Effective OSH Committee Meetings
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:

OSHAcademy

15220 NW Greenbrier Parkway, Suite 230
Beaverton, Oregon 97006
www.oshatrain.org
instructor@oshatrain.org
+1 (888) 668-9079

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## Contents

Course Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 1

Course goals ............................................................................................................................................................ 1

Module 1: Rule Requirements ............................................................................................................................... 2

What do the rules say? ........................................................................................................................................... 2

A Word about Commitment ................................................................................................................................... 5

How often do safety committees meet? ............................................................................................................. 5

Should the safety committee meet after a safety inspection? ........................................................................... 5

"Safety Meeting" vs. "Safety Committee Meeting" .......................................................................................... 6

Module 1 Quiz ..................................................................................................................................................... 7

Module 2: Role and Responsibility ..................................................................................................................... 9

What role do you play? ......................................................................................................................................... 9

Roles Describe Who We Are ................................................................................................................................ 9

Safety Committee Member Duties: Each has an Important Role to Play ........................................................... 9

Safety Committee Purpose: What You Intend To Do. .......................................................................................... 10

What is the purpose of the safety committee meeting? ...................................................................................... 11

Module 2 Quiz ..................................................................................................................................................... 13

Module 3: Preparing for the Meeting ................................................................................................................ 15

Introduction .......................................................................................................................................................... 15

Preparing the Chairperson ............................................................................................................................... 15

Preparing the Recorder ....................................................................................................................................... 15

Preparing the Agenda ......................................................................................................................................... 16

Preparing the Meeting Room .......................................................................................................................... 17

Module 3 Quiz ..................................................................................................................................................... 19
Module 4: Conducting the Meeting ................................................................................................. 21
Before the Meeting Starts ............................................................................................................. 21
Plan the Work: Work the Plan ........................................................................................................ 21
If it isn't in writing, it didn't get done! .......................................................................................... 24
Why Minutes Are Important ......................................................................................................... 24
Module 4 Quiz .................................................................................................................................. 26
Module 5: Safety Committee Communications .............................................................................. 28
Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 28
Scenario #1 ....................................................................................................................................... 29
Scenario #2 ....................................................................................................................................... 29
Effective One-On-One Communication Techniques ......................................................................... 29
More Tips: ......................................................................................................................................... 30
Discussion Methods ......................................................................................................................... 30
Steps in Making Decisions ............................................................................................................... 32
Module 5 Quiz .................................................................................................................................. 33
Module 6: Solving Problems ............................................................................................................ 35
Disagreement and Conflict ............................................................................................................... 35
Words Have Effect ........................................................................................................................... 35
Conflicts in Meetings ....................................................................................................................... 35
Rules for Disagreeing Diplomatically .............................................................................................. 36
Too Little and Too Much Participation ............................................................................................ 37
Mind Mapping - Another Tool to Identify Problems ....................................................................... 38
Something's fishy here..................................................................................................................... 40
Module 6 Quiz .................................................................................................................................. 40
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.

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.

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**Canada - Federal Regulations**

Regulation SOR/1986-305 - Safety And Health Committees And Representatives Regulations

9 - Minutes

(1) The minutes of each safety and health committee meeting shall be signed by the two chairmen referred to in subsection 5(1).

(2) The chairman selected by the representatives of the employer shall provide, as soon as possible after each safety and health committee meeting, a copy of the minutes referred to in subsection (1) to the employer and to each member of the safety and health committee.

(3) The employer shall, as soon as possible after receiving a copy of the minutes referred to in subsection (2), post a copy of the minutes in the conspicuous place or places in which the employer has posted the information referred to in subsection 135(5) of the Act and keep the copy posted there for one month.

(4) A copy of the minutes referred to in subsection (1) shall be kept by the employer at the work place to which it applies or at the head office of the employer for a period of two years from the day on which the safety and health committee meeting is held in such a manner that it is readily available for examination by a safety officer. SOR/89-480, s. 5; SOR/95-438, s. 4(F).
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.

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 Online 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.

