groups/members/resources/safetybasics

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