Effective OSH Committee Operations

OSHAcademy™
Occupational Safety & Health Training

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OSHAcademy Course 701 Study Guide

Effective OSH Committee Operations

This study guide is designed to be reviewed off-line as a tool for preparation to successfully complete OSHAcademy Course 701.

Read each module, answer the quiz questions, and submit the quiz questions online through the course webpage. You can print the post-quiz response screen which will contain the correct answers to the questions.

The final exam will consist of questions developed from the course content and module quizzes.

We hope you enjoy the course and if you have any questions, feel free to email or call:

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Course Introduction

Suggested Additional Reading

Safety committees are not required in all 50 states, but they should be, as they can be extremely helpful in making sure an effective safety culture is developed and maintained. This course will introduce you to the various responsibilities that a safety committee typically has in a company. If your company doesn't yet have a safety committee, let's get one going!

Building a Better Safety and Health Committee, John P. Spath, (April 1998) American Society of Safety Engineers; ISBN: 1885581114.

Human Error Reduction and Safety Management, Dan Petersen, 3rd edition (December 1997) John Wiley & Sons; ISBN: 0471287407.

Safety committees mean involvement!

Involving your employees in an activity such as a safety committee that directly affects their safety and health is the right thing to do. Below are reasons why it's also the smart thing to do.

- Rank and file workers are the persons most in contact with potential safety and health hazards. They have a vested interest in effective protection programs.
- Recent experience has demonstrated that line workers and other rank and filers make highly valuable problem-solvers.
- Group decisions have the advantage of the group's wider field of experience.
- Research shows that employees are more likely to support and use programs in which they have had input.
- Employees who are encouraged to offer their ideas and whose contributions are taken seriously are more satisfied and productive on the job.
- You, the owner/manager, have a solid grasp of your overall operations. Line workers, on the other hand, probably have a more detailed knowledge of each operation and task at your worksite.
- Employees who understand the hazards associated with workplace operations will realize that they have the most to gain from preventing or controlling exposure to those

hazards. Knowledgeable and aware employees tend to be safe workers and also good sources of ideas for better hazard prevention and control.

Communications is the key

The key to a successful safety and health program is effective communications and the safety committee can help to make sure that happens. Consequently, in this course we are going to explore concepts and tools to help you start and grow an effective labor-management safety committee, assess and evaluate your current safety committee, and recommend changes to improve the effectiveness of your safety committee.

Module 1: Role, Purpose, Function

It's all about Vision

You don't have to climb a mountain and sit on a big rock for six days to gain a vision about the role and mission of the safety committee. It might take a little more thought for you to understand how you can help the safety committee perform an effective role and fulfill its mission. So, let's first take a look at the concept of "role" and how it applies to the safety committee.

Just who do you think you are?

Look up the definition of "role" in the dictionary and you'll find something like:

- The characteristic and expected social behavior of an individual;
- A position or title.

Roles are labels that help define who we are, how we should personally behave, and what we should be doing as an individual or as a member of a group.

I'm sure the position you occupy as a worker or manager in your company has some sort of formal title that helps you and others identify your role and associated duties. Along with that role come responsibilities and a certain level of status. Attached to every role you "play" are a set of expected behaviors and activities that are considered appropriate for that position.

Take a look at the following list of common roles. The odds are you play one or more of these roles.

- At home: mother, wife, father, husband, son, daughter, aunt, uncle;
- In the community: youth group leader, coach, club officer;
- At work: receptionist, supervisor, welder, trainer, nurse.

Of course, there are many more roles we can play, but you get the idea. Each is unique with its own set of performance expectations.

Why is it so important to know what role the safety committee plays?

This is important, so read it twice! What we *do* depends on who we think we *are*. If safety committee members think they are consultants to others, they will do and say things that send a message that they can be trusted. Employees will seek their help and appreciate their work. If safety committee members think they are cops, they will do and say things in a manner that is likely to result in mistrust. An effective safety culture cannot exist in a climate of mistrust.

What is the Safety Committee's Role?

One way of looking at the role of the safety committee is to think of it as an internal consultant group with expectations and responsibilities similar to that of a consultant hired by the company. Such a consultant would be asked to:

- Survey and interview employees to find out what they are thinking and feeling;
- Observe employees to analyze behaviors;
- Inspect the workplace to uncover hazardous conditions;
- Audit safety programs;
- Uncover the surface and root causes of safety problems;
- Develop and submit written recommendations;
- Monitor the progress of corrective actions and system improvements;
- Evaluate the long-term quality of the safety culture.

The Committee is a Consultant Team, Not a Cop Squad

It's important to note that none of these responsibilities requires the safety committee to actually control safety programs or "police" employees. When the safety committee assumes the role of a consultant group within a company, it need not, and should not, be expected to control a budget, purchase equipment, or correct hazards.

As a safety committee member, you perform multiple roles. Let's see how this affects your responsibilities:

- When performing the role of a safety committee member you are a consultant not a cop: you warn the employee, but should not report the "name" to the supervisor. You should report the observed unsafe behavior to the committee chairperson so the safety committee can discuss how to fix the root causes (system weaknesses). Yes, as a safety committee member you should most certainly stop the behavior. However, "enforcement" implies you have the authority to administer discipline and safety committee members should not be given that authority. The committee should inform management that infractions are occurring so that line managers and supervisors who have the authority to discipline can address the behavior. The job of the safety committee is to help the employer do safety, not to "do" safety for the employer. Safety is the employer's job! Safety enforcement, training, provision of resources, etc. (leadership) is the employer's job.

- When performing the role of an employee, you should have the authority to warn the employee, but again, you're not a cop. Report the behavior to your safety committee member, and if you are comfortable with it, to your supervisor without naming names. This allows the supervisor to address the behavior with everyone in training. It resets employee accountability when the supervisor tells all employees that they are not allowed to engage in a particular unsafe behavior.

- When performing the role of supervisor or manager, you are the agent of the employer and are legally the "cop" who should enforce safety. If you catch someone misbehaving and you have properly trained them, they have the proper resources, time, support, etc., you're probably justified in disciplining the employee. In fact, best practices in safety leadership demands it.

Remember, writing "tickets" for violating safety rules can be especially disastrous to the success of the safety committee's effectiveness. No, these responsibilities are considered "doing" safety and they more properly belong to line managers, from the CEO down through first line supervisor.

Enforcing safety compliance is a line function, not a staff function.

What About Role Conflict?

If you are a member of your company safety team AND a supervisor, how do you discipline your employees for unsafe behavior? Let's take a look at a scenario below to set the scene.

Scenario

Larry is an important member of his company's safety team. However, he is a supervisor as well. During his workday, he notices one of his subordinates is not wearing the proper personal protective equipment (PPE). Larry wants to correct the unsafe behavior; however, he is unsure how to find the balance of helping the safety cause at work and actually enforcing it. Since he is a line supervisor, should he discipline the workers or should he actually refrain from discipline because he is a safety team member?

This is a good question and his response as both a supervisor and safety committee member depends on the role he is playing at the time. For instance:

If you're conducting a safety inspection as a member of the safety committee and see your employee failing to use PPE, you should let him or her know the role you're playing and ask another inspection team member to interview the employee in private to determine surface/root causes for the behavior.

Here are some sample questions you may ask:

- Are you receiving proper supervision?
- Have you been trained on how to use PPE?
- Do you believe that you'll be disciplined is "caught" violating safety rules?
- Is the PPE you're supposed to use suitable?
- Are you physically able to use the PPE?
- Do you think your supervisor believes working fast is more important than working safe?

You should remind the employee to use PPE, and you would enter the observation/behavior (not the employee's name) and interview responses into the safety inspection report. The information gathered in the interview would be analyzed to determine root causes (system weaknesses). Even though you are the employee's supervisor, you would not discipline the employee because you're not acting as the employee's supervisor during the inspection. Yes, if you think it's best, you might ask someone else to conduct the inspection in your department as there might be a role conflict. It also assures someone else is observing in your department.

If you are performing a safety inspection as the employee's supervisor, and you see the same failure to use PPE, your response would be that as the supervisor. Before considering any discipline, you would first determine if you have fulfilled your supervisory obligations (Supervision, Training, Accountability, Resources, and Support) to the employee. If you have, some form of progressive discipline might be the proper action. However, if you have not met your obligations, touch-caring leadership would require you apologize to the employee and make a commitment to get him or her what's needed to perform safely.

The safety committee must communicate effectively

One of the most important responsibilities of the individual safety committee representative is to receive safety concerns from employees, report those concerns to the safety committee, and provide timely feedback to employees on the status or response to those concerns. Failure to effectively fulfill this important responsibility has the potential to render the safety committee unsuccessful in its ability to help the employer solve safety-related problems.

When you keep people in the dark, they think the worst!

The safety committee should also be communicating regularly with management, both in and out of the safety committee setting. It's vital that managers be directly involved in and participate as members of the safety committee. Safety committees generally communicate formally through written recommendations and safety committee minutes.

Once again, the ability to run effective meetings, and write concise minutes and strong recommendations that provide useful information is critical in fulfilling this purpose. In some instances, the safety committee may be quick to accuse management of a lack of support when, in reality, the safety committee, itself, may not be providing useful information enabling management to make decisions and take action.

Quality education and training is the key to ensuring the safety committee communicates effectively to staff and management.

Purpose - the intended result or effect

Armed with insight into the role of the safety committee, let's take a look at what the committee's purpose might be. A quick review of our friendly dictionary once again defines purpose as:

- A desired or intended result or effect.

As you learned above, the safety committee performs the role of an internal consultant group with primary responsibilities to provide expert advice and assistance. Some companies create a

"vision statement" that reflects who they are. This is a statement about their role in the community and society in general.

A company might also write a mission statement that explains what they do to support their vision. The purpose of the safety committee might also be viewed as its mission and reflects what the safety committee intentionally does to support its assigned role.

What safety committee's do (mission),

depends on who they think they are (role).

Major Purposes of the Safety Committee

What are some of the primary reasons for the safety committee to exist? Let's summarize:

- help protect the employer by providing useful information;
- help protect the employee by responding to safety concerns;
- bring labor and management together in a cooperative way to solve problems;
- help the employer educate and motivate all employees about the importance of safety; and
- help the employer educate and motivate all supervisors and managers to identify hazards and take corrective action.

All of these purpose statements emphasize the safety committee's responsibility to assist the employer, not to do the safety job for the employer.

Management may be able to delegate authority for managing safety programs to the safety committee on paper, but that won’t hold water during an OSHA inspection if the workplace is determined to be unsafe.

The responsibility and accountability for safety and health rests squarely on the shoulders of line managers from top to bottom because they, not the safety committee, control workplaces.

"Function" - describes the actual result or effect.

Purpose and function are related terms, but differ significantly in meaning. Our dictionary definition states that "function" is:

- Something closely related to another thing and dependent on it for its existence, value, or significance.

Whereas "purpose" states the intended result or effect, "function" describes the actual or unintended result or effect. The actual outcome depends on the success of the attempt to carry out the intended purpose. If the safety committee does not effectively carry out its intended purpose, it may unintentionally function to hurt the company's safety and health effort.

The Function of the Safety Committee

Function can be considered a dependent variable. It is dependent upon the effectiveness of a group to follow through with its stated purpose. The safety committee may have the best intentions, but if it cannot follow through effectively with its plans, it may actually function to harm a safety program or activity rather than help it.

Without education and training, safety committee members may not have the basic knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their responsibilities. Given proper education and training, the safety committee is more likely to function to carry out its intended purpose.

For instance, the safety committee may intend to increase interest in safety by implementing a safety incentive program, but if its members do not have the knowledge, skills, or abilities to accomplish this purpose, they may develop a totally reactive incentive program that results in dismal failure. The lesson: It's not good enough just to do the right thing... you've got to do the right thing right!

What's the point? Function is dependent on Purpose!

