If your company has a safety committee, it's critical that meetings are conducted in an efficient and effective manner. This course covers the safety committee meeting process. The role and purpose of the safety committee, preparing and conducting the meeting, success tools, handling conflict, and activities after the meeting are also discussed. With this course, you will learn how to develop the techniques and tools to conduct an interesting meeting filled with motivated members.
OSHAcademy Course 707 Study Guide

Effective OSH Committee Meetings

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This study guide is designed to be reviewed off-line as a tool for preparation to successfully complete OSHAcademy Course 707.

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

Do you hear sighs, groans, or sarcastic remarks when the "safety committee meeting" is announced? Best safety management practices encourage safety teams to help employers improve their safety management systems. The primary forum to conduct safety committee business is the monthly meeting. How do you turn those groans into smiles of anticipation? That's what this course is all about!

Conducting an interesting safety committee meeting can make the difference between success and failure of the safety committee. Planning and managing a successful safety committee meeting requires commitment: it takes effort, time and money. To receive a positive return for your effort, it's important that your safety committee meetings be as fruitful as possible.

This online course will help you and your safety staff conduct interesting and effective safety committee meetings that will get results. We’ll explore methods, techniques, and management concepts for effectively preparing for the meeting; communicating before, during and after the meeting; following-up with action and recognition after the meeting.

Course goals

In this course, you'll gain a greater understanding of the best practices related to conducting an effective safety committee/team meeting. We'll discuss the primary role and purposes of the safety committee. After all, if the committee doesn't know what it's about, how can it know what to do during a meeting? We'll explore some methods and techniques for making meetings more successful. Finally, we'll look at some meeting management concepts and practices.

As with any learning experience, the more involved you are, the more you'll get out of the material. So, be sure to read all the material and do your best in answering the module quiz questions.
Module 1: Rule Requirements

What do the rules say?

To set the foundation for the rest of the course, let's take a look at a few OSHA rules regarding Safety Committee Duties and Functions. Federal OSHA has not published mandatory rules requiring safety committees. Some "State Plan" states require safety committees and Federal/Provincial OSH agencies in Canada also require safety committees. Let's start with some of the State Plan rules.

Oregon

OAR 437-001-0765 Safety Committees and Safety Meetings

Safety Committees. (1) If you have 20 or fewer employees you must have at least 2 members. If you have more than 20 employees you must have at least 4 members.

(2) You must have an equal number of employer-selected members and employee-elected or volunteer members. If both parties agree, the committee may have more employee-elected or volunteer members.

NOTE: Management can select a supervisor to represent them. Employees can elect a supervisor to represent them.

(3) Your safety committee members must:

Have a majority agree on a chairperson.

Serve a minimum of one year, when possible.

Be compensated at their regular rate of pay.

Have training in the principles of accident and incident investigations for use in evaluating those events.

Have training in hazard identification.

Be provided with meeting minutes.

Represent major activities of your business.

(4) Your safety committee must meet on company time as follows:
Quarterly in situations where employees do mostly office work.

Monthly for all other situations (except the months when quarterly worksite inspections are performed).

(5) You must keep written records of each safety committee meeting for three years that include:

Names of attendees.

Meeting date.

All safety and health issues discussed, including tools, equipment, work environment, and work practice hazards.

Recommendations for corrective action and a reasonable date by which management agrees to respond.

Person responsible for follow up on any recommended corrective actions.

All reports, evaluations and recommendations made by the committee.

1. Oregon's safety committee guidelines suggest that it's a good idea to _____.
   a. allow no more than 4 people on the safety committee
   b. have an equal number of management and employee members
   c. meet after normal workday or shift hours
   d. have management choose the chairperson
Washington State

WAC 296-800-13025

Follow these rules to conduct safety meetings. You must:

(1) Do the following for safety meetings.

- Make sure your safety meetings:
  - Are held monthly. You may meet more often to discuss safety issues as they come up.
  - Have at least one management representative.

(2) Cover these topics.

- Review safety and health inspection reports to help correct safety hazards.
- Evaluate the accident investigations conducted since the last meeting to determine if the cause(s) of the unsafe situation was identified and corrected.
- Evaluate your workplace accident and illness prevention program and discuss recommendations for improvement, if needed.
- Document attendance.
- Write down subjects discussed.

2. Based on Oregon and Washington State rules, how often are safety committees expected to hold meetings?
   a. Weekly or quarterly
   b. Monthly or annually
   c. Weekly or monthly
   d. Monthly or quarterly
Safety Committee Meeting Requirements in Canada

The Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations SOR/86-304, requires safety committees for individual work places.

- Employers with 20 or more regular employees must establish local safety committees.
- A Policy Safety Committee is required for all private and public sector employers with 300 or more employees. Policy committees address issues that, because of their nature, cannot be dealt with by local safety committees.

Each workplace health and safety committee is required to meet 9 times a year, at regular intervals and during regular working hours. If circumstances make additional meetings necessary, they should be held during or outside regular hours, whatever is required. The committee is led by two chairpersons, one of whom is chosen by the employer-members and the other by the employee-members.

- The employer must ensure the availability in the workplace of premises, equipment and personnel for the efficient operation of the committee.
- The committee can establish its own rules of procedure pertaining to the administration and operation of the committee (e.g., meeting times and places).
- The committee must keep accurate records of all matters that come before it, as well as minutes of all meetings. They are to be made available to a health and safety officer if they are requested.
- The minutes of each safety and health committee meeting shall be signed by the two chairmen.

3. How often are safety committees in Canada required to meet?
   a. Monthly
   b. Regularly
   c. Nine times a year
   d. Quarterly

A Word about Commitment
So, the rules aren't that interesting. That's because they're typically written by lawyers for lawyers for the benefit of lawyers (a little lawyer humor there ;-).

Seriously, notice the previous rules require a certain level of management commitment to workplace health and safety. What is commitment? Well, here it means investing the time and money it takes for safety committees to meet regularly. Remember, every employer activity requires a commitment of resources.

