Forming a Safety Committee

The role of a safety committee can be as complex or as simple as you feel comfortable with. A safety committee should be viewed as a management tool, but under no circumstances can it replace management’s role in taking the lead or responsibility for safety. Safety must be managed and integrated into daily operations, just as any other business strategy.

The following items should be used as a guide in establishing a safety committee. Outside reference sources should also be incorporated into such a committee that will aid in fitting your particular needs.

I. A definition of purpose - Duties and responsibilities for the committee, such as:
   A. Objectives for the year
   B. Status of long-range goals or recommended projects
   C. Target dates established for new projects
   D. Major goals completed from past objectives
   E. Loss trends and data
   F. Predetermining modified duty jobs and hours/use
   G. Accident/injury review boards
   H. Conduct job safety observations
   I. Produce minutes for follow-up and management review

II. Committee membership - Is, to a large extent, determined by the purpose and goals established for the forming of the committee. Members may be added or supplemented based on new direction or special projects.

III. Chairperson selection

IV. Priorities should be established - Items to consider are:
   A. Goals to eliminate known or potential loss sources
   B. Safety education for employees, supervisors, members
   C. Inspections/observations of processes/workstations
   D. Review of possible plant/operational changes—from a safety standpoint only
   E. Job hazard analysis
   F. Annual review of safety rules or procedures—updating

V. Establish a time and place to meet - A committee should meet regularly but only as frequently as needed. The time to be spent at each meeting should be strictly limited. A suitable and comfortable place should be provided and free from interruptions. Always start on time.

VI. Determination of rules and procedures - As soon as the committee has been formed, determine the following:
   A. What are the immediate objectives
   B. Divide up responsibilities
   C. How various records will be maintained or used (Example: accident reports, inspections, injury review)
   D. The sequence in the order of business
   E. The kind of minutes to be kept and by whom

Our safety evaluations, reports and recommendations are made solely to assist your organization in reducing hazards and the potential of hazards and accidents. These recommendations were developed from conditions observed and information provided at the time of our visit. They do not attempt to identify every possible loss potential, hazard or risk, nor do they guarantee that workplace accidents will be prevented. These safety evaluations, reports and recommendations are not a substitute for ongoing, well-researched internal safety and risk management programs. This report does not warrant that the property inspected and its operations are compliant with any law, rule or regulation.

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VII. Typical committee organization - The following can be used as a guide to provide insight on how a committee can function. It can be used in whole or in part, whichever suits your direction.

A. Safety inspections—to detect unsafe physical conditions, including follow-up on past recommendations
B. Accident investigations—to determine what specific actions have been or should be taken to prevent future losses
C. Safety committee meetings—to review the two items from above and carry forward new issues brought up from a variety of sources, such as new laws, new processes, injury trends, etc.
D. Injury/loss review committee—determines injury causes in a group setting with the injured employee and supervisor involved
E. Job safety observations (JSO)—to make employee observations on a wide variety of circumstances, such as new employees, follow-up on accident investigations, new processes, etc.
F. Job hazard evaluations—for new or existing jobs or to comply with outside standards (Example: OSHA’s PPE standard)

NOTE: As an alternative to a safety committee, teams can be effective when assembled and used to solve a specific problem and are then dissolved afterward. United Heartland is available to assist you in this area.

Safety Committee Pitfalls
- Members are isolated from the actual costs of injuries.
- Safety committee meets because it is time to meet again and there is nothing important to discuss.
- The safety committee is used as a substitute for management’s commitment or involvement.
- No special award is given for safety committee involvement or membership. Plan a dinner or luncheon for the acknowledgment of their contribution.
- Membership gets too large, meetings do not start on time, pessimistic personalities are involved.
- The safety committee is allowed to take on supervisory results and accountability. People management is a supervisory function.
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