So, why is it so important to understand the relationship between purpose and function? The safety committee may have wonderful goals and objectives that support its intended purposes, however:

- if the safety committee does not have the ability, for whatever reason, to meet those goals, it will have great difficulty in carrying out its stated purpose; and

- the safety committee may actually (unintentionally) function to hurt, not help its safety program.

Final Word

These concepts are actually not too difficult to understand, but that understanding is absolutely essential to your ability to be an effective member of a safety committee, and to the overall success of the committee. Okay, onto the quiz!

Module 1 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

1. **In the most effective safety cultures, the safety committee performs the role of a _____.**

    a. Supervisor
    b. Trainer
    c. Consultant
    d. Cop

2. **As a safety committee member, which activity below would be inappropriate?**

    a. Monitor the hazard communication program
    b. Make recommendations to improve safe procedures
    c. Report the names of individuals working unsafely
    d. Help the employer develop interest in workplace safety

3. **Which of the following is a purpose for the safety committee?**

    a. Bring labor and management together to improve safety
    b. Identify hazards in the workplace
    c. Make recommendations to improve safety procedures
    d. All of the above

4. **What safety committee's do depends on _____.**

    a. what they're told to do
    b. who they think they are
    c. who the safety manager is
    d. what makes common sense

5. **This is one of the most important responsibilities of a safety committee representative.**

    a. Receive safety concerns from employees.
    b. Report the bad guys to the good guys.
    c. Tell workers to watch out for the supervisor.
    d. Protect employees from management.

Module 2: Getting Started

Kick start your committee!

Don't pass this module up just because you already have a safety committee!

This module is designed to help you if you are trying to start a new safety committee in your company. However, if you already have a safety committee, be sure to complete this module because you'll still receive some good information to help you further develop your safety committee's effectiveness. At a minimum, it will be a great review for you.

First things first...sell the idea to the boss.

Let's say your company does not presently have a safety committee. You are convinced that the company would benefit if it started one, but how do you sell the idea to the CEO?

You've got to talk the "$$ bottom line $$" to get management's attention.

An effective safety committee may not only help prevent employees' from getting hurt or killed on the job, it may help decrease future direct and indirect accident costs. An effective safety committee is a profit center, not a cost center for the company.

Bottom Line Benefits of a Safety Committee

- The safety committee performs the role of a consultant to the employer. If your employer hired an external consultant it would cost thousands of dollars long-term for the same service the safety committee can provide in-house.
- The safety committee acts as a forum for management and labor to communicate safety related concerns. The benefits from improved communications may be hard to quantify, but they may be substantial.
- Every hazard the safety committee identifies and is directly involved in eliminating results in significant savings in potential accident costs. We'll talk more about this later.
- The safety committee can serve as a valuable problem solving group that addresses workplace conditions, morale and quality. By developing solutions, the safety committee improves the company's competitive advantage.
- The safety committee is an excellent opportunity for employees to improve their professional skills in communications, human relations, problem solving, meeting management, and analysis. Since supervisors and managers should be informed about

occupational safety and health, the safety committee is a natural "school" of preparation for future company managers. In fact, some companies even make it a prerequisite.

The safety committee protects the employer as well as the employee.

As we just saw, by identifying and being involved in eliminating hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices, the safety committee may save the company thousands of dollars in potential accident costs. In fact, for each eliminated hazard that could have caused a serious injury, many thousands of dollars in direct/indirect accident costs are saved.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), nearly 3 million non-fatal workplace injuries and illnesses were reported by private industry employers in 2011. The rate reported for 2011 was unchanged for the first time in a decade. The number of fatal occupational injuries has declined since the mid-1990s. The 2010 total (4,690) was the second-lowest ever recorded by CFOI. The lower counts in both 2009 (4,551) and 2010 are likely related to the slower U.S. economy during those years. Each fatality results in well more than $1 million dollars in insured and uninsured accident costs.

According to the BLS, 4,609 workers were killed on the job in 2011. That equals almost 90 a week or nearly 13 deaths every day. This is a slight increase from the 4,551 fatal work injuries in 2009, but the second lowest annual total since the fatal injury census was first conducted in 1992.

What do these statistics mean to you? Effective "profit center" safety committees have the potential to save not only lives and limbs, but lots of money: Thousands and thousands of dollars each year can be saved every time the safety committee uncovers and helps the employer eliminate hazardous conditions or unsafe work practices.

Every dollar invested in proactive safety, including safety committee activities, may return hundreds back. You've got to convince management that an effective safety committee not only saves lives, but saves money too.

Now that you've got support, get it down on paper.

It's important to make sure the safety committee has a written policy statement to guide its actions. The policy statement should include:

- Role, purpose(s) of the safety committee;
- Reasons for establishing the safety committee;
- Need for management and employee participation;

- Need for support by all departments;
- Responsibilities of the committee;
- Duties of committee members.

Getting Organized

OK, you know the safety committee is going to be composed of a number of people from management and the labor force. What kind of structure should the safety committee take? Typically the committee will have a chairperson (some will also have a co-chair), a recorder, and of course a number of members. You don't need a complicated bureaucratic structure.

Duties of the Chairperson

The chairperson's job is, of course, one of the most important on the committee. He or she is the key coordinator ensuring the safety committee operates effectively. Below are some of the very important responsibilities of the chairperson:

- Prepare an agenda for meetings;
- Arrange for meeting room;
- Notify members of meeting dates/times;
- Distribute agenda;
- Delegate responsibilities;
- Make Exercises;
- Preside and conduct the meeting;
- Enforce committee ground rules;
- Communicate with the employer;
- Report the status of recommendations;

Duties of the Safety Committee Recorder

Let's not forget another very important responsibility: that of the recorder or secretary. This person assists the chairperson in making sure all communications are accurately recorded and distributed to committee members and others. Some duties of the recorder may include:

- Assist the chairperson with agenda;
- Record minutes of the meeting;
- Distribute and post the minutes;
- Assume chairperson's duties if necessary;

Duties of the Safety Committee Member

For the safety committee to operate most effectively, everyone on the committee needs to be involved in some way. Safety committee members should do more than just report safety concerns from their departments. Let's take a look at some ideas for members:

- Receive suggestions, concerns, reports from employees;
- Report employee suggestions, concerns, reports to committee;
- Report back to employees on their suggestions, concerns, reports;
- Attend all safety committee meetings;
- Receive training on safety and health subjects;
- Review injury and illness reports;
- Monitor safety and health programs and system;
- Set example by taking action;
- Conduct safety inspections;
- Make recommendations for corrective action;
- Assist in communicating committee activities to all employees.

Safety Committee Membership

The makeup of the committee membership is a very important consideration. Joint labor-management committees are a popular method of employee participation. They are extensively and successfully used in many European countries and Canadian provinces. Other types of committees also have been used successfully for safety and health participation. At many unionized worksites, employee safety committees -- with members selected by the union or elected by employees -- work alone, without management, on various tasks. At some worksites, hourly workers participate on a central safety committee. In addition, some worksites use employee or joint committees for specific purposes, such as inspecting the site for hazards, investigating accidents and incidents, and training new employees. Finally, although they go by a different name, quality circles are another form of committee. They focus, at least part of the time, on identifying and resolving health and safety problems.

More thoughts on the makeup of the safety committee

If one of the purposes of the safety committee is to bring management and labor together in a cooperative effort to improve the safety and health of workers, it just makes business sense to include representatives from management ranks as well as the work floor.

Management and labor can sit together and discuss their unique and common concerns regarding safety. The safety committee becomes a forum that both management and labor may use, to ensure mutually acceptable solutions to problems can be reached.

It's important that the safety committee not be dominated by management in general, or any one individual, be it the safety director, chairperson, or member. To make sure this does not happen, establish ground rules, and techniques for decision-making that promotes group consensus.

Management representatives and the chairperson will be the primary conduits of communications between the safety committee and the employer. Committee members are the primary communicators with employees. It's very important that communications occurs in both directions.

Final Word

You've sold the CEO on the value of the safety committee, written an effective safety committee policy statement, and recruited members. You are organized, but don't relax... there's a lot of work ahead if you expect long term success.

Module 2 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

1. **What is the number of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses in the USA reported by the BLS for 2011?**

    a. 1 million
    b. Nearly 2 million
    c. Nearly 3 million
    d. More than 4 million

2. **Which subject below is important to include in a safety committee policy statement?**

    a. Reasons for establishing the safety committee.
    b. Role, purpose(s) of the safety committee.
    c. Need for management and employee participation.
    d. All of the above are equally important.

3. **Which of the following is an important reason for including both labor and management in the safety committee?**

    a. Increase effective communication channels.
    b. Increase trust between labor and management.
    c. Greater efficiency in implementing corrective actions.
    d. All of the above are important reasons.

4. **Which of the following should not be the responsibility of the safety committee chairperson?**

    a. Prepare agenda
    b. Delegate responsibilities
    c. Enforce safety rules
    d. Preside and conduct meetings

5. The safety committee member should not be required to _____.

a. report hazards to the committee
b. report unsafe employees to the supervisor
c. respond to employee concerns
d. monitor safety programs

Module 3: Motivating Involvement

Let me... pump you up!

It's important that the safety committee be composed of both managers and employees who understand its role, purposes and activities, and are interested in its success. But, sometimes it seems that most companies experience varying degrees of difficulty generating enthusiasm for the safety committee. We'll take a look at the possible reasons for this, and then try to come up with some solutions to the problem.

Perceptions Drive Reality

There are many reasons that might explain why both managers and employees have no interest in a safety committee. What drives that lack of interest? It is their perceptions. Here are a few perceptions that might cause a lack of interest:

- Why join the safety committee? Who cares?
- Safety committee members were "volunteered;"
- Meetings are boring;
- Safety committee members aren't properly trained;
- Safety committee duties cut into busy schedules;
- Employees receive an unspoken message that management doesn't really support the safety committee, and are left wondering, “Why bother?”
- The chairperson often seems like a rudderless ship in a storm (or, “clueless”). Even a rat would desert such a ship!
- One person dominates meetings;
- The safety committee never gets anything done;
- Safety committee meetings end up just being gripe sessions;
- The safety committee is just a pack of snitches.

How does the safety committee gain credibility with management?

To get things done, you must have credibility: Expert power. To be believable, it's important that members of the safety committee have a clear understanding of their role, purpose, duties, and responsibilities. They need to understand where their responsibility ends, and where management's responsibility takes over.

When the safety committee realizes they play the role of an internal consultant to the employer, they know that their credibility depends on the expertise they bring to the role. How do you gain expertise? By increasing your knowledge and gaining experience.

Writing and submitting effective recommendations to management is crucial if credibility is to be gained. The most effective recommendations will discuss costs and benefits -- talk the bottom line to management, and it will offer reasonable options for correcting workplace hazards, unsafe work practices, and ineffective administrative controls.

Another strategy for gaining credibility is to increase the committee's "position power". Do you have an executive secretary positioned immediately outside the CEO's office? Why does this person possess position power? It could be because he or she "has the ear" of the person in charge. Likewise, the position power of the safety committee is strengthened when it communicates with the head of the organization. Which safety committee has more position power: The committee that reports to the deputy director for human resources, or the committee that reports to the CEO? That's pretty obvious. The principle here is that for the safety committee to increase its own position power, it must communicate directly with the powerful.

How does the safety committee gain credibility with employees?

Communication is the key here. Employees see the safety committee as a communications conduit to management. When an employee informs or makes a suggestion to the safety committee representative, he or she expects to get some sort of feedback soon thereafter. They want to see action. If the safety committee representative takes the information to the safety committee, but neglects to give the worker feedback, what is the employee going to think about the safety committee: A bunch of do-nothings? They're a waste of time?

Therefore, to gain credibility with employees, communicate regularly and often with them. If a hazard can't be fixed for a while, let the employees know the "whats" and "whys" behind the delay. They will appreciate it, even if it's not the answer they want to hear. The safety committee has done its job.

