

Safety Teams

THE POWER OF SAFETY TEAMS

Having a safety team is beneficial for several reasons. It helps protect an organization's most important asset – its workers. Everyone deserves to go home from work each day just as safe as when they arrived. It takes passion and dedication to help make that happen.

Safety teams are a way to show how much an organization and leadership values the health and safety of its workers. It is also a great way to bring together workers at every level in building a culture of safety. However, to be effective the group needs to have focus and structure.

A safety team ideally should be a high-functioning team. This team should be supported and empowered by top levels of management. It should be activity centered and results driven. It should act under the advice of safety professional(s), but extend the role of being a safety leader to others. Lastly, it should function on an ongoing basis and be aligned with your organization's overall goals and mission.

SAFETY TEAM: FIRST STEPS

To get started, determine the purpose of the group, the scope of what the team will address and what decision-making authority the group has. Next, select team members and outline roles and responsibilities. Identify how many representatives are needed on the team and who might make the best fit. Draft participants who will be the most

enthusiastic about supporting safety. It's also good to have representation from across the entire organization. Having a variety of perspectives will help produce the most meaningful results. If the organization is large, create a minimum of one team at each location/facility/department/shift.

It's important to determine SMART goals for the team that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound. The team needs to know what they want to accomplish, so they can measure their progress and work to continually improve.

Decide how often the group should meet, as well as who will set the agenda and take notes. Make sure projects are assigned to specific people or groups, so someone is able to report back on progress at the next meeting. With different levels of knowledge and exposure to safety, it's important to train members of the team on what they need to know. Team members should be able to depend on one another and build trust among the group.

SAFETY TEAM PARTICIPANTS

As mentioned before, have participation of members from a variety of departments/areas. Enlist people with different levels of authority, including management representation. Having leaders involved will help the team secure the necessary resources and buy-in to move projects forward. Include people with different skill sets, experience and expertise.



Within the team, elect a chairperson(s) to help keep things running smoothly. This person(s) should chair the group for a set period of time so they don't get burnt out. Everyone who joins the team should come to all meetings and be on time. You want members who don't just fill a seat, but actively participate and provide positive contributions. People need to know it is ok to speak up, even when they disagree. Members need to be respectful of one another, and practice good listening skills and cooperative problem solving. If someone is assigned a project, they need to follow through and be prepared to report back on progress to the group.

THINGS SAFETY TEAMS DO

What the safety team works on will be unique to each organization, but topics could include:

- Assessing and controlling hazards and risk
- Developing and/or updating safety rules, policies and procedures
- Facilitating safety and health education
- Communicating safety and team initiatives organization wide

- Developing, implementing and managing safety improvement action plans
- Keeping job-specific safety training current
- Reviewing workplace injuries and incidents for trends and corrective actions
- Motivating employees to improve safety culture
- Conducting safety and health inspections
- Building ongoing safety and health processes

Being a part of an empowered and engaged safety team is an exciting way to make a difference at an organization. Working together we can help keep each other safe.

