



Best Practice Safety Committees



Maine Municipal Association
Risk Management Services
Loss Control

Forming Your Safety Committee

One way in which management can encourage employee participation in their workplace safety program is to create a Safety Committee. The committee can help share the responsibilities of implementing and monitoring the Safety Program. Typical duties might include:

- Workplace self-inspections.
- Accident investigations.
- Developing safe work practices
- Developing written Safety programs.
- Facilitating safety training.

The Committee also can help promote other activities, which encourage employees to support the organization's safety program.

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Forming Your Safety Committee

Introduction

Safety committees take many different forms. Ideally, the committee should have representation from both management and labor, as well as from all departments and shifts as applicable. A formal safety committee is not the only way. In small organizations, it may be as effective to have all employees attend a monthly or quarterly (at a minimum) safety meeting during which safety issues and concerns are discussed and recent incidents and injuries are reviewed. Some organizations may elect to have a group such as department heads fulfill the functions of the safety committee. As long as employee input is solicited, such a group can also accomplish the safety committee's stated duties.

Scope

This information was prepared as an outline to assist you in organizing your Safety Committee or similar group. As is the case with all parts of your safety program, to be effective the Safety Committee must have clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and goals. The information provided is designed to help you develop your Safety Committee.

Maine Department of Labor Requirements

At the present time, there is no legal requirement enforced by the MDOL for you to develop a Safety Committee. However, it is highly recommended and OSHA has developed guidelines such as the Effective Elements of a Safety Program to assist you with this process. You may want to consult with the MDOL for additional assistance. OSHA Standards have been adopted by the MDOL.

Purpose:

Safety Committees should be established for the following purposes:

1. To promote and maintain the interest of employees in health and safety issues.
2. To educate managers, supervisors and employees through awareness and training activities that **they** are primarily responsible for the prevention of workplace accidents.
3. To help make health and safety activities an integral part of the organization's operating procedures, culture and programs.
4. To provide an opportunity for the free discussion of health and safety problems and possible solutions.
5. To inform and educate employees and supervisors about health and safety issues, new standards, research findings, etc.

6. To help reduce the risk of workplace injuries and illnesses.
7. To help insure compliance with federal and state health and safety standards.

Steps to Forming Your Organization's Safety Committee

1. **Determine the Structure of the Safety Committee** ...some consideration should be given to the structure of the safety committee. Employee wellness can be included in the responsibilities and duties of the safety committee, or the Wellness Committee can work in combination with the Safety Committee. The Wellness Committee does not need to be implemented during the initial start up phase of the safety committee. It can be incorporated at a later time if this is a desired element of the safety committee. The Wellness Committee can address concerns of employee health and wellness.
2. **Determine the Optimal Size of Your Committee** ... Determine the ideal number of people to be part of your Safety Committee. If you are forming a joint labor-management safety committee, keep in mind the importance of maintaining an equal balance in the number of the representatives from each group. Remember to include representatives from the various departments and work groups. If you elect to utilize the All-Employee Safety Meeting method, then this criterion is unimportant. A target of five to ten committee members is usually a good-sized group.
3. **Determine Who the Specific Committee Members Will Be** ... You may elect to hand-pick the specific employees that you think would make good Committee members. You may also choose to issue an open invitation to employees and supervisory personnel to ask for volunteers to join the Committee. Either way, your goal is to have a group of individuals that can work together as a team, and who are willing to do what they can to promote safety in your workplace. Depending on the response to your invitation, you still may need to invite specific individuals to join the committee. If the response is high, then you may need to maintain a waiting list. It is a good idea to periodically rotate members on and off the committee, to help to prevent burnout and to keep fresh ideas and energy flowing through the group.
4. **Top Management Involvement** ... You need to provide top management support to the safety committee, so that all employees will understand that your commitment to safety is a serious one. If you chose to be a member of the committee, then you should remember to encourage all members' involvement in the discussion of safety issues and concerns. Should you elect not to become a member of the committee, and then you should attend the initial meeting and visit periodically after that. You should also review the meeting minutes and make yourself available to respond to

questions and concerns from the committee. Most importantly, management must establish the authority of the committee and then support it.

5. **Conduct the Initial Safety Committee Meeting** ... The first meeting should cover the following items:
 - Welcome members to the Committee;
 - Set a schedule for the committee to meet (for instance, the first Tuesday of every month at 2:00 p.m.) that is as convenient as possible for all members;
 - Determine who will be the committee officers--Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Recorder or Secretary (you may wish to have temporary officers until the committee has met at least a couple of times);
 - Discuss the duties of the committee and determine which duties should initially receive the highest priority. Some examples would include conducting facility self-inspections, developing required written safety programs, and conducting Incident/Accident review.
 - Determine the need for sub-committees to take responsibility for some of the priority items. If sub-committees are formed, their work on projects can be advanced by meeting between the full committee meetings. They can then report on their progress at the next meeting of the larger group. This should also facilitate keeping the length of the full committee meetings to an hour or less.