It's important for safety committees to return the biggest "bang for the buck" possible to the employer. They do that by making sure safety committee meetings are effective. What does "effective" mean here? In this context, it may be thought of as producing well-written recommendations for improving safety programs.

If your employer sees value in conducting safety committee meetings, the time and money invested in safety committee meetings will increase. If the employer sees the safety committee meeting as a waste of time, don't expect enthusiastic commitment. In this course, we'll discuss ways to fine-tune safety committee meetings, so they produce valuable results.

4. How does the safety committee demonstrate real commitment to safety?
   a. Enforcement of safety rules
   b. Regular effective meetings
   c. Well-written minutes
   d. Decreasing workers' compensation costs

How often do safety committees meet?

As you can see, most safety committees must meet once a month. Most, but not all committees meet once a month. Some meet more often. Remember, you can always do things that "exceed" OSHA minimum requirements. A basic guideline in determining how frequent to meet states, "the greater the risk (or change) in the workplace, the more frequently we should meet." The degree of risk in the workplace is determined by evaluating probability, severity and exposure (more on this topic in OSHAcademy course 704 Hazard Analysis and Control). For instance, in many situations like construction sites, logging operations, and some types of manufacturing, safety committees find it wise to meet more often than once a month.
5. After conducting a safety inspection, the committee should meet to do each of the following EXCEPT _____.

a. making recommendations to improve safety programs
b. ensuring identified hazards are reported to responsible supervisors
c. analyzing and discussing their possible root causes
d. reporting names of employees violating safety rules

Should the safety committee meet after a safety inspection?

Absolutely! Best practices suggest that it’s most effective if the safety committee conducts a meeting immediately after the inspection to:

• Discuss findings.
• Ensure identified hazards are reported to responsible supervisors or managers.
• Analyze findings and discuss their possible root causes.
• Make recommendations to improve safety programs.

"Safety Meeting" vs. "Safety Committee Meeting"

We occasionally hear confusion about what constitutes a safety meeting vs a safety committee meeting. There is a difference:

• A safety meeting (also called a "tailgate" or "toolbox" meeting) includes some or all employees and usually a management person to ensure that important safety issues are addressed. The primary reason for the meeting is to update employees on safety policies, procedures, rules, and expectations for the day. However, the safety meeting may also include general safety instruction and training.

• The safety committee meeting is conducted by a formal, structured group of individuals who meet regularly to conduct safety-related business such as discussing the results of safety inspections/investigations, considering safety suggestions, and conducting safety committee training. The meeting gives everyone a voice but keeps the meeting size to an effective number of participants.
6. Which meeting is typically an informal gathering of most or all employees to get updates on safety policies, procedures, rules, and expectations for the day?

   a. Safety committee meeting
   b. Human resources meeting
   c. Business meeting
   d. Safety meeting
Module 2: Role and Responsibility

What role do you play?

Safety committee members need to understand the role of the safety committee and what role they personally play as a member of the committee. Unless the safety committee’s role is understood by all members, it's difficult to effectively carry out assigned responsibilities that achieve the safety committee's purpose.

Roles Describe Who We Are

The term, role, describes who we are. At home, we may play the role of a spouse, coach, father, or mother. At work, our position largely determines the role we are expected to play.

As you learned in Course 701 (Safety Committee Operations), the most effective safety committee performs the role of an internal consultant team to the employer. On the other hand, the least effective safety committee will function as an internal, fault-finding, cop squad.

It's essential to understand your role if you want to design the most effective safety committee meetings. Can you imagine what a meeting would look like if members believed they were all junior OSHA inspectors that had to control things? The meeting would be very different than one in which the safety committee acted like a consultant team.

1. What is the most effective role of a safety committee?
   a. Supervisor
   b. Consultant
   c. Controller
   d. Cop

Safety Committee Member Duties: Each has an Important Role to Play

Each member of the safety committee must understand the very important role they play within the safety committee. There are no unimportant positions. Let's take a quick look at some different roles and associated responsibilities in a safety committee:

Chairperson

- Schedules monthly meetings
- Develops agendas for meetings
• Conducts monthly meetings

_Vice-chair_

• Assumes chair’s duties when the chair is absent
• Coordinates training for new representatives
• Performs other duties assigned by the chair

2. The _____ conducts the monthly safety meetings.
   a. vice-chair
   b. management representative
   c. safety manager
   d. chairperson

_Recorder_

• Takes minutes at each meeting
• Distributes copies of minutes to representatives
• Posts minutes for other employees to review
• Maintains the safety-committee file
• Keeps minutes and agendas on file for three years

_Committee Representatives_

• Report employees’ safety and health concerns to the committee
• Report accidents, near miss incidents, and unsafe workplace conditions to the committee
• Suggest items to include in the monthly meeting agenda
• Encourage employees to report workplace hazards and suggest how to control them
Establish procedures for conducting quarterly workplace inspections and for making recommendations to management to eliminate or control hazards

Help management evaluate the company’s safety and health program and recommend how to improve it

Establish procedures for investigating the causes of accidents and near-miss incidents

As you can see, each role includes a set of expected behaviors. By meeting these expectations, safety committee members fulfill their role.

3. How long is it recommended to keep safety committee meeting minutes and agendas on file?
   a. 1 year
   b. 2 years
   c. 3 years
   d. 4 years

Safety Committee Purpose and Function

Now that we correctly see our role as an internal consultant group, we need to figure out how meetings can help us fulfill the expectations of that role. To do that, we must understand the subtle difference between two important concepts: purpose and function.

- If asked, "What is the primary purpose of your safety committee meetings?" The answer would be a goal statement such as, "to bring management and labor together to identify hazards and make recommendations for improvement."

- How well meetings actually function depends on the success of its activities. For example, if asked, "How well is the safety committee meeting functioning to help identify hazards and make recommendations?" The answer would describe meeting activities and how effective they are.