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"

Throughout my years of training, we occasionally hear confusion about what constitutes a safety meeting and safety committee meeting. There is a difference:

• A safety meeting includes some or all employees and usually a management person to ensure that important safety issues are addressed. The purpose of the safety meeting may include general safety instruction and training, but the primary reason for the meeting is to inform employees about safety policies, rules, expectations, etc.

• The safety committee meeting is conducted by a formal, structured group of individuals who meet to conduct safety-related business. This gives everyone a voice but keeps the meeting size to an effective number of participants.
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. Usually, safety committees conduct meetings at least once a ________.
   a. week
   b. month
   c. quarter
   d. year

2. Which of the following employers might be most likely to conduct quarterly safety committee meetings?
   a. an auto dealership
   b. a retail grocer
   c. a construction company
   d. a bank

3. In Oregon, the safety committee must hold the regularly scheduled meeting unless they ________.
   a. are below the average industry accident rate
   b. conduct the quarterly safety inspection
   c. are accident-free the previous month
   d. cancel the meeting due to production requirements

4. Best practices suggest that it’s most effective if the safety committee holds a meeting immediately after the inspection to do all of the following, except: ________.
   a. report non-compliance to supervisors
   b. ensure identified hazards are reported to responsible supervisors or managers
   c. analyze findings and discuss their possible root causes
   d. make recommendations to improve safety programs
5. Which activity includes all employees in a department or the company for the purpose of conducting general safety instruction and training, and to inform employees about safety policies, rules, and expectations?

   a. safety committee meeting
   b. safety job hazard analysis
   c. safety audit or inspection
   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.

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

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.

Safety Committee Purpose: What You Intend To Do.

So we know who we are. Now we can better figure out what we are going to do to fulfill our role as a consultant group. First, let's take a look at the subtle difference between two
important terms: purpose and function. You will hear these terms from time to time and it's easy to think of them as meaning the same thing. However, they actually mean something different. What's the difference?

- Purpose is defined as an intended outcome. What does the safety committee intend to do?
- Function refers to the actual outcome. What does the safety committee actually do?

So, why do we need to know how these two concepts relate to each other? Well, the safety committee may intend to have successful meetings, but if the meetings are not planned well, the activity may actually function to reduce rather than increase safety committee effectiveness. Just remember, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Unless we carefully plan safety committee activities, no matter how well intended, they may actually fail. And, that, my friend, is a total waste of time and money. The boss won't like that!

**What is the purpose of the safety committee meeting?**

If the safety committee is able to effectively accomplish each purpose, they can serve as a catalyst to improve the safety management system and they can literally "transform" your safety culture. Let's see how the safety committee meeting "fits" into the purpose statement:

- The safety committee meeting is the time and place to bring management and labor together. This is a major idea. Management and labor must speak with each other. The more the two groups 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 speaking, they will think the worst about each other.

- The meeting should reflect a non-adversarial, cooperative working relationship between management and labor. It's essential (I call it the prime directive) that safety committees help build understanding and trust between labor and management. W. Edward's Deming, in his book, Out of the Crisis, states that to achieve true operational quality, the employer must "drive out fear" (Element 8) in the workplace. Increased cooperation, not competition, between management and labor is a crucial criteria in every action the safety committee takes.

- The meeting is the primary communication tool used to help promote safety and health in the workplace. There are many ways to "promote" safety and health. The meeting
can be the place to design and implement ideas and activities that can increase employee awareness and attitudes about safety.

- Finally, a primary activity in each meeting is to develop recommendations to improve safety and health programs within the safety management system. Helping your employer improve the safety management system is probably the most important long-term goal of the safety committee. Meetings need to be designed to allow time for analysis and evaluation of safety and health programs so that effective recommendations can be written.
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. According to the text, the role of the safety committee is that of a ______, not a ______.
   a. communicator, controller
   b. trainer, boss
   c. consultant, cop
   d. supporter, enforcer

2. W. Edwards Deming states quality in the workplace will not be achieved unless we first rid the workplace of: ________.
   a. managers
   b. wasted steps
   c. variation
   d. fear

3. This term is defined as an "intended" result: ________.
   a. role
   b. Purpose
   c. Function
   d. outcome

4. Each of the following is a purpose of the safety committee, except: ________.
   a. bring management and labor together
   b. require compliance with safety rules
   c. promote safety and health
   d. assist in improving programs
5. **As described in the text, the "prime directive" for safety committees is to:**

   a. increase trust
   b. decrease costs
   c. make people behave
   d. cover your assets (CYA)
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?