Another good idea is to appropriately "brag" about safety committee accomplishments. I don't mean that members of the committee should go out and literally brag about how great they are… just let employees know about its accomplishments, and do so with some excitement and pride.

Look in the Mirror

Apathy towards the safety committee is common in many companies. There may be many reasons, but usually this problem is due to factors that can be controlled by top management. Lack of top management support is a common complaint forwarded by safety committee members. But, is the safety committee premature in "blaming" management for their ills? The safety committee may want to first reflect on how well they are fulfilling their own responsibilities before they accuse management.

It's all about credibility

What does it mean to be credible? A quick look in the dictionary tells us that to be credible means, "capable of being believed: deserving confidence". What's the message here? Credibility must be earned! So the real question to ask is, "What can the safety committee do to increase its believability and earn confidence in its recommendations?"

Management Support and Commitment

Management can demonstrate support through word and commitment through deed. and by investing time and money into the safety committee.

Support. How is support expressed? Formally through the mission statement, policies, job descriptions, and performance appraisals. Informally through word of mouth; a simple recognition of a job well done; or appreciation expressed before a group of peers.

Commitment. Commitment is more than an expression of support. It is achieved by investing time and money in safety. A few examples include:

- allowing members of the safety committee more than an hour a month to work their safety responsibilities;
- promoting those who serve on safety committees because they have increased knowledge and skills in safety and health management;
- responding to the recommendations made to correct conditions, practices, and systems;
- through active membership in the committee; and

- by attending (as observers) safety committee meetings from time to time.

Motivated safety committee members

It goes without saying that safety committee members should be volunteers. The committee will always be more effective as a group of interested volunteers who are enthusiastic about voluntary activities. But, when employees do not volunteer, management may feel obligated to do something. Consequently, management "volunteers" employees as members of the safety committee. Well, I'm sure you can understand why those employees might not appreciate their new responsibility and will likely not put more into the committee than required.

Be a "wanta-be," not a "haveta-be"!

It's better to get someone to do something because they want to be involved (a "wanta-be"), not because they have to be involved or do something (a "haveta-be"). Forcing people is not usually the most effective long-term policy. If they know why what they're doing is important, how it contributes to their own success and that of the company's they're more like to be a "wanta-be"!

If management controls the workplace, and has the greatest influence on corporate culture there should be some way to effectively enlist volunteers for the safety committee. Remember, we behave the way we do in the workplace primarily as a result of perceived consequences. How can management arrange positive consequences for involvement in the safety committee?

Tough question: How does management encourage volunteers?

Answer the employee's question, "what's in it for me?"

Reward members of the safety committee with tangible and intangible incentives.

Tangible rewards might consist of monthly merit pay increases or bonuses for taking on additional professional responsibilities.

Intangible rewards include career incentives. Membership on the safety committee might be recognized on performance appraisals under professional development.

Management could let it be known that it is to an employee's advantage for career advancement to gain experience on the safety committee. After all, doesn't a member of the safety committee gain additional professional skills in communications, meeting management, problem solving, occupational safety and health programs, hazard identification, accident investigation, recommendation writing, and other areas?. That's quite a list. Consequently,

safety committee membership should make an employee more qualified for advancement. I like to think of the safety committee as part of a "management apprenticeship" program.

Proactive recognition programs that work

Here are a few ideas for developing a proactive safety recognition program for your company:

- Safety Buck: Supervisors carry safety bucks, and when they see someone doing something right, they reward them. The employee can take the safety buck to the company cafeteria for lunch, or they can use it at a local participating store to purchase items.

- Bonus Program: When an employee identifies a hazard in the workplace that could cause serious physical harm or a fatality, they are rewarded with a bonus check. In some cases the bonus check is a fixed amount. In other programs the bonus check is a small percentage of the potential direct cost for the accident that might have occurred.

- By the way, the average direct cost for a disabling claim in is around $10,000. Doesn't it make sense to reward an individual with $100 for identifying a hazard that could potentially cost the company thousands?

- Safety Hero: After an extended period of time, employees are rewarded with a certificate or bonus check for complying with company safety rules.

- Reporting Injuries: Wait a minute... Do I really mean that employees should be recognized for reporting injuries? That's right. If employees report injuries immediately, they not only minimize the physical/psychological impact of the injury on themselves, they reduce the direct/indirect accident costs to the company. Both the individual and the company win if the employee reports injuries immediately. These are just a sample of many ideas available. There are many other ways to recognize employees being used by companies across the country. Call your local OSHA office to see if they know of companies in your area that have developed successful proactive safety recognition programs. Use those companies as benchmarks.

Module 3 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

1. **Which of the following is the best way to lose credibility as a safety committee?**

    a. Write effective recommendations
    b. Blame management for lack of support
    c. Respond to concerns promptly
    d. Increase member expertise

2. **What can the safety committee member do personally to best shape positive attitudes about the safety committee?**

    a. Report injuries
    b. Evaluate and report safety statistics
    c. Communicate regularly with employees
    d. Provide goodies at the meeting

3. **The most significant incentive for someone to join the safety committee might be _____.**

    a. "I can help others be safe"
    b. "I can increase chances to advance my career"
    c. "I can get a free lunch"
    d. Any of the above

4. **If the safety committee isn't working, it is always due to a lack of top management support.**

    a. True
    b. False

5. **According to the text, the safety committee benefits from what two kinds of power?**

    a. Charismatic, Position
    b. Expert, Position
    c. Expert, Personal
    d. Personal, Charismatic

Module 4: Safety Committee Education and Training

The Key to successful safety committees

In the last module we discussed ways to get people excited about joining and being involved in the safety committee. In this module, we'll continue the theme of safety committee member professional development. Effective education and training is the key to making the safety committee a valuable profit center in your company.

If you've been a member of a safety committee whose members were not properly trained, you can appreciate the benefits from effective safety committee training. You may be a member of a safety committee right now. Did you receive any training about your role and responsibilities as a safety committee member when you joined? Chances are you didn't. If you did, that's great. New safety committee members should be properly educated so that they understand why their new position is so important. The purpose is to affect attitudes about the safety committee and the contribution each member can make.

Safety committees that lack effective education and training, for the most part, flounder around but rarely get much done.

The Benefits of Training the Safety Committee

It's important that safety committee members be trained so that they understand the big picture. Each member needs to know how the safety committee fits into the company's operations plan and how it can most effectively benefit the employer.

Training will help each safety committee member:

- Understand the role and purpose of the safety committee;
- Understand and carry out their individual responsibilities;
- Understand important safety and health concepts, methods, rules;
- Improve safety leadership skills;
- Improve communications skills with other employees;
- Improve meeting management skills;
- Improve problem solving skills;

- Improve writing skills;
- Improve ability to successfully submit proposals;
- Increase their value to the company;
- Increase the opportunity for career advancement.

Training will help the safety committee:

- Fulfill their mission to assist the employer;
- Improve its status within the company;
- Work together as a problem-solving team;
- Submit high quality recommendations to correct hazards;
- Have a positive impact on lowering claims costs, raising profits.

A well-trained safety committee will help the employer:

- Gain a better understanding of the positive impact of safety;
- Demonstrate effective safety leadership and management;
- Lower injury and illness rates;
- Improve profitability, competitiveness, and morale;
- Correct hazards and make system improvements in a timely manner;
- Maintain an effective system of accountability;
- Develop a successful recognition program.

Three Key Subject Areas

For a safety committee to operate successfully, its members should be educated and trained in at least three very important areas:

- Safety committee operations
- Hazard identification and control concepts and methods
- Accident investigation procedures

Get trained in safety committee operations

This is pretty obvious, but no less important. Safety committee members should be trained in how the safety committee operates, how meetings are conducted, and what is expected of them as members. New safety committee members may not have a firm understanding of the consultative role the safety committee plays within the safety management system. They may not realize that one of the primary purposes of safety committees to *help* the employer fulfill safety accountabilities.

Get trained in hazard identification and control

To be effective, safety committee members must know basic hazard identification and control concepts and methods. We'll cover this topic briefly below. A more in-depth discussion can be found in OSHAcademy Course 704.

One of the hazard identification and control duties you might have as a member of the safety committee might be conducting regular walk-around safety inspections. Safety inspections can be effective in spotting workplace hazards, but only if the people inspecting know what they're looking for and ask the right questions.

Sometimes, safety inspections consist of one person walking around with what I call the "rolling-eyeball" approach. The inspector just scans up and down, side to side, all over the place looking for hazards, not really knowing what to look for. Occasionally, the inspector might ask an employee if they have any "safety complaints", only to receive with a quick "no" so the person can get back to work. You can imagine that such an inspection ends up a waste of the inspector's time and the employer's money. If you are going to inspect...inspect effectively so that the company realizes some benefit from the process.

Get to know the Hierarchy of Controls

It's very important that safety committee members be trained on using the well-known Hierarchy of Controls, which includes five basic strategies in controlling exposure to hazards in the workplace.

Controlling workplace hazards: The first three strategies reduce exposure by controlling hazards. If you can get rid of the hazard, you don't have to manage behaviors.

1. Elimination - totally eliminate the hazard.
2. Substitution - substitute a hazardous condition with a less hazardous or hazard free condition.
3. Engineering - eliminate or reduce hazards through design and redesign.

Controlling employee behaviors: The last two strategies reduce exposure by controlling employee behaviors through the use of procedures and personal protective equipment (PPE).

4. Administrative controls - to protect employees through the use of safe procedures and practices.
5. Personal protective equipment - to set up personal barriers to the hazards.

Safety professionals know all about the Hierarchy of Controls, so be sure to get trained and otherwise become more familiar with each this topic. You may want to attend conferences sponsored by the National Safety Council, American Society of Safety Engineers and others to learn more about this important topic.

Note: ANSI/AIHA Z10-2005 also includes "Warnings" as one of the strategies in the Hierarchy of Controls. However, I would classify this strategy as an administrative control because warnings are only as effective as the awareness of and compliance with their message. Warnings do not eliminate or reduce hazards.

Get trained on accident investigation procedures

In some companies, safety committees are assigned the responsibility to review and evaluate accident reports. Consequently, it's important that safety committee members understand effective accident investigation procedures and what good accident reports look like.

The Six-Step Accident Investigation Procedure

One effective process for conducting accident investigations includes six steps to assess, analyze, and evaluate facts to develop permanent corrective actions. The six steps are:

Step 1: Secure the accident scene to ensure material evidence is not moved;

Step 2: Gather data and information using observation, interviews, photos, sketches, etc;

Step 3: Develop the sequence of events prior to, during and immediately after the accident;

Step 4: Analyze each event for surface and root causes that contributed to the event;

Step 5: Develop recommendations for immediate and long-term corrective actions.

Step 6: Write the accident report.

You'll find more about this topic in Course 702.

Training strategies for safety committees

You now know basically what subjects in which to train safety committee members, but what type of training is best, and when is the best time to conduct the training? You have several alternatives:

Formal classroom training: In many cases, formal training in-house or from an external source can get a safety committee member trained quickly when needed. Classroom training is best if the class is composed of students from many different departments or companies. By the way, most adults like small group exercise as their favorite training method. On the other hand, most adults do not like lecture (boring!)

Computer based training (CBT): This is growing in popularity because safety committee members can fit short training sessions on the computer into their busy schedules at work or at home. CBT can lack the quality other types of training offers if no live interaction occurs between the student and an instructor.

Informal on-the-job training (OJT): This is best done by first-line supervisors. Safety committee members will learn how to do things like use personal protective equipment, conduct accident investigations, and perform job hazard analyses.

Mini training sessions at safety committee meetings: This is a good method to keep safety committee members up on the latest changes to OSHA standards and changes in company policy, procedures, and rules. Mini training sessions can be as short as five minutes or up to 30 minutes. However, most are in the 10 minute range, so time is available to conduct other meeting business.