Achieving the purposes of safety committee meetings is dependent on how well they operate. For example, safety committees naturally intend to fulfill their purpose as an internal consultant group: to do that, they design and perform activities to identify hazards and make recommendations. If, however, the activities are unintentionally designed and performed
poorly, they may malfunction; failing to achieve their intended purposes. Bottom-line: The road to failure is paved with good intentions.

4. The intended outcome of a safety committee meeting is defined as its _____.
   
   a. purpose  
   b. function  
   c. objective  
   d. goal

If the safety committee is able to effectively accomplish its purpose, it can serve as a catalyst to improve the safety management system and transform the safety culture. Let’s see how the safety committee meeting can help do that:

- **The meeting brings management and labor together.** Management and labor must be talking to each other. The more they talk, the more they understand each other. Why is it important to talk? Think about this principle: "If you keep people in the dark, they think the worst." If management and labor are not talking, they will be thinking the worst about each other.

- **The meeting naturally promotes trust.** It builds a cooperative working relationship between management and labor. It’s essential that the safety committee build trust between labor and management; we call this the prime directive. W. Edward's Deming, in his book, *Out of the Crisis*, states that to achieve true operational quality, the employer must drive out fear in the workplace. Increased cooperation, not competition, between management and labor is a crucial goal in every action the safety committee takes.

- **The meeting fosters ideas for improvement.** It can be the place to design and implement ideas and activities that can increase employee awareness, improve attitudes, and make improvements in operations as well as safety.

- **The meeting promotes continuous improvement.** The meeting is important in each phase of Deming's Plan-Do-Study-Act process.
5. Why is it important to bring management and labor together safety committee meetings?

   a. So the committee doesn't "go rogue"
   b. Management can control the meeting
   c. Because OSHA requires it
   d. To understand each other better
Module 3: Preparing for the Meeting

Introduction

If you have a safety committee, it's likely you'll have regular meetings. The challenge is to make meetings effective so that the outcome of the meeting ultimately adds value to the product or service produced. Thoughtful preparation by the safety committee chairperson is essential in making sure the meeting is successful. When preparing for a safety committee meeting, the chairperson should make sure he or she has carefully considered each of the essential questions below.

- Am I personally prepared for the meeting?
- Is the agenda well-written and distributed?
- Does everyone know when and where we will hold the meeting?
- Are the location and meeting room suitable?
- Is the recorder prepared to take minutes?

1. To make sure the safety committee meeting is successful, it's essential for the chairperson to _____.
   - a. post announcements
   - b. thoughtfully prepare
   - c. order pizza
   - d. review statistics

Preparing the Chairperson

As the leader of the safety committee, the chairperson must be personally prepared for the job. Adequate education and training about duties and responsibilities is essential.

The safety manager or outgoing chairperson should be able to help a new chairperson learn how to prepare agendas and lead meetings. It's important that the Chair also learns how to objectively analyze and evaluate meetings.

Another important consideration is to elect or appoint a co-chairperson or deputy chairperson who is ready to take over if the primary chairperson can't make it to the meeting.
2. Who should help the chairperson learn how to prepare agendas and lead meetings?

   a. Insurer
   b. Supervisor
   c. OSHA compliance officer
   d. Safety manager

Preparing the Recorder

Be sure the recorder (sometimes known as the committee secretary) is adequately trained on how to take effective minutes. Usually, the safety committee Chair will train the recorder on their job duties. There's nothing worse than a bunch of disjoined chicken scratches.

Meeting minutes should include:

- Date of the meeting
- Time the meeting started
- Names of attendees
- Review of previous meeting minutes
- Corrections to previous meeting minutes
- Preview of current meeting agenda
- Changes to the current agenda
- New business
- Items to be held over
- Open discussion
- Next meeting date and time
- Time meeting ended
If the meeting seems to move fast, the recorder may want to use an audio recording device to record the meeting to make sure the minutes accurately reflect the topics discussed and actions taken.

Note: It's usually more effective to use the term "recorder" than "secretary" for this position. Members are more likely to volunteer for the job when recorder is used as the position title.

3. What can the safety committee recorder do if the pace of the meeting moves along too quickly?
   a. Paraphrase discussions
   b. Use two recorders to take notes
   c. Use an audio recording device
   d. Use shorthand for notes

Preparing the Agenda

Knowing the purpose of the meeting is a first step in preparing the agenda. Having a good idea where you want to be at the meeting determines what must be covered during the meeting. An agenda is a step-by-step outline of the points to be covered at a meeting. The chair should always ask for input to the agenda a week or so prior to the meeting. Everybody attending a meeting should receive a tentative agenda a few days in advance for the following reasons:

- To make sure important business is not over-looked
- To remind people of the meeting
- To help members identify important items and prepare to discuss them
- To help members focus on issues
- To encourage their contributions
- To discourage the thought that the committee chair wants to control everything
- To promote a sense of progress among members and others
4. What is the first step in preparing a meeting agenda?

   a. Requesting agenda items
   b. Determining the time and place
   c. Distributing the agenda
   d. Knowing the purpose of the meeting

Agenda Items

Keep the agenda brief: one page, if possible. Most meetings should follow an agenda that includes some or all of the following topics:

- Welcome and Call to Order
- Introductions of new representatives and guests
- Review of last meeting’s minutes for addition or corrections
- Review agenda items/topics for discussion
- Old business: items not covered or resolved during the last meeting
- New business: items the committee needs to address or resolve
- Employee suggestions
- Safety concern reports
- Formal observation program reports
- Survey/interview summaries
- Safety program reports
- Inspection reports
- Accident Investigation Reports
- OSHA 300 Log Report
• Training

• Recommendations to management

• Next meeting – date, location, and time

5. Which of the following is a good recommendation for safety committee meeting agendas?

   a. Keep the agenda topics closed to revisions
   b. Give agendas only to members
   c. Make sure agendas are comprehensive
   d. Keep the agenda brief: One page.

Preparing the Meeting Room

The physical location of the meeting and room setup can make the difference between success and failure. Below are some points to remember.

• **Location:** Some committees find it most effective meeting away from the workplace so members are not as likely to be distracted by other work issues. A quiet, comfortable meeting room is best.

