

Developing a safety program

Developing an effective safety program is key to a healthy workplace for your employees and your bottom line. Not only are there costs associated with injuries but there are other affected areas such as employee morale and potential violations that could result in expensive fines.

The benefits of implementing an effective safety program, according to OSHA, include:

- Prevent workplace injuries and increase employee morale
- Improve compliance with laws and regulations,
- Reduce costs, including potentially significant reduction in workers' compensation premiums
- Engaged workers
- Enhanced social responsibility goals
- Increased productivity and better overall business operations

It may seem like a daunting task to create a safety and health program but if you break it down, it will be much easier to develop. A successful safety program is built around key elements. Some of the key elements when creating a safety program include:

- 1. Management leadership/employee participation and commitment to safety**
 - a. Commitment and participation demonstrate the need for a strong and effective safety program from all levels of management.
- 2. Learn the requirements for your industry**
 - a. There are many requirements and regulations that pertain to industry and knowing which ones relate to your organization is key to efficiency and effectiveness.
- 3. Hazard identification, assessment, control and prevention**
 - a. Workplace hazard assessment should be a team effort between employers and employees.
 - b. Once identified, come up with a strategy to eliminate or minimize these hazards.
- 4. Education and training for the workforce**
 - a. Always educate and train employees about the hazards, how to identify them and how to report them.
- 5. Injury and illness tracking**
 - a. Tracking your injuries and illnesses and near misses will help uncover hazardous situations.
- 6. Program review and updating**
 - a. Never stop evaluating the workplace for hazards. Successful safety programs are an ongoing process.
- 7. Communication with outside organizations**
 - a. Outside vendors, contractors and temporary employees need to understand the safety program to ensure a healthy workplace.

Creating an effective safety program needs to include involvement from all levels of management. It goes beyond just writing it up, but includes a thorough review of hazard evaluation, hazard control and employee training. Continuing to be successful with a safety program is an ongoing process. Remember, do not try to do it all at one time. It will take time!

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