Final Word

You know the importance of a well-trained safety committee, the subjects to train, and the best strategies for getting the training done. Safety education and training, effectively accomplished by a qualified supervisor, can have dramatic positive results in your safety and health program.

Module 4 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

1. **Which of the following is a positive benefit of a well-trained safety committee?**

    a. Ability to conduct safety inspections
    b. Improve safety awareness
    c. Help correct safety program weaknesses
    d. Each of the above is a benefit

2. **Which of the following would be the least useful training subject for safety committees?**

    a. Safety committee rules and procedures
    b. Workers' compensation law
    c. Accident investigation procedures
    d. Conducting safety inspections

3. **Education and training help the safety committee member enforce safety rules with greater expertise.**

    a. True
    b. False

4. **According to the text, which of the following is not one of the three important topics in which safety committee members should be trained to ensure successful operation?**

    a. Effective supervision and discipline
    b. Accident investigation procedures
    c. Hazard identification and control
    d. Safety committee operations

5. **Which of the following is the classroom training method adults usually like the best?**

    a. Lecture
    b. Group exercise
    c. Online
    d. Video

Module 5: Hazard Identification and Analysis Tools

Get the right tools for the job

Now that you've got a good idea about the training requirements for safety committees, it's time to take a look at some of the tools available to the safety committee to identify hazards in the workplace and determine how to best correct those hazards.

What accounts for most workplace accidents?

Earlier, we talked about the importance of understanding the nature of workplace hazards that are manifested primarily as hazardous conditions, unsafe work practices, and ineffective administrative controls. Which of these three categories result in the most accidents?

Unfortunately hazardous conditions alone account for as little as 3 percent of all workplace accidents. But, we tend to look primarily for unsafe conditions when conducting a walk-around inspection. OSHA inspections are geared toward discovering unsafe conditions also. It's very possible that your company could conduct an inspection on Tuesday, and a fatality occur on Wednesday as a result of unsafe work practices that were not uncovered during the inspection the day before.

Unsafe work practices and behaviors account for far more accidents in the workplace, up to 95%, but what are the factors that allow those unsafe work practices to exist? That's the key to a safe workplace.

Poor or missing safety management system components account just about 98% of all workplace accidents. However, there are instances when system weaknesses are working and cannot be judged as the root cause for an accident:

- The accident results when the employee makes an informed decision to intentionally violate a safety rule;
- The accident is what is termed an "act of God" (lightning, etc.);
- The accident is the result of an illness/disease which is unknown by the employee and not observable by management.

What does OSHA cite?

When OSHA investigates accidents, they generally write citations addressing four general violation categories.

- *Inadequate supervision*: The employer fails to adequately supervise employees;
- *Inadequate education/training*: The employer fails to adequately train employees;
- *Inadequate accountability:* The employer fails to enforce compliance with safety rules and policies;
- *Inadequate resources:* The employer fails to provide adequate resources such as tools, equipment, facilities.

As borne out by OSHA fatality accident investigation reports, the vast majority of injuries occur in these four violation categories. Consequently, safety committees need to look at them as the "Big 4" system weaknesses and focus on them in safety inspections and accident analyses.

Effective safety management, which is an organizational skill, does not allow these system weaknesses to exist in the workplace. The employer has the ability to develop safety management systems that address the vast majority of hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices in the workplace. I believe there is always a way to fix the system to reduce hazards and exposures to an acceptable level.

Hazardous Conditions

A hazardous condition may be thought of as a "state of being" that exists. All workplaces contain hazardous conditions in any one or more of the five categories below. It is easy to remember the categories by using the "MEEPS" acronym:

1. *Materials:* Raw materials such as chemicals, wood, metals, fibers, and plastics may present hazards.
2. *Equipment:* Tools, portable equipment, stationary machinery...anything that moves is hazardous.
3. *Environments:* Physical - Atmospheres, noise, temperature, ergonomics. Psychosocial - inadequate time, unreasonable schedules, unobtainable goals, other employees can create a high level of anxiety, distress leading to illness.
4. *People:* Lack of training, inadequate physical/mental ability, distraction, misuse of drugs, etc. can all create "walking hazardous conditions."

5. *Systems:* Safety management systems in which programs, policies, plans, processes, and procedures are either missing or inadequate.

Unsafe Behaviors

Simply put, unsafe behaviors are what we do or don't do that result in an injury or illness. These include work procedures that increase the likelihood of an injury. Most unsafe behaviors may occur at any level in the organization when we neglect safety responsibilities or take shortcuts to accomplish a task. When managers fail to train, supervise, hold their employees accountable, or set the proper example, they exhibit unsafe behaviors. The longer an employee is exposed to a hazard, the more likely he or she will trivialize its danger and take the "efficient" shortcut to get the work done faster.

Unsafe behaviors may occur at any level in the organization

Unsafe employee behaviors: All employees make choices about safety every day. They may choose to work safely, or they may choose to ignore safety issues. Employees do what they do in the workplace as a result of the consequences they think will occur. Employee actions depend in large measure on the nature of the safety culture they work within. For instance, if your company has large machinery or equipment, you probably have a lockout/tagout program that requires workers to follow specific procedures to make sure machinery does not startup unexpectedly while being repaired. An unsafe work practice would occur when a worker bypasses those procedures, or uses tags when locks are required.

In a worst-case scenario, employees may work within a culture that actually encourages unsafe behaviors. On the other hand, they may work within a safety culture that expects and insists on high standards of safety behavior. It's a matter of culture (leadership) and safety system design (management).

Inappropriate manager behaviors: Safety is too important for managers to merely "encourage". Managers must display and insist on behaviors that produce safe conditions. Failure to do so is a management-level unsafe behavior that may produce hazardous conditions and unsafe behaviors at all various levels in the organization. As position and responsibility increase, so does the impact of unsafe management-level behaviors. Management-level hazardous conditions and unsafe behaviors may occur when:

- Managers unintentionally create hazards or exhibit unsafe behaviors. This is the most common reason management-level hazardous conditions and unsafe behaviors exist. Inadequate education and training, unreasonable workloads or other pressures may

prevent top management from formulating adequate safety systems, middle management from implementing them, and supervisors from overseeing the implementation on a daily basis.

- Managers intentionally create hazards or exhibit unsafe behaviors. I want to think this never happens, but the truth is...it does. However, it's probably quite rare. It usually takes the form of "ignoring" established safety policies and rules: a conscious choice by the supervisor or manager. A more serious situation arises when a supervisor or manager directs an employee to perform an action that creates a hazard or exposes the employee to an existing hazard without proper protection.

Give this some thought...

All leaders get what they give and all managers get what they design.

Safety Management Systems

Every company, large and small, formulates some sort of safety management system (OSHA calls it a "program") to ensure the workplace is safe and healthful. Safety management systems may be designed to maintain OSHA compliance, achieve higher profits, and/or protect valued employees.

No matter what the purpose, the resulting safety management system will be designed perfectly to produce precisely what it produces: It can do nothing but produce what it's designed to produce.

Since weaknesses in safety management system design result in hazards and behaviors that cause accidents, ultimately "fixing the system" is the most effective hazard control strategy in creating a safe and healthful workplace.

Identifying and controlling hazards in the workplace is ultimately most effectively accomplished when all system components are present and adequate. Typical Safety Management System components include:

- **Vision statement:** Tells the world what the company would like to have accomplished in the future. A vision statement is based on an organization's strategic and organizational objectives.

- **Mission statement:** Tells the world why the company exists. It's purpose. What it does.

- **Objectives:** Intended outcomes that support the mission and vision.

- **Policies:** General guidance formulated and implemented by managers at all levels.
- **Programs:** Describe coordinated strategies that support policy.
- **Plans:** Give clear written (formal) guidelines on how to implement programs and policies. Includes long-term strategies and short-term tactics.
- **Processes:** Make sure safety is integrated into operational processes.
- **Procedures:** Ensure concise formal/informal step-by-step instructions.
- **Budgets:** Support investment in all of the above.
- **Rules:** Clearly state specifications and performance standards.
- **Reports:** Reflect process and measures results. Evaluates effectiveness of all the above.

No matter how well a particular safety management system is designed, the results will be flawed if the system is not implemented effectively. Ineffective implementation actually points to other system design flaws. If system design is flawed, it doesn't matter how effective implementation is...the result will not be what was intended.

Managers can "say things" and "do things" to make sure facilities under their control are safe and healthful. They express their expectations and requirements formally by establishing programs, written plans and processes which support the mission, vision, objectives, and policies. Budgets, reports, procedures, and rules support programs and written plans. Managers also express these expectations and requirements informally through their daily communications.

Two Important Tools to Identify Hazards

Your ability to identify hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices can be very effective if you are given the correct tools. We'll talk about two such tools below.

The Safety Inspection...an Effective Tool

The first important tool is rather obvious: It's the safety inspection or audit. Three important points should be remembered when conducting the safety inspection:

- Know what you are doing. Only trained individuals should conduct safety inspections. They should be aware of the different types of hazards in the workplace. Unsafe

materials, tools, equipment, work station design, noise, atmospheres, temperature extremes, and work practices should be evaluated. The inspector should know what to look for, and how to look for it. Get trained.

- Allow enough time to conduct a thorough inspection. The more time you give to complete the safety inspection, the more likely you'll uncover that hazard waiting to injure someone. Actually, a short inspection conducted once a quarter by an untrained safety committee member or supervisor may not be worth the time spent to conduct it.

- Use a checklist.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using the Safety Inspection Checklist

Advantages: Checklists, when properly constructed help you inspect for hazardous conditions and unsafe work procedures in a structured, systematic manner. If a checklist is not used, it's more likely that quality will suffer over time. Without a checklist, the conduct of the inspection will vary widely from person to person, depending on their expertise.

Disadvantages: Simply put, checklists take time to construct: time you may not have. But the long-term advantages far outweigh the short term effort. A second disadvantage is that using a checklist might cause the dreaded "tunnel vision" syndrome when an inspector overlooks a hazard in the workplace because it was not addressed in the checklist. The cure for this common disease is to merely place a "catch-all" question into the checklist that asks if there are any other hazards that need to be corrected.

A better way: the Job Hazard Analysis

The Job Hazard Analysis or "JHA" is a less used procedure to identify and control hazards in the workplace, but it is considered far more effective in reducing injuries and illnesses. The JHA procedures go something like this:

1. The supervisor and employee get together and talk about doing a JHA.
2. The employee works through about five or more cycles of a task;
3. The supervisor records what the employee does;
4. The supervisor and employee break the job down into distinct steps;

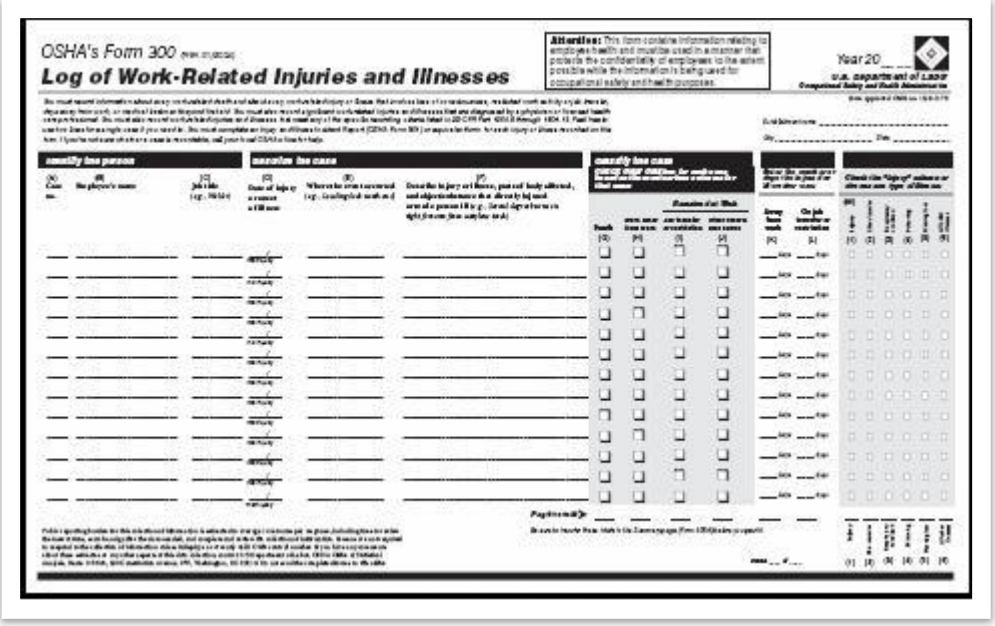
5. They analyze each step for hazardous conditions and practices;
6. They think up ways to correct the hazards in each step;
7. They devise ways to work safely in each step;
8. They write an improved safe work procedure for the job.