• **Access:** Be sure you coordinate access to the room. You don't want to show up with the door locked and no one available to give access.

• **Room:** The size and shape of the table, and the seating arrangement are important too. Make sure everyone can easily see each other. Windows are desired, as long as the outside is not too interesting. Committees up to 12 members could easily meet around a table. For a larger group, tables placed in a U-shape work well. All members should have easy visual and spatial access to the chairperson.

• **Lighting:** Try to make sure direct glare from windows or overhead lights isn’t a problem. Try to have control over the lighting. You don’t want a situation where all the lights are out when showing a video or slides.
• **Noise and acoustics:** You don’t want to conduct the meeting where interruptions might be frequent; for example, meetings usually don’t work in the lunch room or noisy part of the plant. Don’t meet in a huge room with lots of echo.

• **Temperature:** Too hot or too cold is always distracting. It’s best to keep the room on the slightly cool side so people are not as likely to be hot or sleepy.

• **Air quality and ventilation:** A humid, moldy, or unventilated room is usually uncomfortable and distracting.

• **Seating:** It’s always important to have comfortable chairs. Be sure to allow for adequate personal space between members when arranging seats.

• **Writing materials:** Be sure you bring pencils and writing pads.

• **Restrooms and exits:** Review availability of restroom and emergency procedures.

• **Refreshments:** Providing goodies during the meeting is always good ideas. It sends a positive message about commitment from management. Light refreshments, especially coffee or other beverages, can help sustain energy levels.

• **Audiovisual equipment:** Be sure the required equipment, outlets, and cords are available. Visual aids assist in making visionary dialogue more concrete.

6. **What can be done to help make sure the safety committee meeting is not interrupted with work issues?**

   a. Lock the meeting door
   b. Meet away from the workplace
   c. Post a "Do Not Enter" sign
   d. Collect all cell phones
Module 4: Conducting the Meeting

Before the Meeting Starts

Well, it’s just about time to start the meeting. Everyone knows where and when the meeting is. They have all received an agenda, so it’s a done deal, right? Well, not necessarily so. There are a few actions to take just prior to the meeting to make sure it starts without a hitch. Here are some important things to do just before the meeting starts:

- Arrive early. Thirty minutes before the meeting. One hour to set up if training is involved.
- Set up the room. Make sure there are enough tables and chairs, pencils, paper, etc. Make sure the lights and electricity work.
- Refreshments? Hey, coffee and pastries, or what about pizza! Remember, a small investment can result in a big return.

1. All of the following are good ideas when preparing for a safety committee meeting EXCEPT _____.
   a. setting up to meet in the lunch room
   b. arriving early
   c. arranging for refreshments
   d. ensuring adequate tables/chairs

Plan the Work: Work the Plan

There are some basic "best practices" when it comes to running a safety committee meeting. The following is a suggested order of business that may be adopted for safety committee meetings in general.

1. Thank everyone for coming: Before you start, thank members and guests for attending the meeting.
2. Call the meeting to order: The meeting should be called to order promptly at the appointed time.
3. *Note attendance:* The recorder can make a note of who is present and absent. Large safety committees may want to conduct a roll call.

4. *Introduce visitors:* No one likes to feel left out at a meeting. Make sure visiting employees, managers, presenters and other guests are recognized and thanked for attending.

| 2. Before the meeting starts, the recorder should _____.
|---|
| a. thank everyone for coming  
| b. note who is present/absent  
| c. make follow-up calls  
| d. introduce visitors |

5. Review ground rules. Review ground rules. If your committee doesn't have ground rules, make sure it develops them. Typically ground rules cover procedural and behavioral do's and don'ts. Procedural ground rules usually include:

- Time lines for the length of the meeting
- Time lines for individual presentations
- Meeting will start and end on time
- The flow of business will follow the agenda
- Focus on meeting safety-related agenda items only
- Every member has an opportunity to speak
- Decisions will be based on consensus agreement

Behavioral ground rules clarify what is acceptable behavior during the meeting. Here are some examples:

- Arrive on time.
- Don't interrupt while another person is speaking.
o Raise your hand to be recognized.

o Don't make negative comments about another person or their ideas.

o Focus on what you think works or does not work, and why.

o Ask questions. There are no stupid questions.

3. Typically, ground rules cover _____.
   
   a. OSHA directives
   b. politically correct speech
   c. do's and don'ts
   d. safety policies and rules

6. **Review meeting minutes**: Typically, the first activity is to review the minutes of the previous meeting. Any corrections should be identified and corrections made. This item can sometimes be waived.

7. **Review the agenda topics**: Give representatives and guests the opportunity to suggest changes or to add discussion topics to the agenda. Unless the representatives agree to continue the meeting, end it at the scheduled time. You can discuss unfinished items during the next meeting or later with concerned representatives.

8. **Discuss unfinished business**: Review actions and recommendations that have not yet been completed. Those responsible should report the status of the item. Items on which definite decisions have not been made should be brought up for reconsideration.

9. **Review observations of conditions and behaviors**: Discuss observations safety committee members have made during the previous month. The information represents important data that can be used by the safety committee to uncover trends and improvements that may be needed in the safety management system. Remember, names are not important here.

10. **Evaluate incident and accident reports**: The safety committee should pay special attention to:
• The quality of the description of the events
• Accuracy of the surface and root causes
• Corrective actions to fix surface causes
• System improvements to fix root causes

The information gathered from the reports represents an excellent source of information to help improve the safety management system. Discussion of "who" had the accident, or who was to "blame," is inappropriate.

**4. What should the safety committee do with incident and accident reports?**

   a. discuss and file the reports for later use
   b. use the information to fix surface/root causes
   c. report those responsible for the accident
   d. administer reprimands as required by OSHA

**11. Receive safety program status reports:** Some safety committees include the results of safety program audits in the meeting. As a "program analyst" the safety committee member gives the committee a status report, including recommendations for improvement.

