Developing a Safety Program

Establishing a safety program must be done in a logical, step-by-step manner. The process can be compared to constructing a home. The foundation must be laid before the walls and roof can be erected. The foundation of any safety program must be solid enough to support the elements that make up the program. If this foundation is not solid, the program will eventually weaken and collapse.

The planning for the construction of a safety program needs to be accomplished by top management. Their planning will determine the direction and success of the program. The ultimate goal of any safety program is to eliminate, or at least control, human suffering and the direct and indirect costs of accidents.

Once top management has decided to develop a safety program, they need to initiate an action plan in these four areas:

1. The reasons why the program is necessary and what is to be accomplished by this program. The objectives will determine the depth, scope and direction of the program.

2. A policy statement should be written and communicated to all employees. It should clearly outline the objectives and indicate top management’s intentions and methods for achieving the goals of providing a safe working environment.

3. Responsibilities within the program need to be assigned. An effective safety program involves all staff functions, all levels of management, and the general labor force. Therefore, all employees will have some responsibilities and involvement within the program.

4. A means of communicating to top management about the effectiveness of the program. The periodic review of results will give the program additional direction and emphasis where needed.

Completing these four items will establish the firm foundation necessary for any safety program. The sequence of implementation of these four areas will depend on the priority of the objectives established by top management. Each point will require the assignment of responsibility for its development and implementation.

The development of a comprehensive safety program is time consuming. All elements are rarely developed at once. Building a successful program takes planning. Time must be given to allow each area an opportunity to become effective. Experience has shown that the success of one phase will oftentimes lead to the development and implementation of the next phase. Once the areas have been developed and implemented, they freely interface with one another.

The recommended elements of a Comprehensive Workplace Safety Program are:

1. Management Commitment and Employee Participation
   - A clearly stated policy so that all employees understand the priority of safety and health concerns;
   - Goals and objectives for the program;
   - Visible top management involvement in safety and health;
   - Assignments and communication or responsibility so that all managers, supervisors, and employees in all parts of the organization know what performance is expected of them;
• Adequate authority and resources to carry out assigned responsibilities; and
• Accountability for all managers, supervisors, and employees in meeting their assigned responsibilities;

Review of program operations at least annually to evaluate their success in meeting the goals and objectives of the overall program.

2. Worksite Analysis
   • Identification of all hazards through comprehensive surveys, analysis of change to facilities, equipment, materials, and processes; and routine hazard analysis.
   • Regular site safety and health inspections;
   • Reliable system for employees to report hazards;
   • Investigation of accidents and near misses; and
   • Analysis of patterns of injuries and illnesses.

3. Hazard Prevention and Control
   • Use of engineering controls, work practices, personal protective equipment, and administrative controls;
   • Preventive maintenance;
   • Planning and preparation for employees;
   • A medical program.

4. Safety and Health Training
   • Ensuring that all employees understand hazards and how to prevent harm to themselves and others;
   • Ensuring that supervisors understand their safety and health responsibilities to identify previously unrecognized hazards, maintain physical protections, and reinforce employee training through feedback on performance and enforcement when necessary; and
   • Ensuring that managers understand their safety and health responsibilities.