The JHA is far more effective than the walk-around inspection because it systematically identifies hazardous work conditions *and* unsafe work practices. The safety inspector conducting a traditional safety inspection may not take the time necessary to watch every job being performed in the area he or she inspects. Consequently, many unsafe work procedures are not discovered. The Job Hazard Analysis does require the time necessary to uncover unsafe work practices and procedures.

The OSHA 300 Log

"What?" you ask... Is the OSHA 300 Log? What is it good for? The OSHA 300 Log is probably the best statistical tool you have in analyzing hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices. More than 25 important injury and illness trends have been identified using the OSHA 300 Log.

Take a look at each column of your company's OSHA 300 Log and ask Who, What, Where, When and How about each. Take the information you gain from this analysis to draw conclusions about where your greatest effort needs to be directed. Most lost workday claims are due to strains and sprains. Your OSHA 300 Log may reflect this trend. At any rate, analyzing the OSHA 300 Log allows you to act on facts, not hunches.


OSHA's Form 300

Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses

Attention: This form contains information relating to employee health and must be used in a manner that protects the confidentiality of employees to the extent possible while the information is being used for occupational safety and health purposes.

Year 20__

U.S. Department of Labor

Think about this too: When an OSHA compliance officer comes inspecting, he or she will review your OSHA 300 Log. It will identify exactly where accidents are occurring and what kind of injuries and illnesses are happening. At that point the compliance officer knows where to put emphasis in the inspection. Make sure all hazards identified on the OSHA 300 Log are corrected!

Final Word

These safety committee success tools are tried and tested winners that, when used effectively, result in great benefits to the safety committee and the employer. Do some planning and implement some of these ideas. Make sure you not only do the right thing...but do the right thing *right*, so that your results are those the committee intended.

Module 5 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

1. **Which of the following is an unsafe behavior?**

    a. Slippery floor
    b. A broken ladder
    c. Fatigue
    d. Horseplay

2. **Which of the following is a hazardous condition?**

    a. Using a dim computer monitor screen
    b. Using an unsharpened saw
    c. Fatigue
    d. Climbing a broken ladder

3. **Ultimately, which is the greater cause of all workplace injuries and illnesses?**

    a. Lack of common sense
    b. Hazardous Conditions
    c. Unsafe work practices
    d. Inadequate safety management systems

4. **Why is the JHA considered superior to the safety inspection in reducing workplace injuries and illnesses?**

    a. The JHA established non-accountabilities
    b. The process analyzes conditions and behaviors
    c. The process takes less time
    d. The procedure takes less training

5. **The OSHA 300 Log is a valuable analysis tool that helps uncover all of the following, EXCEPT _____.**

    a. where injuries occur
    b. what kind of injuries are occurring
    c. who to blame
    d. how employees are injured

Module 6: Problem Solving Techniques

As a safety professional, you are or will be engaged in the process of solving safety management system problems for your employer or client. It's important to have a general understanding of the basic steps involved in the process so that you acquire adequate skills. In this module, we will take a look at the basic steps in problem solving and some of the proven techniques to efficiently and effectively solve your organization's safety management system challenges.

Solving Safety Problems

Solving safety-related problems centers around two key strategies:

- Finding solutions for the surface cause problems. Eliminating/reducing the hazardous conditions and unsafe work behaviors that will become the actual/possible surfaces causes of accidents, and

- Finding solutions for the root cause problems. Improving inadequate or missing safety and health programs, policies, plans, processes, and procedures that represent the actual/potential root causes for accidents.

The Basic Steps in the Problem Solving Process

As with any process, there are a number of required steps involved to ensure a successful outcome. Let's examine five steps that every problem solving task should involve.

Step 1: Understand the problem.

- Describe the observable/measurable conditions and behaviors that represent the “signs and symptoms." of the problem.

- Determine the nature of the problem. Is the problem one of inadequate leadership or management? Does it involve negative or improper relationships between people? Or is it a problem of process, quality, equipment, or materials?

- Determine the scope of the problem. Does it affect individuals, groups, departments, the facility, the company, or the industry?

- Write a descriptive problem statement. Problem statements should be operational. That is, they should be expressed in measurable/observable outcomes. For example; “There

has been a 50% increase in the number of strain/sprain injuries in the warehouse over the last six months."

- Determine if a problem really exists. Is the problem statement accurate? It's crucial that the group achieve consensus on the problem statement.

- Determine priorities. If more than one problem exists, which one should we solve first? It's important that the group, not an individual, determine the most important problem to work on.

Step 2: Discover the cause(s)

- Analyze the problem. Break the problem down into component parts. Some simple techniques: Circle key words. Accident investigation - Develop a sequence of steps.

- Ask who, what, where, why, when, and how, to get to the source or root cause of the problem.

Step 3: Target Solutions

- Develop specific primary and alternative solution strategies. Focus on engineering, work practice, and administrative controls, or personal protective equipment to make correct corrective actions. Focus on implementing or revising programs, policies, plans, processes and/or procedures to make safety management system improvements.

- Determine resources and responsibilities. Physical and human resources will be required for most corrective actions and system improvements.

- Design specific primary and alternative solutions. Developing alternative corrective actions and system improvements will give management choices and a feeling of control over the outcome.

- Decide on appropriate timelines. The sooner the better, of course, but in some instances, it may be impossible to correct or improve immediately. Generally, you might promote the following schedule: Serious impact - immediate or as soon as possible. Minor impact - within 30 days.

Step 4: Sell the solution

What is an effective recommendation? You'll learn more about submitting a recommendation that "sells the fix" in the next module. When recommendations are not acted upon it may be because the supervisor does not have enough information to make a decision and therefore doesn't act right away. To speed up the process and to improve the approval rate, the presenter of the recommendation must learn to anticipate the questions that the supervisor must answer in order to sign off on the requested change. The more pertinent information included, the higher the odds are for approval.

Step 5: Implement the solution

Your work in problem solving is not done once you have gained agreement on the solution. In fact, you problem(s) may just be starting. Implementing the solution to problems that require reorganization and changes in processes, procedures, policies, and corporate culture requires an understanding of the dynamics of change and transition.

- Change is imposed by an external source. It is usually threatening to a person. Change may involve a new boss, new procedures, or new products. Change will not succeed unless each affected employee transitions internally.
- Transition occurs within each affected employee. It's a psychological process of adapting to externally imposed change. It involves changes in behavior and performance.
- According to William Bridges, Managing Transitions, there are three phases of transition that all employees must complete before successful change can occur:
    - *Phase One:* Letting go. Ending the old order. Unfreeze old behavior. Acceptance.
    - *Phase Two:* Adapting. Searching for new identity. Limbo. Neutral zone. Learning new behaviors, performance.
    - *Phase Three:* Grabbing hold. A new beginning. Refreeze new behavior. Acceptance.

Applying the techniques

Developing solutions to surface cause problems may occasionally require different tools and techniques than those required to solve root cause problems. So, we'll first review the problem

solving tools and techniques that help address surface causes, and then shift gears somewhat to discuss problem solving for root causes.

But first, let's introduce you to the following scenario and next use it as the context within which we'll discuss problem solving in each of the two areas. Carefully read the following accident scenario and then reference it to answer the questions that follow:

Scenario

Bob was a new hire employee working as a clean-up person in the finish department of XYZ, Inc's particle board plant.

On his first day of work, he received an initial classroom orientation on company policies from the personnel department.

He was also introduced to his new supervisor who gave him a walk-around tour of the plant.

Since his supervisor was quite busy, and didn't have time to fully brief Bob on his new job, he was then given some simple initial duties to accomplish.

He was busy cleaning up around the floor under the return belt of a conveyor connected to a large piece of machinery.

He removed a guard covering pinch points on the conveyor, and reached into the area to remove the piece of wood.

Bob’s glove became caught in the return drum nip point, and he was drawn into the machinery.

Luckily, Bob was eventually able to pull himself out of the machinery before being injured.

XYZ, Inc. has a mod rate of 1.5. Unfortunately, this incident was not a total surprise to the company. Most of their OSHA 300 Log recordable accidents have been the result of injuries to employees within their first six months on the job.

What's a mod rate? The experience modification rate (mod) compares an establishment’s workers’ compensation claims experience to other employers of similar size operating in the same type of business. The mod rate reflects a company's safety record and affects its insurance premium.

- If the mod rate is higher than 1.0, the employer's experience is worse than expected and insurance premiums will be higher than the average for companies within the industry.

- If the mod rate is below 1.0, the employer's experience is better than expected and insurance premiums will be lower than average for companies in the industry.

- Just remember, the company's safety goal is to achieve a mod rate below 1.0. For more information see NCCI - ABC's of Experience Rating

Understanding the Problems

Incidents like the one above at XYZ Inc. actually happen. If this had been an injury accident it would have had long-lasting negative effects on both the victim and the company. Naturally, it is smart business policy to uncover and correct the hazards involved before they result in injury.

Getting to the facts: Five-Why Analysis

One technique used in accident investigation to arrive at the surface and root cause(s) of an accident is called "5 Why Analysis." It combines the traditional who, when, where, what and why method of questioning with the more contemporary continuous quality improvement Five Whys technique. This method asks:

- Who is getting hurt? Are individuals or groups getting hurt over and over, and is it the same kind of injury?

- What actually caused the injuries? This question looks for the basic cause of the physical trauma to the body. This might be best answered determining trends in the following accident types:

- *Struck by:* A person is forcefully struck by an object. The force of the Contact is provided by the object. Example: Struck by a falling object.

- *Struck against:* A person forcefully strikes an object. The person provides the force or energy. Example: Running up against a wall.

- *Fall from elevation:* A person slips or trips and falls to a level below the one he or she was walking or standing on. Example: Fall over edge while shingling roof.

- *Fall to surface:* A person slips or trips and falls to the surface he or she is working or standing on. Example: fall due to slippery floor.

- *Contact with:* A person contacts a harmful substance or material. The person initiates the contact. Example: Contacting electricity.

- *Contact by:* Contact by a substance or material that, by its very nature, is harmful and causes injury or illness. Example: Acid splashes on a person's face.

- *Caught on:* A person is somehow caught on an object that is either moving or stationary. This may cause the person to lose his or her balance and fall, be pulled into a machine, or suffer other harm. Example: A person is dragged into a machine because loose clothing is caught on a conveyor belt.

- *Caught in:* A person is trapped or otherwise caught in an opening or enclosure. Example: A person's arm is stuck in a printing machine when it starts up and causes injury.

- *Caught between:* A person is crushed, pinched, or otherwise caught between a moving and a stationary object, or between two moving objects. Example: Person is crushed between moving crane and wall.

- *Bodily reaction:* Caused solely from stress imposed by free movement of the body or assumption of a standard or unnatural body position. Example: Person bends over to plug in a tool and strains back.