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.

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.

If the meeting seems to move fast, the recorder may want to use a recorder 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.

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

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

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.
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 not listed as a key question to ask when preparing for a safety committee meeting?
   a. How am I personally prepared for the meeting?
   b. Is the meeting location and room suitable?
   c. Will management be attending?
   d. Does everyone know when and where we will hold the meeting?

2. According to the text, this person should be able to help the chairperson learn how to prepare agendas and lead meetings: _______.
   a. supervisor
   b. safety manager
   c. insurer consultant
   d. OSHA compliance officer

3. What is the first step in preparing the agenda?
   a. Requesting agenda items
   b. Determining the time and place
   c. Distributing the agenda
   d. Knowing the purpose of the meeting

4. What should the chairperson do a week or so prior to the meeting?
   a. Ask for input from members
   b. Make sure the room is available
   c. Check that the meeting time is agreeable
   d. Make sure everyone is attending
5. **When should the chairperson plan activities requiring more energy and clear heads?**

   a. After everyone has had coffee
   b. During the first part of the meeting
   c. In the last half of the meeting
   d. After new business
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.

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.

5. Review ground rules: A formal review of the meeting ground rules can be conducted. However, an informal reference to the ground rules is all it takes. You may not need to review the ground rules at every meeting, but consider doing so for the benefit of
guests and new members. Some committees place a ground rules poster where everyone can see it. Other committees merely include the ground rules with the agenda. If your committee doesn't have ground rules, make sure it develops them.

6. *Typically ground rules address procedures and behaviors:* Procedural guidelines detail how the meeting will be conducted. 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; and
- 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;
- Raise your hand to be recognized;
- Don't make negative comments about another person;
- Address what works vs. does not work; and
- No one is stupid, wrong, bad, or otherwise flawed.

7. *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.
8. **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.

9. **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.

10. **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.

11. **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.

12. **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.

13. **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.
14. **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.

15. **Adjourn:** Minutes should be taken, prepared, and circulated by the secretary, 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.

**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.

**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

Well, that's a lot of information to absorb. But there's light at the end of the tunnel... it's time to take the module quiz.
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. According to the text, before you start the formal part of the meeting you should do which of the following?
   a. Offer everyone some goodies
   b. Note those who are late
   c. Thank everyone for coming
   d. Take attendance

2. Typically ground rules address _______ and ________.
   a. procedures, behaviors
   b. rules, guidelines
   c. do's and don'ts
   d. supporter, enforcer

3. According to the text, the first activity during the meeting is typically to ________.
   a. review accident reports
   b. discuss old business
   c. review observations
   d. review minutes

4. According to the text, if during an inspection, OSHA or OSH officers ask if you're having committee meetings and you answer with a "yes," you better have the documentation because ________.
   a. OSHA will put you in jail if you don't
   b. they need to make copies for analysis
   c. if it isn't in writing, it didn't get done
   d. the minutes tell them where hazards exist
5. All of these should be made a part of the minutes of the safety committee meeting, except _______.
   a. informal discussions
   b. program evaluations
   c. hazard reports
   d. committee recommendations
Module 5: Safety Committee Communications

Introduction

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. During the safety committee meeting, at any given instant, the process basically involves two people communicating on two levels.

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 first level is called the content level and describes only what is sent. The only information transferred at this level is data, usually in the form of spoken words. The words in this paragraph send information on the content level.

