

19. Injury & Illness Prevention

Safety is Good Business

The Federal Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 requires that all employers with more than 10 employees have an official Safety and Health Program in place. However, some states exceed federal requirements. For example, at least Alaska, California, Florida, and Washington require that **all** employers have a Safety Program, regardless of size.

Legal requirements aside, it simply makes good business sense to implement a Safety Program. Business owners are usually making the connection with day-to-day business decisions. For example, by their nature, risk takers. However, taking the risk with the safety and well-being of our employees is not worth the gamble.

One Lost Workday Due to an Injury Costs \$10,000 to Handle

Safety is not just a moral concern. Accidents cost money. For every dollar you spend on the direct cost of an employee's injury, it can cost you much more in both direct and indirect costs. Consider what one lost workday injury costs you:

- production downtime for both the injured employee and her/his team members;
- production loss if you are a supervisor, team leader, or you in charge of training the accident victim;
- increased time and expense of assisting the injured worker, especially if the recovery period is extended;
- replacement of equipment or vehicles damaged in an accident, the cost of repair or replacement can be substantial;
- increased morale among your employees, which can result in increased productivity; and, not the least,
- increased Workers' Compensation Insurance rates.

Several Essential Elements of a Good Safety Program

1. Management Commitment.

Your employees will not take this issue seriously unless you show that you are truly committed to their safety and well-being. A written policy needs to be implemented and administered faithfully.

2. Labor and Management Accountability.

While it is the business owner's responsibility to provide a safe and healthful work environment for their employees, both labor and management

must understand their joint responsibilities under OSHA rules. Once employees have been instructed in important safety and health issues, they must be held accountable for safe work practices.

3. Employee Involvement.

Employees should be encouraged to identify and report unsafe working conditions (such as reporting a frayed vacuum cleaner cord to management, without fear of reprisals for doing so. Inviting employee feedback on the subject of safety at meetings held on this subject. Establishing a Safety and Health Committee, even if not required by State OSHA, is a good way to involve employees in safety and health issues.

4. Hazard Identification and Control.

This requires an evaluation of potential hazards which may be encountered on the job:

- ❖ Walking on wet floors can result in injury if an employee slips and falls.
- ❖ The potential hazard with respect to the use of bleach and ammonia is another potential problem.
- ❖ Leaning windows, balconies, as well as the use of ladders are issues not included here.
- ❖ What about the use of power vacuum cleaner around by the plug into a wall outlet with wet hands? There are many issues which can be identified by both management and staff. Putting together a hazard identification and control program.

Incident and Accident Investigation.

The primary focus here is not why the accident happened, and what actions should be taken to avoid a recurrence of this type of incident. It should not be placing blame for the accident, but on finding solutions.

If you have a Safety and Health Committee (whether required by law or on a voluntary basis), its members should establish procedures for evaluating all accidents. By recording incidents of "near misses" and not just accidents involving actual injuries, you can also identify potential hazards and prevent potential accidents and injuries.

Worker Training.

Without saying that new employees are required to be instructed on the safe use of cleaning products when they're newly hired. But what about training them when a new or alternate product is introduced into the system?

Are they provided with Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for every chemical product you use, do they understand them, and do you check to

make sure the team always has all MSDS on location at each household job?

Team Leaders need to be trained that they are responsible for being familiar with safety hazards to which they and their team members may be exposed and the rules, procedures and work practices for controlling exposure to potential hazards.

7. Periodic Program Evaluation.

Schedule a review of your Company Safety Program on a quarterly basis to determine what parts of the program are working and what areas need reevaluation and change.

Safety Meetings

If your business meets the criteria to require you to have an official Safety and Health Program (i.e. you are required only if you have 11 or more employees, or operate a business in California, Hawaii or Washington), you will generally be required to also have an official Safety and Health Committee.

This Committee will usually be required to meet at least quarterly to discuss prescribed topics. If your business qualifies, be sure to keep minutes of these meetings to provide evidence of your compliance. (Contact your local OSHA office or state regulatory agency in your state.)