**12. Conduct safety committee education/training:** When it is desired and time permits, the chairperson should request a member or guest to present a short topic of interest. Tip: It's a good idea to schedule topics and presenters for the year. Training doesn't have to be long: Ten to fifteen minutes may work for your committee.

**13. Conduct a safety inspection:** Although, some safety committees include an inspection of the workplace as part of the meeting, I believe you should conduct the safety inspection before the meeting. After the inspection, members discuss their findings and make recommendations for program improvement. Sometimes a team will conduct the inspection and report their findings to the committee. A record of the inspection time, facilities covered, hazardous conditions, safe/unsafe behaviors observed, and recommendations made should be included in the minutes.
14. **Adjourn:** Minutes should be taken, prepared, and circulated by the recorder, after approval by the chairman. The minutes are of great importance since they are often sent to others besides committee members, especially top management. The minutes must record accurately all decisions made and actions taken, since they serve as a means of keeping management informed of the group's work and as a follow up.

5. **Why is conducting safety inspections prior to safety committee meetings an effective strategy?**

   a. Those employees violating safety rules can be reported
   b. The results of the inspection can be discussed at the meeting
   c. The inspection reminds others that a meeting will be conducted
   d. Employees see safety inspections as the responsibility of the safety committee

If it isn't in writing, it didn't get done!

Safety committee minutes should be typed up for each meeting. If OSHA or OSH officers show up for an inspection, and safety committees are required, they'll ask if you are having meetings. If you say "yes," you better have the documentation because as far as the government inspectors (or lawyers) are concerned, if it isn't in writing, it didn't get done!

The employer should review and maintain meeting records for at least three years if trend analysis is conducted. Copies of minutes should be posted or made available for all employees and sent to managers and each committee member. If you do not have meeting minutes, claims of negligence against your employer may be more easily substantiated.

All reports, evaluations, and recommendations of the safety committee should be included in the meeting minutes. It's not necessary to record everything. Summarize those items that may be necessary to document at a later time. Audit trails should be in place to keep track of formal committee activities.

A reasonable time limit should be established for the employer to respond in writing to all safety committee recommendations. Usually the more serious the matter, the sooner management should respond.
6. How long should an employer review and maintain safety committee meeting records?
   a. 6 months  
   b. A year or so  
   c. Up to 2 years  
   d. At least 3 years

**Why Minutes Are Important**

Minutes are the official record of the safety committee’s activities, including recommendations to management and accomplishments. The content should be concise, clear, and well-organized.

*Who’s responsible for minutes?* Your committee should have a recorder who takes minutes at each meeting and, after the meeting, does the following:

- Distributes the minutes to representatives and management
- Posts the minutes where other employees can read them
- Keeps a copy of the minutes on file for three years
- Ensures that all employees have the opportunity to respond to the minutes

*What to include in the minutes:* Organize the minutes so that they follow the meeting agenda. Information to include in the minutes:

- Date, time, and place of the meeting
- Names of attending representatives, guests, and representatives unable to attend
- A summary of each agenda item discussed
- Employee suggestions and reports of hazards
- The committee’s recommendations to management
- Management’s response to committee recommendations
7. This should be part of the minutes of the safety committee meeting.

   a. Who provided the food
   b. Disciplinary actions required
   c. Recommendations to management
   d. Medical records
Module 5: Safety Committee Communications

The Two-Level Theory of Communication

Effective communication is extremely important to a successful safety committee meeting. The most basic communication theory talks about the requirement for both a sender and a receiver in the communication process.

The characteristics of the sender and receiver may be quite different. However, during the safety committee meeting, at any given instant, the process basically involves people sending communication messages on two basic levels: the content and relationship levels.

1. In the Two-Level Communications Model, on what two "levels" are messages sent when two people communicate?
   a. The sender and receiver level
   b. The content and relationship level
   c. The fact and feeling level
   d. The education and experience level

It's not what you say: It's how you say it!

The Two-Level Theory of communications states that, in any communications process, messages are sent and received on two levels.

1. **The Content Level.** The first level is called the content level because it provides the information, content, data, or facts of the message. For instance, the words in this paragraph and the short statement in the image to the right are examples of the content level of communication.

2. **The Relationship Level.** The second level of communication is called the relationship level and has more impact on the receiver because it establishes a relationship between the sender and the receiver. The relationship depends on what the receiver sees and hears. If I communicate with you, the tone of my voice and my body language are interpreted by you as a message about the relationship between you and me. For instance, does the receiver believe the message being sent in the image above? Of course not: The receiver knows the sender is angry by the tone of her voice and her body language.

The relationship message is actually received first and determines the reaction to the content received. Once the relationship is established between two people, it greatly influences the
subsequent content of their communication. For instance, in the short video clip to the right, an adversarial relationship is quickly established that greatly influences the content of the messages sent.

2. Which communication level has more impact on the receiver?
   
   a. Content  
   b. Feeling level  
   c. Fact level  
   d. Relationship level  

Scenario #1

Charlie Pendergast is sitting at the breakfast table happily reading the morning paper while his wife, Gloria is cooking up some bacon and eggs. Charlie suddenly looks up from the paper and asks rather flirtatiously, "Oh Dear, when are those eggs going to be done." Gloria interprets his tone (flirting) as positive attention and responds in like manner, "Here they come now, sweetie," and brings Charlie a nice plate of bacon and eggs and gives him a big kiss.

Scenario #2

Charlie Pendergast is sitting at the breakfast table, face buried in the morning paper, while his wife, Gloria, is cooking up some bacon and eggs. Charlie, obviously irritated, verbally assaults Gloria with, "Oh DEAR, when ARE those eggs GOING TO BE DONE?!" Gloria interprets his tone (impatience) and feels hurt and unappreciated. She slowly turns, fire in her eyes, and says, "Here they come now... DEAR!" and throws the plate full of eggs down on the table in front of him and stomps off to the bedroom.