- *Over-exertion:* A person over-extends or strains beyond ability to lift, lower, push, pull an object. Example: Person strains back while lifting a box.

- *Over-exposure:* Over a period of time, a person is exposed to harmful energy, such as noise, heat, toxic chemicals, or hazardous atmospheres. Example: Person loses consciousness due to lack of oxygen.

When are workers getting hurt? Look for trends in:

- A particular time of the day. Early or late in the work shift?

- A particular day of the week. Mondays? Fridays?

- A particular week of the month. Just before payday? Last production week?

- A particular month of the year. December?

- A particular quarter of the year. Last fiscal quarter?

- A particular season of the year. Just before hunting season?

- A particular business cycle. Just before annual report?

How was the worker injured? This question is directed toward hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices? Were hazardous materials, tools, equipment, being used? What was the worker not using: personal protective equipment? Are work shifts too long? Were workers using unsafe practices? Are workers getting hurt as a result of factors within or outside of work: factors the employer controls, or can't control?

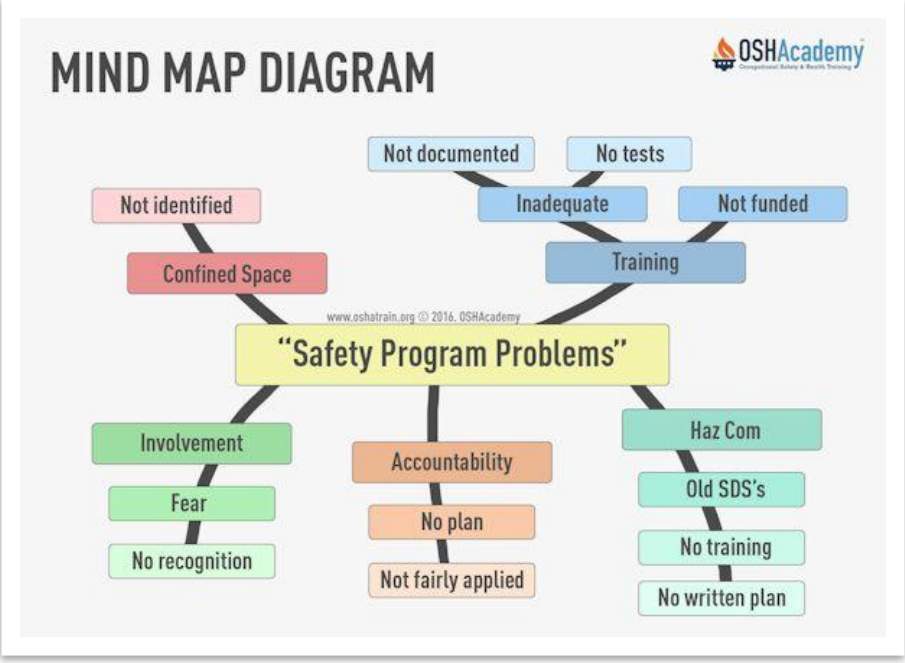
Why did the above occur? Did someone do something or create a hazardous condition that indirectly resulted in the conditions and behaviors you arrived at above?

- Why...? Is there inadequate or missing training, supervision, accountability?
- Why...? Is there an inadequate or missing procedure?
- Why...? Is there an inadequate or missing policy?
- Why...? Is there an inadequate or missing program?

As you can see, the first set of questions get at the surface cause(s) for the accident. Once we know what directly caused the injury or illness, we begin to ask why to arrive at root causes. Each time a why question is asked, a deeper root cause is uncovered.

Getting to the facts: Mind Mapping

Mind Mapping, or "Instantaneous non-linear cognitive deduction utilizing spatial forms in a two-dimensional plane." (huh?) No, actually mind mapping is merely drawing circles and lines to help you quickly think about and categorize ideas, problems, concepts, subjects, and just about anything else. Mind mapping is successful



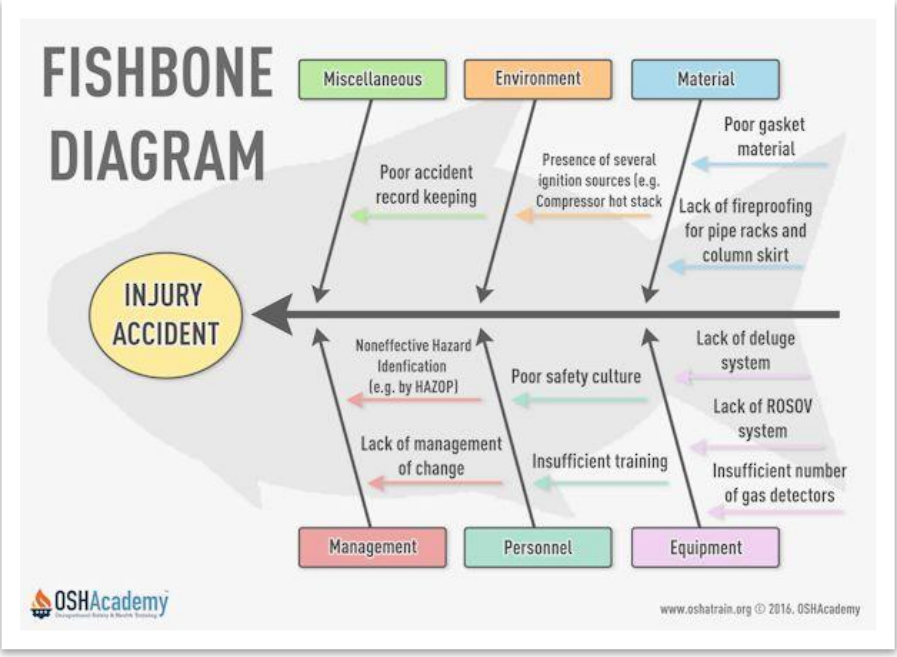
because it takes advantage of the brain's natural ability to categorize ideas in a rapid, but rather unorganized manner.

Look at the mind map below. At the center we write the problem. Next, think of the factors that are more obvious causes for the problem. (This works best by letting your subconscious do the work while you watch TV or work on another project) Next, take a look at each factor listed and ask why the cause exists. After a while you would build a diagram similar in form (but not content) to the one below.

Using this technique, you will be able to take any topic, project, or problem and quickly determine related categories of processes, procedures, topics or events. Once the mind map is complete, it is merely a matter of reorganizing the information into the more common "outline" format.

Something's fishy here...

Another tool similar to the mind map is called the Fishbone Diagram or "Cause and Effect Diagram. Basically, it's just a mind map using a different form. The diagram illustrates this. The "Effect" describes the problem. Possible causes are listed in one of several categories that you determine. Generally, these categories might be people, materials, equipment, environment, methods, or procedures.



Getting to the facts: Brainstorming

You are probably familiar with this problem-solving technique. Brainstorming can be used by individuals or groups quite successfully to quickly develop a list of possible solutions to

problems. There are six basic and unalterable rules to the group process of brainstorming that set it apart from other problem-solving procedures. They are:

- *Define the issue*: Make sure everyone is clear on the problem you are going to brainstorm.
- *Critical non-judgment:* Defer judgment on any idea that is expressed. This even includes encouraging comments to others or qualifying phrases attached to your own suggestions.
- *Organized chaos:* The session should be as freewheeling as possible, with each person voicing whatever ideas come to mind - - no holds barred. Ideas may be expressed in rapid, machine-gun, fashion. Don't limit the creativity.
- *Similar originality:* Participants are encouraged to hitchhike or piggyback on the ideas of others. When one person's suggestion sparks an idea by another, it should be instantly expressed. Lots of "ah-ha's"...
- *Quantity, not quality:* The more ideas the better. The goal of brainstorming is to get as many ideas as possible. Evaluation and elimination can be accomplished later.
- *Brief summary statements:* Don't go into great detailed explanations of your idea. You want the recorder to be able to have time to write down all ideas as team members think of them.

Perception is Reality

The survey is an excellent problem solving tool to help identify the perceptions of a number of employees. What they perceive is their reality, so it's important to understand what they think. Safety committees and coordinators can gain a wealth of valuable information about the safety management system with this technique. To help ensure the survey is effective, do the following:

1. Gather a team. Best if led by trained employees.
2. Determine who you are going to sample. All departments should be represented. Randomly select from three groups: mangers, supervisors, employees.
3. Decide how you are going to do the survey. Keep it simple and confidential. Use computer software or manual system.

4. Tell everyone why you are going to have a survey. This is a critical step. Explain clearly. Express the importance of the survey. Explain who is involved, what the survey is about, how it is being administered, and especially why it's important.

5. Conduct the survey. The key to high participation is a quick response. Honor confidentiality and reward participation.

6. Summarize the results. What are the perceptions of each of the three groups: managers, supervisors, employees?

7. Meet directly with the top decision-maker to discuss the results. This helps reduce misunderstanding and is more likely to get top management buy-in. It also bypasses gatekeepers who might revise the results or prevent the results from being heard.

Final Words

We've discussed a sampling of some common problem solving techniques, but there are many others available that can help you and the safety committee quickly arrive at solutions to apparently complicated problems that might surface. I want to encourage you to continue to explore all available methods. Well, I think it's about time for your module quiz, don't you?

Module 6 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

1. **Safety committee problem solving usually involves finding solutions to which of the following?**

    a. Hazardous conditions
    b. Weaknesses in the safety program
    c. Unsafe work practices
    d. All of the above

2. **Which of the following is an example of a surface cause?**

    a. Machine not properly guarded.
    b. Safety rules are not written.
    c. The process used to investigate accidents is flawed.
    d. Lockout/tagout procedures are inadequate.

3. **The mind map tool is useful only to group problem solving.**

    a. True
    b. False

4. **This activity is an excellent problem solving tool to help identify perceptions of a number of employees.**

    a. Fishbone diagram
    b. Brainstorming
    c. Survey
    d. Games

5. Why is it important to discuss the results of a survey with the CEO?

a. Bypass the gatekeepers
b. Reduce misunderstanding
c. More likely to get top management support
d. All of the above are important

Module 7: Developing Effective Recommendations

What is a good recommendation?

Once you have developed engineering and administrative controls to eliminate or reduce injuries, the challenge becomes convincing management to make changes. Management will most likely understand the importance of taking corrective action and readily agree to you ideas. However, if management doesn't quite understand the benefits, success becomes less likely. Your ability to present effective recommendations becomes all that more important. This module will help you learn how do put together "an offer they can't refuse," by emphasizing the long-term bottom-line benefits of the corrective action you are recommending.

Why decision-makers don't respond quickly...

When recommendations are not acted upon, it is usually because the decision-maker does not have enough information to make a judgment. To speed up the process and to improve the approval rate, you must learn to anticipate the questions the decision-maker will ask in order to sign off on the requested change. This being the case, the more pertinent information included in the presentation, the higher the odds are for approval.

To develop great recommendations, ask six key questions.

Remember the scenario from Module 6? If you didn't, I've placed it below for your review. We're going to use this scenario to make some effective recommendations for corrective action. We want to make sure this accident never happens to Bob (or anyone else) again. You'll do this by reviewing the accident scenario and answering six key questions. With the information gained, you will conclude by writing a recommendation. Your job is to convince me (your supervisor) that your ideas make sense... and I'm busy, so make it good!

Scenario

Bob was a new hire employee working as a clean-up person in the finish department of XYZ, Inc's particle board plant.

On his first day of work, he received an initial classroom orientation on company policies from the personnel department. He was also introduced to his new supervisor who gave him a walk-around tour of the plant.

Since his supervisor was quite busy, and didn't have time to fully brief Bob on his new job, he was then given some simple initial duties to accomplish. He was busy cleaning up around the floor under the return belt of a conveyor connected to a large piece of machinery.

He removed a guard covering pinch points on the conveyor, and reached into the area to remove the piece of wood. Bob's glove became caught in the return drum nip point, and he was drawn into the machinery. Luckily, Bob was eventually able to pull himself out of the machinery before being injured.