2. The second level of communication is a little more abstract. It's called the relationship level which describes the communication that automatically occurs at the same time the message is being sent on the content level. It establishes the relationship between the sender and the receiver depending on how the message is sent and received. The tone of my voice and my body language are interpreted by you as a message about the relationship between you and me. Do you believe what the person is saying in the image off to the right? Of course not. You know she's angry... you can tell by the tone and the body language. Let’s take a look at a couple examples below:
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.

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.

**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.

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.

**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.**
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. The "Two-Level Theory" of communications states that, in any communications process, messages are sent and received on the ____________ and ____________ levels.
   a. formal, informal
   b. content, relationship
   c. interpersonal, group
   d. intrinsic, extrinsic

2. This level of communication is conveyed by how the message is sent, and is the level to which the receiver reacts.
   a. Formal
   b. Informal
   c. Content
   d. Relationship

3. This can be used as an effective one-on-one communication technique.
   a. Use facts and don't base decisions on opinions.
   b. Be indirect to avoid confrontation.
   c. Be inconsistent in your message.
   d. Only recognize people when they perform poorly.

4. Which of the following is an important communications technique?
   a. Avoid first names to maintain professional distance.
   b. Selectively listen to tune out those who are confrontational.
   c. Protect committee members from personal attack.
   d. Use closed-ended questions to obtain facts quickly.
5. Which of the following is true about consensus decision-making?

a. Veto power is a must.
b. Everyone likes it or can live with it.
c. It ignore those who dissent with the decision.
d. Confrontation is encouraged.
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.

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

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!

**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;
- Nervous about expressing ideas in front of others;
- No interest in the topic;
- May want the meeting to get over more quickly; and/or
- Belief that their input doesn't matter.

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.

**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.
**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 under one of several categories that you determine. Generally, these categories might be people, materials, equipment, environment, methods, or procedures.
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. According to the text, each of these terms raises a "red flag" during the meeting, except _______.
   a. right, wrong
   b. works, doesn't work
   c. wrong, stupid
   d. bad, evil

2. Each of the following may be conflict resolution tactics that you can use for meetings that get out of control, except _______.
   a. deferring the subject until later
   b. identifying areas of agreement in the two positions
   c. finding some "grain of truth" in the position
   d. trivializing the importance of each position

3. Which of the following represents a factor that might motivate over-participation in a safety committee meeting?
   a. Strong interest in finishing the meeting
   b. Naturally disinterested in the topics
   c. Lack of confidence
   d. Desires to control the outcome

4. According to the text, which of the following would be most successful in reducing conflict between two individuals in the meeting?
   a. See if someone else has a recommendation.
   b. Agree that each position may be equally valid.
   c. Present your view as "common sense."
   d. Claim the other person just "doesn't get it."
5. All of the following may be successful, regardless of the type of conflict you are dealing with, except _______.

a. getting agreement to defer decisions
b. reflecting your understanding of the other's position or opinion
c. stating your position or opinion is obviously correct
d. acknowledging the behavior by describing it without evaluation
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.

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.

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.

**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 its 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.

**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.
The Shewhart/PDSA Cycle

Act - Adopt the change or abandon it, or run through the cycle again.

Plan a change or or a test, aimed at improvement.

Study the results.
What did we learn?
What went wrong?

Do - Carry out the change or the test on a small scale.
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 was not given as a reason to begin drafting the minutes immediately after the meeting?
   a. To more accurately determine what happened
   b. To more precisely determine who caused the problems
   c. To enter accurate time frames
   d. To better know who was assigned tasks

2. All of the following should be attached to the safety committee minutes, except ________.
   a. incident/accident analysis
   b. disciplinary records
   c. hazard tracking log
   d. results of employee surveys

3. Copies of safety committee minutes should be given to ________.
   a. supervisors and managers
   b. safety committee members
   c. safety manager
   d. all of the above

4. If the meeting consistently finishes on time, it is said to be ________.
   a. acceptable
   b. timely
   c. effective
   d. efficient
5. Which of the following is given as the reason it's important to limit the scope of any change made to the safety committee meeting?

a. Verify the results.
b. Control the outcomes.
c. Limit the variables.
d. Determine the impact.