You'll notice that, in both cases, the content of Charlie's message was exactly the same. However, due to the tone of his voice and his body language, the relationship set up between the two in the second scenario differed greatly from that established in scenario number one. Consequently, Gloria gave Charlie a vastly different response in the second scenario. In the first scenario, Charlie sent a positive relationship message. In the second scenario, the relationship
message was very negative. To Gloria, how Charlie sent the message had far more impact than what he said.

Remember, you get what you give. When communicating with another safety committee member, it's not what you say, it's how you say it. When you experience someone reacting negatively to something you've said, it's probably because you may have somehow sent a negative relationship message.

3. In the Two-Level Communications Model, if someone responds negatively to something you have said, it could mean _____.
   a. they did not understand the content of your message
   b. you did not send a relationship message
   c. you sent a negative relationship message
   d. they did not hear the message you sent

Effective One-On-One Communication Techniques

- Use facts, not opinions (make sure you know the facts).
- Use “I” statements (“You” statements put people on the defensive).
- Be direct and to the point (keep it in the here and now).
- Be consistent (repeat the same message to everyone, every time).
- Recognize good performance (both in productivity and safety).

More Tips:

- Be enthusiastic. We're not talking about wild enthusiasm, but an active interest in what's going on in the meeting. Encourage active discussions.
- Appoint a “devil’s advocate.”
- Be a traffic cop. It's important to stay on task. Fall back on the ground rules if need be.
- Use first names. No need to be formal during these meetings.
• Ask open-ended questions. This technique works best to determine what people think, how they feel, and what their opinions are.

• Actively listen. Active listening requires each person to listen to and then restate the statement in their own words, emphasizing the feelings expressed as well as the substance. The purpose is to confirm that the listener accurately understands the message sent and acknowledges that message, although the listener is not required to agree.

• Protect members from personal attack. Do not allow members to play the "blame game."

• Facilitate. Keep control of the meeting, but don’t be domineering.

• Never ignore! It's the worst response and you can bet people don't like it.

4. It is important for the safety committee chairperson to _____.
   a. avoid first names to maintain professional distance
   b. protect committee members from personal attack
   c. selectively listen to tune out confrontation
   d. use closed-ended questions to get facts quickly

Discussion Methods

Well-managed safety committee meetings allow members to participate, and feel part of a decision. Reaching decisions involves looking for common ground and building upon a series of small agreements. There are many decision-making methods. Some common methods are outlined below. When choosing any of these methods, consider that the degree to which individuals “buy into” an agreement depends on how much ownership they have in the decision-making process.

Majority Rule: This requires group members to consider options, discuss pros and cons, and vote. Participants agree that the group will adopt the option(s) that receive a plurality or majority of votes cast. Majority rule works best when the group has demonstrated a willingness to work together cooperatively, and when no one is so heavily invested in one or more options that they will not abide by the group’s collective decision.

One-liners: The chairperson of a large safety committee might say: "You've been listening for the last half hour, and I appreciate your patience. Before going on, let's find out what is on your
minds. Let's have comments from anyone who wants to speak but limit yourself to one sentence."

The one-liner technique provides members of the committee a chance to find out what everyone else is thinking. Members get a number of abbreviated opinions instead of one or two long speeches. The one-sentence limit may seem like an imposition, but once this pattern is set, each person will make a point of being clear and concise.

A survey: Ask for a show of hands to determine what members think about proposed ideas, to decide what to do next, and so on. Even this minimal level of participation gives people the opportunity to express a thought, feeling or opinion.

5. Which of the following techniques provides the chairperson a chance to find out what everyone else is thinking?
   a. Majority rule
   b. Surveys
   c. One-liners
   d. Consensus

Small group discussion: Small group discussions generate ideas and enable everyone to participate in a smaller group setting. In a small group session, about four to eight people talk for a short time on an assigned topic. A person should be assigned as recorder to make lists of the group’s quick conclusions. The groups then return to the main group with their ideas. In this way, small group interactions alternate with the diversity of the larger group.

Brainstorming: Brainstorming is a well-known procedure for generating a large number of spontaneous ideas in a short period of time. No criticism is allowed during the session. Quantity is what the group is after, not quality. From the great number of ideas generated, the group can later select those of interest. Be sure to choose a person to record all ideas on a flipchart or blackboard briefly and accurately for everyone to see. Seeing others' ideas will generate even more ideas by "piggy-backing" off the ideas of others.

Questioning: As mentioned earlier, the most effective questions are usually open-ended. Open-ended questions stimulate thinking, and rethinking. Questions allow for reflection. The Chairperson or member, by posing questions, encourages the group to focus on something, rethink a course of action, or evaluate options.

Consensus decision-making: Making decisions by consensus is the cooperative development of a decision that members agree with, or at least can live with. Sometimes, consensus means that
each and every person involved in decision-making may have "veto" power but be careful with this idea. A more workable policy might be to allow the person who strongly objects to a consensus decision to "opt out." That person would not be required in taking action on the decision. It's also important to find out why and give considerable thought to the concerns expressed by the dissenting member. He or she may have a legitimate concern that others do not see. Consensus means considering all concerns and attempting to find the most universal decision possible.

6. This is true about consensus decision-making.

- Everyone agrees or can live with it
- Veto power is a must
- Ignore those who disagree with the decision
- Confrontation is encouraged

Steps in Making Decisions

The basic steps for consensus decision-making include the following:

1. Agree on the purpose, desired outcomes, and ground rules;

2. Choose a decision-making method—if the group decides to reach a decision through consensus, select a back-up method to be used if the group cannot reach consensus;

3. Identify the problem;

4. Identify and process possible solutions by brainstorming, clarifying ideas, grouping similar ideas together, ranking and selecting options;

5. Develop an action plan, identify responsible parties and delegate tasks; and

6. Review the meeting.
7. If the committee cannot reach a consensus on plan, what should the committee chairperson do?

a. Cancel the meeting
b. Complain to the employer
c. Select a back-up method
d. Withhold a decision on the plan
Module 6: Solving Problems

Disagreement and Conflict

Don't be surprised if and when, during some part of the meeting, an argument or heated exchange between members occurs. When this happens, discussion may quickly degenerate into name-calling and judgment, so it's important to fall back on the ground rules to stop the escalation of heated exchanges.