XYZ, Inc. has an experience modification rate (MOD) of 1.35. Workers compensation premiums for last year totaled $100,000 which included a $100,000 standard premium plus a $35,000 surcharge (35%) as a result of the below average MOD. To add injury to insult, XYZ, Inc. is also in an "assigned risk pool" because they can't get an insurer to cover them, so they must pay out an another $52,000 (35%) penalty. The total annual workers compensation premium, therefore, is $187,000. Unfortunately, this incident was not a total surprise to the company. Twenty five of their 30 OSHA 300 Log recordable injuries and illnesses for the previous year involved employees working in various departments within their first six months on the job.

Answer the following six questions to help develop and justify recommendations.

1. What exactly is the problem?

- What are the specific hazardous conditions and unsafe work practices that caused the problem?
- What are system components - the inadequate design or implementation of safety management programs, policies, plans, processes, procedures and general practices that allowed the conditions and behaviors to exist?

2. What is the history of the problem?

Have similar accidents occurred previously? If so, you should be able to claim that the probability for similar accidents is highly likely to certain. What are previous direct and indirect costs for similar accidents? How have similar accidents affected production and morale?

- Describe how it has affected direct, budgeted or insured costs related to past injuries or illnesses.

- How has it affected indirect, unbudgeted or uninsured costs related to loss of efficiency and/or productivity and employee morale?

3. What are the solutions that would correct the problem?

What are the specific engineering, administrative and PPE controls that, when applied, will eliminate or at least reduce exposure to the hazardous conditions? What are the specific system improvements needed to ensure a long term fix?

4. Who is the decision-maker?

Who is the person who can approve, authorize, and act on the corrective measures? What are the possible objections that he/she might have? What are the arguments that will be most effective in overcoming objections?

5. Why is that person doing safety?

It's important to know what is motivating the decision-maker. Is the decision-maker doing safety to fulfill one or more of the following imperatives?

- Fulfill the legal obligation? You may need to emphasize possible penalties if corrections are not made. Common in a fear-driven culture.

- Fulfill the fiscal obligation? You may want to emphasize the costs/benefits. Common in an achievement-driven culture.

- Fulfill the social obligation? You may want to emphasize improved morale, public relations. Common in a humane corporate culture.

- Employer motivation will determine the nature of the objections to the recommendations you submit. What are possible objections the decision-maker might raise? Whatever they might be, it's important you understand their motivations so that you are better prepared with responses that satisfy the decision-maker's needs.
- List the possible decision-maker objections.
- List the arguments that are most likely to be successful against those objections.
- As a last resort: Review employer obligations under administrative law.

6. What will be the cost/benefits of corrective actions and system improvements?

- What are the costs that might result if/when OSHA inspects? Answer this question to address the legal obligation your employer has.
- What is the estimated investment required to take corrective action, and how does that contrast with the possible costs if corrective actions are not taken? Answer this question to address the fiscal obligation your employer has.
- What is the "message" sent to the workforce and the community as a result of action or inaction? Answer this question to address the social obligation your employer has.

It's important to have the answers to all of these questions ready for the decision maker.

The maintenance supervisor may be able to help you estimate the investment required for recommended corrective actions.

Below are some additional ideas for you to consider.

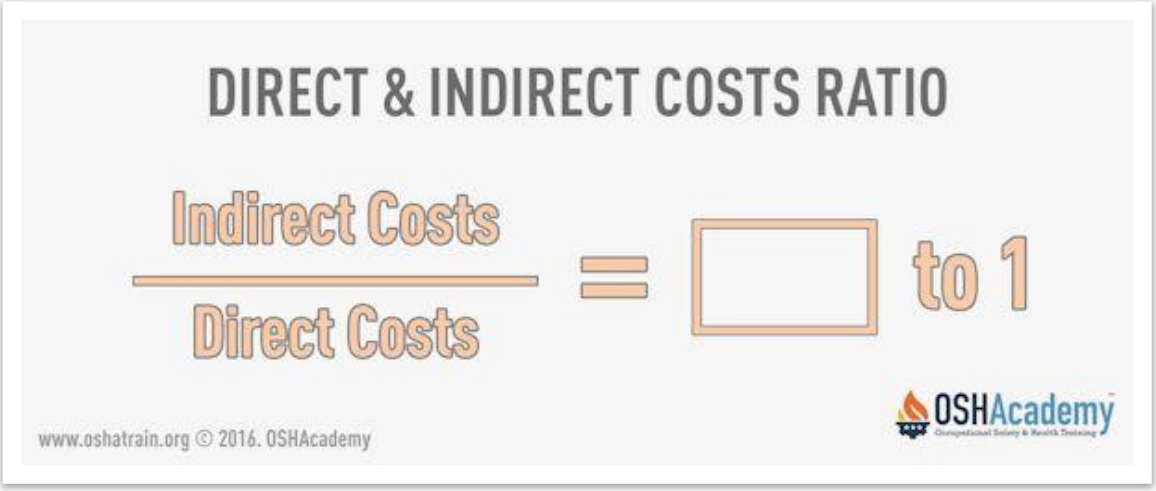
- These options must also eliminate or reduce the hazards and the exposures;
- Try to include at least three (real world) but only one or two for this exercise;
- Briefly list low/high cost solutions that eliminate the problem now/soon;
- Briefly list low/high cost solutions that reduce the problem now/soon;
- Briefly list the advantages and disadvantages of each solution.

Estimating direct and indirect costs...

The direct and indirect accident costs represent the "benefits" if we adopt the recommended actions. The benefits are realized as savings in these costs. The company will not have to pay them out over the foreseeable future. To help estimate direct and indirect costs, you can use OSHA's Safety Pays software. This is an excellent software tool that determines direct and indirect accident costs. It also calculates the business volume required to cover those costs. The data is based on 52,000 lost-time claims submitted to a major workers compensation insurance carrier.

What is the ratio between direct and indirect costs in your scenario?

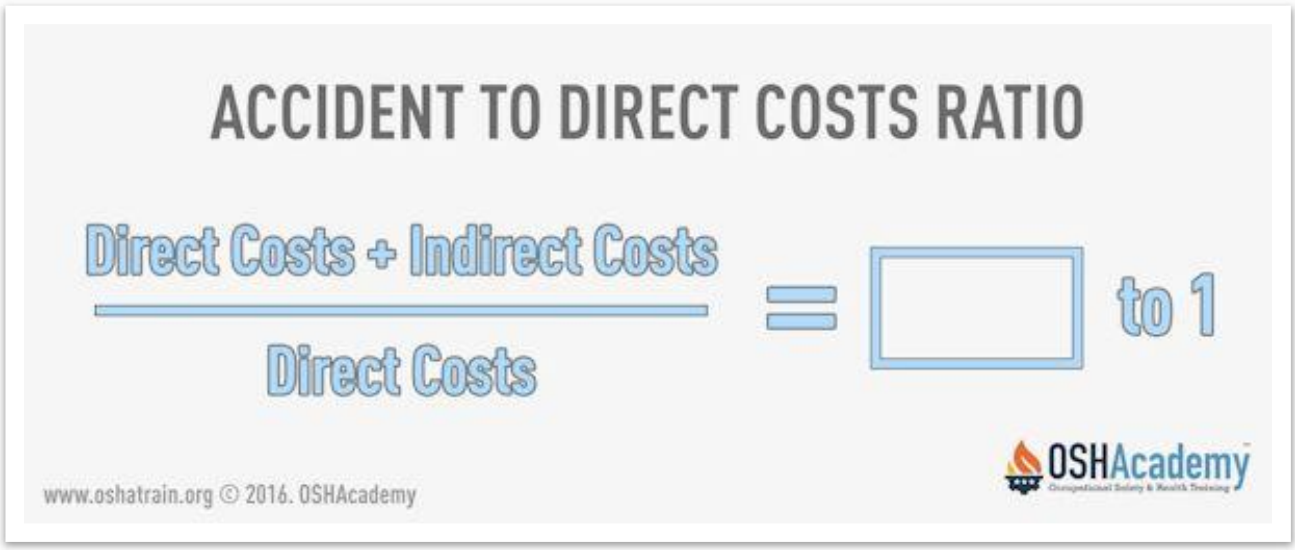
The indirect costs for accidents will usually be higher than the direct costs. Generally this ratio will be 1.5 or higher. To determine the ratio between the indirect and direct costs, use the following equation:



Let's say an employee injured his hand (requiring surgery) while working around the machinery in our scenario. If the indirect (uninsured) accident cost totals $160,000 and the direct (insured) cost is $40,000, the ratio of indirect to direct costs will be 4:1. This ratio just happens to be the most common or "average" ratio between indirect and direct accident costs in the USA.

What is the ratio between total accident costs to direct costs?

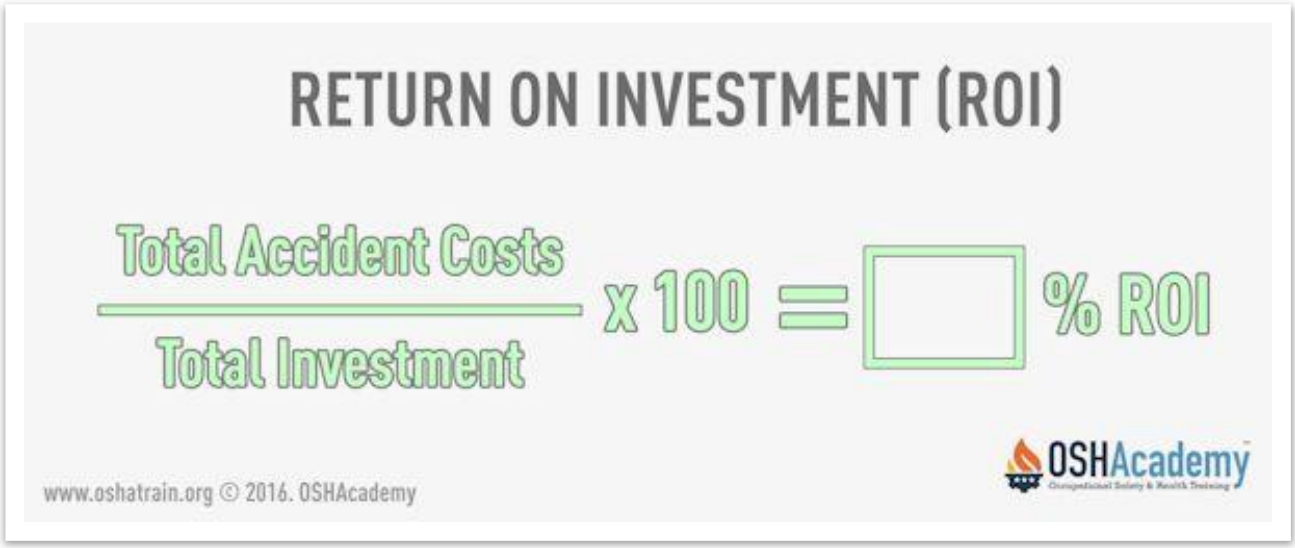
This ratio is a little more dramatic than contrasting the indirect costs with direct costs. It helps emphasize the fact that direct costs are actually just the tip of the iceberg. To determine this ratio, use the following equation:



In this case, if the indirect (uninsured) cost totals $160,000 and the direct (insured) cost is $40,000, the ratio of total costs to direct costs will be $200,000/$40,000 = 5:1. What will XYZ have to earn in sales to pay back this lost money? Well, if XYZ has a 5% profit margin, they'll have to earn 20X the total accident cost, or $4 million in sales!!!

What is XYZ Manufacturing's return on their investment going to be?

To determine ROI, it's necessary to estimate the amount of the initial investment required to complete corrective actions and safety system improvements. Once the initial investment is determined, use the equation below to determine ROI.