The safety of all-be it your employees is an issue that should not be neglected. Regularly update your regulations. Regularly review laws and state requirements. A Safety and Illness Prevention Program is a sign of management as a responsible and caring employer. Safety issues should be integrated into regular staff meetings; we should do this at least once each month.

Safety Meeting Topics

To begin, initiate frequent review and discussion of the Company Safety Handbook provides a great deal of material. While it is important that each employee receive his or her own, personal written copy of the handbook, in and of itself, that isn't sufficient. It should be reviewed both during each employee's initial training, as well as in group sessions with all employees present.

In addition to the itemized safety checklist on the New Employee Orientation Form in the Company Safety Program handbook, you can discuss each of these issues, as well as introduce additional safety topics and practices. Topics which can and should be covered in Safety Meetings include, but are not limited to:

- ❑ The responsibility of management with respect to implementing and enforcing safe practices and injury prevention policies;

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- The responsibility of each employee to follow the company's safety and injury prevention program;
- Reporting all unsafe conditions or practices noted by any employee;
- Reporting of "near miss" accidents;
- Reporting all injuries or apparent illnesses immediately, no matter how small;
- Planning on how to respond in the event of an injury to someone on the team;
- Discussion on the contents and use of first-aid kits;
- The use of the required fire extinguisher in the case any vehicle used for transporting employees, and for clients;
- When and how to use emergency medical services;
- Review of emergency telephone numbers and how to call under such circumstances;
- Safe driving practices, such as:
 - Delegating some tasks rather than the driver to read maps, find signs and street signs, check weather and winter driving hazards; and
 - Carelessness; and
 - Defensive driving practices;
- Avoiding slips, trips and falls outside the home (including icy walkways and stairs) and while working;
- Tripping hazards such as items on stairways, or left where they present a trip hazard;
- Avoiding contact between feet;
- Personal hygiene when wearing protective gloves;
- Safe personal conduct with respect to running, horseplay, and on-the-job alcohol consumption;
- Avoiding electrical shock from frayed cords or electrical wires; prohibition of plugging the vacuum cleaner or other electrical apparatus on wet surfaces (or outdoors when raining);
- Use of ONLY vacuum cleaners and other electrical appliances that are grounded or double-insulated;
- Potential dangers in the use of bleach (chlorine) and ammonia:
 - Knowledge and understanding of MSDS;
 - Climbing high places to clean: ONLY OSHA-approved ladders in first-class condition to be used, if ladders are permitted to be used at all (Class 1 - industrial wooden or fiberglass, not metal, and having non-skid feet);
- No leaning out of high windows or over balconies or banisters;

- ❑ Incident and accident investigation policies, procedures and paperwork.

Information & Training Resources

State Agencies.

We have provided a list of both local OSHA offices, as well as a directory of OSHA-funded state consulting agencies at the end of this chapter. It's important, of course, that you contact your state to determine your State's OSHA requirements. This can also be helpful information. Some states offer a library of safety training programs from which you can borrow for the purpose of conducting Meetings with your employees.

Your Workers' Compensation Program.

Your Workers' Comp Insurance carrier has invested a great deal in supporting your Safety and Health program. The carrier has reduced incidents of accidents and injury on the job, which lowers your insurance costs for your company. In addition to providing you with printed material and/or video training programs on safety, they may even be willing to assign someone to conduct a safety program at your site or more often, to conduct staff meetings.

If you are operating a new business, you may need to be assigned to your state's workers' comp program until a track record has been established. This is not true for all states.

Note: The SIC (Standard Industrial Code) for house cleaning services is 7349

Local Fire Cross-Training.

Local fire departments often have information on the type of programs they offer. They may offer training to conduct CPR and first-aid training programs on company premises.

National Safety Council.

If there is an NSC chapter in your area, you can turn to them for a range of various information services.

Local Libraries.

Ask your local library to direct you to topical reference materials specific to safety and health issues.

Local Health Care Providers.

Your physician or local health clinics and hospitals can direct you on specific information and assistance can be obtained in your area.

Local Chamber of Commerce.

If you are a member of your local Chamber of Commerce, they may offer information or even sponsor job-related injury prevention workshops or seminars. Since other business members face the same regulations and safety concerns as you do, they may also be a good information resource.

Safety Program Handbook

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