Words Have Effect

As we've mentioned before, the purpose of the safety committee meeting is to come to a decision about what works vs. what doesn't work. And, it's important to use those terms. It might be interesting to discuss some terms that raise a "red flag" during the meeting. As soon as the chairperson hears any of the terms below, it's important to intervene.

- Bad or evil
- Wrong or incorrect
- Stupid or dumb
- Lazy or crazy
- Ridiculous or idiotic

These terms above, and others like them, may point the finger of judgment about an idea, but the underlying implication is that the person, rather than the idea, is flawed. The implication may be further strengthened by the relationship message reflected in the tone of voice used.

1. What should the chairperson do if someone starts name-calling in a meeting?
   a. Ignore the remarks
   b. Restate the ground rules
   c. Apologize to the offended person
   d. Remove the offending person
Conflicts in Meetings

Conflicts in meetings can be very disruptive. But they can also be very helpful. Remember, conflicts are disagreements. If the person who is disagreeing with you is raising valid questions, it may benefit the group to address the issues they are presenting. In fact, by listening to them, you may gain valuable insight into what is and what is not working within your organization. However, if the person continues past the point of disagreement to the point of disruptiveness, specific steps should be taken.

Below is a list of conflict resolution tactics that you can use for meetings that get "out of control."

- Find some "grain of truth" in the other person's position that you can build upon.
- Identify areas of agreement in the two positions.
- Defer the subject to later in the meeting to handle.
- Document the subject and set it aside to discuss in the next meeting.
- Ask to speak with the individual after the meeting or during a break.
- See if someone else in the meeting has a response or recommendation.
- Present your view, but do not force agreement. Let things be and go on to the next topic.
- Agree that the person has a valid point and there may be some way to make the situation work for both parties.
- Create a compromise.

Source: Texas Center for Women's Business Enterprise
2. Which of these statements reflects the most appropriate way to respond to a suggestion during a safety committee?

a. "I think your idea is most likely right/wrong."

b. "I think your idea just might work/may not work."

c. "I feel you must be wrong/stupid to suggest that."

d. "You must be just plain evil/bad."

Rules for Disagreeing Diplomatically

Regardless of the type of conflict you are dealing with, there are several general guidelines you should follow whenever you are trying to bring harmony to a volatile situation. Here they are:

- Acknowledge the behavior by describing it without evaluation. "I see you don't agree with what's just been said, is that right?"

- Reflect your understanding of the other's position or opinion. "Let me see if I understand what you're saying..." This says, "I am listening to your opinion and I take your opinion into account before I state mine."

- Let the other person know that you value him/her as a person even though his/her opinion is different from yours. "I understand (appreciate, respect, see, etc.) how you feel that way." This says, "I hear you and respect your opinion."

- Legitimize the validity of the feelings behind the behavior: "You may have a good point", "I know how you feel", "I've felt that way myself", "but I've found that..."

- State your position or opinion. "I feel, think, want, etc." This says, "I don't agree, but I value you - so let's exchange ideas comfortably, not as a contest for superiority."

- Gain agreement to defer any decisions: "Are you willing to let others express their opinions on the matter?" If the disruptive member does not agree to defer, then intervene gradually. Start with a subtle, unthreatening approach. However, if unsuccessful, then proceed to:

  o Thank him/her and move on to next person.

  o Close to his/her location (invade space) and confidently thank him/her. Move on.
o Restate ground rules. If he/she can't comply, they are free to leave.

o Take person aside for private conversation.

- Becoming a good conflict manager requires a lot of practice. Just remember that the goal is to reach a compromise that both of you can live with as well as be happy with. In other words, find a way that both of you can walk away feeling like a winner!

3. Which of these is a conflict resolution tactic you can use when meetings get out of control?

   a. Ignore areas of disagreement
   b. Tell the person you don't value their opinion
   c. Get agreement to defer the subject
   d. End the meeting early

**Too Little and Too Much Participation**

Problem situations in a meeting may have something to do with the level of participation of individual members when they participate too much or too little.

- Too much participation. Other members may not be able to fully participate in meeting activities when an individual member is too vocal. Over-participation may occur for a number of reasons, including:
  
  o Strong interest in the topic;
  
  o Naturally enthusiastic and talkative; and/or
  
  o Strong desire to control outcomes (not a "team player").

- Too little participation. When a safety committee member does not participate in meeting activities, their valuable input may be lost. The chairperson may not be able to accurately assess the degree of consensus that's taking place when members are silent. Lack of participation may occur for several reasons, including:
  
  o Lack of confidence;
  
  o Nervous about expressing ideas in front of others;
One theme throughout all OR-OSHA courses and workshops is that, "for every effect, there is a cause." Each of these reasons for over-or-under-participation above represents an effect which has a cause. It’s important for the safety committee chairperson to determine the cause for these behaviors. Only after knowing the cause, can the solution be found. A personal talk with the committee member can help find the cause.

4. Which of these is a possible reason a meeting member may participate too much during a meeting?

a. Lack of confidence  
b. Strong interest in finishing early  
c. Disinterest in the topic  
d. Desire to control the outcome

Mind Mapping - Another Tool to Identify Problems

Mind Mapping is "instantaneous non-linear cognitive deduction utilizing spatial forms in a two-dimensional plane." Or, in more simple terms, 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.
Take a look at the mind map below. At the center, we write the problem. Then, try to 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 that particular cause exists. After a short time, (minutes to hours) you will 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, processes, procedures, etc. Once the mind map is complete, it is merely a matter of reorganizing the information into the more common outline format.

5. Which technique is successful because it takes advantage of the brain's natural ability to categorize ideas in a rapid, but unorganized manner?
   a. Brainstorming
   b. Mind Mapping
   c. Fishbone diagramming
   d. Consensus-building
Fishbone Diagram

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 that reminds users of a fish with bones. The diagram has two sections: The effect and the causes.