Let's say our investment to train all employees on lockout/tagout procedures, machine guarding and PPE while working around machinery will be $20,000. If our total accident cost is $200,000, our ROI will be 1000%!!! Now that's a return.

Final Words

Well, how was that? Pretty tough... but the whole idea is to help you get through the rough parts now, so that you will be able to develop and present an effective recommendation to top management the first time! It is time to take the review quiz, so let's go.

Module 7 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

1. **Which of the following is not a characteristic of an effective recommendation?**

    a. Lists benefits vs. costs
    b. Places blame on someone
    c. Gives alternative options
    d. Corrects surface and root causes

2. **Which of the following are important reasons for providing options?**

    a. Gives the decision makers ability to choose
    b. Gives the decision maker control over the corrective action
    c. Takes unknown factors into consideration
    d. All of those reasons listed are important

3. **If the decision-maker is merely doing safety to meet OSHA requirements, you may have to do which of the following to most likely overcome objections to a recommendation?**

    a. Emphasize the legal obligation
    b. Emphasize the financial obligation
    c. Emphasize the moral obligation
    d. Emphasize the social obligation

4. **It is important to promote the idea that all expenditures for the purpose of making corrective actions and system improvements are _____.**

    a. costs
    b. investments
    c. immediate losses
    d. funded by workers compensation

5. Who should most appropriately receive your recommendations for corrective action?

a. Safety committee chair
b. Safety director
c. The decision-maker
d. OSHA

Module 8: Conducting Safety Committee Meetings

Meetings...you either love'm or hate'm!

One of the most important factors impacting on the success of the safety committee is the quality of the meetings. I'm sure you've been to meetings that were poorly managed. You probably don't look forward to attending another meeting like that. The safety committee is certainly not immune from being perceived as a waste of time, so it's important that the safety committee chairperson conduct an effective meeting. Believe it or not, safety committee meetings may be very interesting. Let's take a look at some of the things that can help ensure your meetings are not only interesting, but exciting!

Characteristics of an Effective Safety Committee Meeting

Meetings are organized. The committee chair has planned the meeting. The meeting starts and ends on time. Committee members follow an agenda that includes new and old business. Every meeting includes some kind of training.

Surprise! The most effective committee meetings are composed of about 80% expected and 20% unexpected activities. It's always a little more interesting if members anticipate a "surprise" somewhere in the meeting.

Role and purpose are understood. The shape of the meeting is a function of the perceived role the safety committee plays. The role of the safety committee answers the question, "who are we?" Role also determines purpose, or "what the safety committee does." It's very important that all members clearly understand what their role and purpose are.

Objectives and completion dates are set. Operational objectives are more than goals. Objectives state results that are observable, measurable, and completed within stated time limits. For instance, a wish might be to, "increase awareness." An operational objective supporting this goal might be, "Educate all employees in our plant about direct and indirect accident costs by the end of the year." We can observe the training process. We're going to train all employees. We're going to do this by the end of the year.

Extent of authority is understood: The degree of authority may be determined by OSHA law and/or the employer. In any case, with authority comes accountability. Authority, accountability, role and purpose are all interrelated. All must be clearly understood.

Standards of behavior: Ground rules that shape the “committee culture” are extremely important. What are the commonly accepted norms of behavior during the meeting? Establishing and posting written ground rules during the meeting will help keep the meeting effective. More on this later.

Clear communication: Does the safety chairperson use all mediums effectively to communicate details of the meeting before, during and after it occurs? Agendas, handouts, videos, guests, and ground rules all help to clearly communicate the message to members.

Member commitment: If the meeting is interesting, communication clear, and if effective consequences are designed into the safety system, members will consistently attend. During the meeting members actively participate.

Delegated responsibilities and duties: We all know the safety committee chair can't do it all. It's extremely important that everyone be involved in the meeting process. Active involvement will happen only if responsibilities are delegated to members.

Member input and interaction: The successful meeting invites everyone to participate. Interaction is expected, however, ground rules establish appropriate and inappropriate interaction. The most effective safety committee chairs tap into the creativity of each member.

Members trained: The safety committee is a great training ground for "management wannabees," and in fact, some companies consider the safety committee a "management apprentice program" for prospective supervisors and managers. As we learned in other modules, in addition to hazard identification and accident investigation, safety committee members will benefit from other topics as well. They include meeting management (of course), conflict resolution, problem solving, and group communications.

Preparing for the Meeting

The preparation for the safety committee meeting begins as soon as it's over. What? That's right. As soon as the meeting is over, the effective chairperson will begin preparing for the next meeting while everything is fresh in his or her mind. And, as with every process, the more you do it, the easier it gets. Below are some important actions a chairperson can take to prepare for the meeting.

- Determine and define the purpose of the meeting. What is the meeting supposed to get done? Not all meetings have the same purpose, so don't downplay this task.
- Set the meeting date, time, place. Regular dates, times, locations help everyone set their calendars;
- Build the agenda. Get input from all members and other interested persons;
  - Transfer old business;
  - Request input from members;
  - Incorporate new business topics;
  - State objectives;
- Develop training minutes;
- Gather supportive materials;
- Distribute the agenda to CEO, plant manager, supervisors, etc.;
- Post copy so all employees can see it;
- Place a copy of agenda in Safety Committee file.

Conducting the Meeting

A few years ago I had a conversation with a participant in one of my safety workshops. He mentioned that the first meeting he conducted was an absolute disaster. He didn't have a clue what to do, so he stumbled through the meeting as best he could. But, his fellow committee members were patient, and gave him some patient support. After a few months of trial and tribulation he really mastered the process, and is now much more confident and competent in running the meeting. Below are his "tips for conducting successful meetings."

- Arrive early, so you can be ready when others arrive.
- Set up the room to facilitate group communications.
- Refreshments? Why not! A small investment that can have large returns.

- Start on time. Don't wait for stragglers...it only promotes lateness.
- State purpose and objectives. Helps others focus...stay on target.
- Establish time limits. Very important for planning.
- Set and/or reestablish ground rules. A poster works great for this.
- Review agenda and set priorities.
- Stick to the agenda. Part of the ground rules...don't allow off topic discussions.
- Assign responsibilities and completion dates. Make sure they are entered into the minutes.
- Summarize agreements on assignments and completion dates.
- Limit interruptions. Intervene early or interruptions will proliferate.
- Review assignments to clarify expectations.
- Keep minutes or a written record.
- Close on time or before if possible. This is important to everyone.

Establishing the ground rules

Ground rules tell safety committee members about the procedures that are followed and behaviors that are acceptable or not acceptable. It's crucial that ground rules be developed by the members so that they "own" the rules. Ground rules should be written and clearly understood by all members. You may want to write the ground rules along with the safety committee agenda. Members can review the ground rules as they get ready for the meeting. Below are two basic types of ground rules.

- Procedural ground rules. These ground rules establish proper procedures for conducting the meeting. Examples include each person having five minutes to make a comment, the meeting starting and ending on time, and one person - one vote. This final rule helps to make sure one committee member does not always gets his or her own way or exert too much influence over decisions.

- Behavioral ground rules. These ground rules guide behaviors of individual members during the meeting. Examples include not interrupting or laughing at others while they are speaking, and not using foul language or inappropriate humor. I remember being criticized for "rolling" my eyes while others were speaking. That little nasty habit really bothered people :-) Live and learn.

Old business

Start by reviewing any old business that you might have from the last meeting. Warning, don't let this old business build up as it will send the message that the safety committee is a "do nothing" group. Don't get in the habit of "revisiting" too much. (I never heard that term until I started working for state government... they do a lot of revisiting :-)

New business

Here's where the fun begins. Hopefully, new business in your safety committee may include a variety of topics and tasks. Once again, most new business can be expected, but be sure to include a little bit of a surprise to help keep interest. Here are some ideas for new business:

Department hazard reports: Safety committees that have a limited understanding of the valuable contribution they can make to the safety culture usually limit new business to hazard reports.

OSHA 300 Log Status: In my years of educating safety committees, I've found that most members do not understand the value of the OSHA 300 Log. In fact, most don't know that the OSHA 300 Log is. Effective safety committees review the OSHA 300 Log during each meeting to help determine trends. (More on this topic in Course 708, OSHA Recordkeeping).

Safety Inspection report. If your safety committee conducts regular safety inspections, it's important to review the results with the safety committee. This can be an excellent opportunity to do some hazard identification and control training. The review of the inspection might include:

- Hazard trends;
- Potential root causes;
- Recommendations for corrective action;
- Cost/Benefit analysis related to corrective actions.

Accident analysis reports: The committee can review and evaluate the quality of the accident analysis report. I don't recommend the committee be involved in any way with determination of negligence or disciplinary actions. Remember, the safety committee is a consultant group, not a policing group. The main goal of the safety committee is to improve the system, not place blame. When evaluating accident reports, check for:

- An accurate description of the events leading up to and including the injury event.
- The primary, secondary, and root causes of the accident;
- Recommendations for corrective action and system improvement;
- Cost/Benefit analysis.

Program reviews: If members of the safety committee are responsible for monitoring and evaluating various safety programs such as the Hazard Communication Program, Confined Space Program, or PPE Program, a quarterly or annual review of the program is not only informative, it's educational. And, program reviews are very effective continuous improvement strategies.

Evaluate safety management system: Effective safety committees are involved in evaluating the various activity elements of a safety management system. These elements include:

- *Commitment:* Proactive investment in safety. TMC = time money communications.
- *Accountability:* Standards, resources, measurement, consequences, evaluation.
- *Involvement:* Communications, problem solving, suggesting, etc.
- *Hazard Analysis and Prevention:* Inspection, JHA, control strategies.
- *Accident Analysis and Correction:* To fix the system, not the blame.
- *Education and training:* Tied to accountability - natural and system consequences.
- *Continuous improvement:* To evaluate all the other elements.
- *Discuss new rules:* It's important to review any new company policies, government regulations, or industry standards with the safety committee. An educational "heads up" will help members answer potential questions in their departments.

- *Training:* Every safety committee meeting should include some sort of short training session. A short video or presentation by a guest speaker or committee member will help to increase knowledge, skills, and attitudes. A five- or ten-minute mini-training session may be all that's needed.

Follow-up

It's not over until the paper work is done! Once the meeting is over, it's time to begin planning for the next meeting (can't say that too many times :-) It's important to be communicating with the safety committee throughout the month to:

- Respond to concerns raised;
- Keep in contact with members;
- Discuss assignments - are they being accomplished?
- Get feedback on meeting;
- Make sure minutes are promptly typed, posted and distributed;
- Thank members who attended;
- Brief members who were absent;
- Place unfinished business on agenda for next meeting.

Revise and improve: Given all the feedback, the chairperson may more effectively improve the many processes and procedures related to safety committees.

Final Words

Well, there you have it. All you wanted to know (and maybe more) about running a safety committee meeting. We go into greater detail about meeting management in Course 707. Right now, it's time to take the quiz. Remember, review all your quizzes before taking the final exam!

Module 8 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

1. **One of the most important factors impacting on the success of the safety committee is the _____.**

   a. number of people on the committee
   b. quality of the meetings
   c. absence of management
   d. authority to discipline

2. **Effective preparation for the next safety committee meeting begins _____.**

   a. the day before the meeting
   b. the day after the last meeting
   c. two weeks prior to the meeting
   d. one week prior to the meeting

3. **"Committee members will not interrupt while another member is speaking," is an example of a _____.**

   a. policy
   b. ground rule
   c. procedure
   d. meeting format

4. **Which of the following is the focus of ineffective safety committee meetings?**

   a. Finding who is at fault
   b. Safety program status
   c. Quality of accident reports
   d. Training

5. **Which technique helps to make sure one person does not always get his or her own way?**

   a. Call in a manager to decide
   b. The safety chairperson has the last say
   c. One person, one vote ground rule
   d. Insisting on unanimity