1. **Effect.** The "effect" is described using a problem statement. A problem statement might be: "Increased number of accidents in the maintenance department."

2. **Causes.** The "causes" are represented by the arrows and boxes. Generally, the cause categories might be personnel, materials, equipment, environment, management, and miscellaneous methods/procedures.

As you can see in the diagram below, the large horizontal arrow pointing at the accident represents the surface cause(s) that directly caused the accident event. The six categories pointing to the surface cause arrow represent the possible root causes that might have somehow contributed to the accident.

Using the fishbone diagram is important because it forces the investigator to consider root causes, and the vast majority of accident investigations, when properly conducted, will uncover one or more root causes for an accident.

![Fishbone Diagram Image]
6. Why is it a good idea to use the fishbone diagram when conducting accident investigations?

   a. Fishbone diagrams are easy to draw and use
   b. It focuses on the surface causes for accidents
   c. OSHA requires the use of the fishbone diagram
   d. It forces you to consider the root causes for accidents
Module 7: After the Meeting

You are not finished yet!

Another meeting has just been completed, you've thanked everyone for coming, and they're returning to their work. You kick back and "decompress." OK, back to the real world. It's time to get the paperwork done. Following up on assignments and action items after the meeting may be the most important part of the whole process.

1. What is left to do when the safety committee meeting is over?
   a. Get back to work
   b. Finish the paperwork
   c. Drink a tall cool one
   d. Review Powerpoint slides

What next?

It's important not to wait to complete the meeting minutes. The longer you wait to finalize the meeting minutes, the less able you'll be to accurately put down on paper what happened, who was assigned tasks, and associated time frames.

While your memory is fresh, be sure to review and edit the minutes with the help of the committee recorder (two brains are better than one!). Below are some tips to consider.

- Make necessary corrections in the layout, content, grammar, and spelling of the minutes.
- Be sure to clearly indicate in the minutes the members of the safety committee who have been assigned responsibilities.
- Include assignment completion or "drop-dead" dates for all assignments.
- Attach written recommendations that were developed.
- Attach management responses to previous recommendations.
- Attach incident/accident report summaries.
- Attach results of analysis, surveys, etc.
• Attach the hazard tracking log.

• Use the minutes to draft the next meeting’s agenda.

**2. Why is it important to review safety committee meeting minutes soon after the meeting has been completed?**

  a. OSHA requires review within 8 hours
  b. Someone might change the minutes
  c. To assure minutes are kept secure
  d. The memory is fresh

**Spread the word!**

Once you are happy with the quality of the minutes, be sure they are distributed to all members of the safety committee. Better yet, include supervisors and managers in your distribution. It’s important that they all know what the safety committee is doing. Sharing information helps increase understanding and that’s good for everyone. Below are some other suggested ideas to help spread the word effectively.

• Post the minutes on a bulletin board in the lunch room or other busy area in the facility. Don’t be afraid to "brag" about the safety committee's accomplishments. Let people know how the safety committee has improved the bottom line through effective safety and health. The safety committee can save lives as well as thousands of dollars.

• To increase readership and interest, some safety committees reformat the minutes to look like a newsletter or poster. Another great idea is to develop a program that rewards employees who read the minutes and can answer questions. Remember, recognize everyone that meets your criteria to increase the number of possible "winners."

• Brief members who were absent.

• Send a copy of the minutes to employees at mobile worksites or field offices.

• Keep the minutes for at least three years. You can file them in a notebook or a computer.
• Make sure management responds to recommendations within a reasonable period of time.

### 3. Who should receive copies of safety committee minutes?

- Supervisors and managers
- Employees
- Local safety associations
- OSHA inspectors

### Evaluate Meeting Process and Outcomes

The safety committee meeting may be your organization's primary forum for discussing safety and health issues. It's important to evaluate the meeting process to make sure it's efficient and effective. The meeting is efficient if the process is conducted in a consistent and timely manner. The meeting should not be a waste of time. The meeting is effective if it achieves desired results. If the meeting isn't efficient and effective, the activity may actually be counter-productive in improving your organization's safety management system.

To make sure the meeting is both efficient and effective, it's important to evaluate the process and results. Below are a number of ways to do this.

*Survey safety committee members and others:* Ask co-workers searching questions. Get their ideas, feelings, opinions, and beliefs about the meeting. You can also survey non-members to determine how well the information from meetings is being communicated throughout the workplace.

*Interview individual members and co-workers:* Sometimes you can learn valuable information that would never be captured on a survey. Ask them how you might be able to improve the safety committee meeting process and outputs.

### 4. If the safety committee meeting consistently finishes on time, it is said to be _____.

- predictable
- efficient
- compliant
- smart
**Improve the Meeting Process**

When you decide some part of the safety meeting needs to be improved, it's important to use a systematic process to make sure the change is effective. We encourage the use of W. Edwards Deming's Plan-Do-Study-Act process. Let's take a brief look at this process:

*Step 1: Plan* – Design the change or test. Take time to thoroughly plan the proposed change before it is implemented. Pinpoint specific conditions, behaviors, and/or results you expect to see as a result of the change. For instance, you may want to include a short 10-minute training session in each meeting. You'll need to carefully plan who will conduct the training, what format will be used, and what subjects will be presented.

*Step 2: Do* - Carry out the change or test. Implement the change or test it on a small scale. This will help limit the number of variables and potential damage if unexpected outcomes occur. Educate, train, and communicate the change...help everyone transition. Keep the change small to better measure variable.

*Step 3: Study* – Examine the effects or results of the change or test. To determine what was learned: what went right or wrong. Statistical process analysis, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews will help in this step.

*Step 4: Act* – Adopt, abandon, or repeat the cycle. Incorporate what works into the meeting process. Ask not only if we're doing the right things but ask if we're doing things right. If the result was not as intended, abandon the change or begin the cycle again with the new knowledge gained.

5. Why is it important to limit the scope of any change made by the safety committee at one time?
   a. To best form the results
   b. To know the outcome
   c. To better predict the impact
   d. To reduce the number of variables