6. **Review the Progress of the Committee at Least Annually** ... Each year the safety committee's progress should be reviewed in order to evaluate the group's success in helping the organization to meet its safety goals and objectives. This will allow both progress and deficiencies to be identified so that the committee's efforts can be further refined as necessary to allow the organization to continue to make progress toward an accident-free workplace.

Key Elements

To be effective, Your Safety Committee needs to do the following:

- Hold meetings on a regular basis, following a consistent schedule.
- Set clear meeting agendas, publish them in advance, and follow them.
- Keep minutes of each meeting that summarize the issues discussed, the proposed actions to be taken, and the person(s) responsible for follow-up on each item. Minutes should be published and provided to each committee member, as well as made available to all employees.
- Members should be required to attend all meetings, except in the case of emergencies. If a member cannot attend a meeting, then an alternate should be sent. Attendance should be taken at each meeting and recorded in the minutes.
- Publicize the Committee's accomplishments, as well as assistance to management; find ways to recognize the efforts of individuals and groups within the organization who make significant contributions to the Safety Program.

Planning Guide and Sample Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

The attachments provided are intended to help you in forming your organization's Safety Committee. Each of the key elements is included. Each organization will need to carefully analyze its own safety issues and available resources, so that the Safety Committee can be structured to your specific operation.

Sources of Additional Help

Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Standards, Safety Works 877-723-3345.

MMA RMS - Please call Risk Management Services at (800) 590-5583.

The information contained in this presentation is intended to assist you in your loss control efforts. We do not assume responsibility for the discovery or elimination of all hazards that could possibly cause accidents or losses. Recommendations are developed from the best information available and may not include every possible cause of loss. Compliance with these recommendations does not guarantee the fulfillment of your obligation under local, state or federal laws.

Safety Committee Planning Guide

A. General Organization of Safety Committees

1. The board of selectmen/town council should announce the formation of the Safety Committee officially. This should include a brief description of the committee's function, current membership, and should solicit cooperation from all departments.
2. The committee membership should have knowledge of their work area, interest in supporting safety, and have the support of their peers. The committee should be consistent with this requirement.
3. Safety committees should have access to and communications with top management through direct reporting or via distribution of the minutes to all key management officers and department heads.
4. The safety committee should have the full backing of management if they are to function effectively. Management should monitor the committee to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

B. Typical Duties of a Committee

1. Report unsafe conditions and suggest corrective actions.
2. Meet at least monthly; less frequently for smaller departments or operations, but at least be quarterly.
3. Clearly define the duties and responsibilities of officers and members.
4. Review incidents, near misses, Supervisor's Accident Investigation Reports, claim summaries and loss analysis on a periodic basis.
5. Review all serious injuries. Not for faultfinding, but for fact finding to prevent a re-occurrence of the same or similar incident.
6. Contribute ideas and suggestions for improvements in safety.
7. Work safely and influence others to work safely.
8. Make periodic facility safety audits.
9. Sponsor and coordinate contests, poster programs, safety drives; etc., and supply other informational materials which can help to promote safer operations.
10. Develop, implement, and review written safety programs.
11. Build enthusiasm for safety programs.
12. Direct involvement with organizational wide safety training.
13. Establish dispute resolution procedures.
14. Propose and create safety checklists.
15. Identifying high-risk job tasks and developing written safe operating procedures.

C. Setting of Goals

1. Short term, 1-6 months and long term, greater than 6 months.
2. Goals should be measurable and achievable.
3. Goals should be reviewed periodically to determine the effectiveness of the committee and to reset or restate goal targets.

D. Safety Committee Meeting Agenda

Committee Chairman/Safety Manager should call the meeting to order, the secretary should take minutes of the meeting, if the secretary is not present, the chairman should designate a member to take minutes and proceed with business in the following suggested order:

1. Call to Order

- a. Call meeting to order, introduce guests, speakers, agenda changes, etc.
- b. Read minutes of previous meeting. Note corrections or changes.

2. Old Business

- a. Discuss status of previously submitted recommendations.
- b. Request status report on any other pending old business.
- c. Set target dates for completion of recommendations and other pending items.
- d. Status report of goals and objectives.

3. Accident Review

- a. Brief summary of number and type of incidents reported since last meeting.
- e. Discuss severe or potentially severe cases including action to be taken or suggested to minimize exposure.
- f. Brief summary of number and type of accidents for the year to date.
Discuss any problem trends.
- g. Evaluate effectiveness of supervisor's investigation/prevention efforts.

4. Inspection Reports

- a. Report findings of safety inspections made by the committee members or others. Department operations should be inspected on a rotating basis.
- b. Discuss and decide on action to be recommended as a result of reports. Identify who will be responsible and establish time frame for action.

5. New Business

- a. Request committee members to submit safety suggestions (brainstorm).
- b. Comment on new safety procedures, equipment, etc., of interest to the committee.
- c. Plan and schedule safety-training programs.
- d. Other new business

6. Goals/Planning (possible topics)

- List each new recommendation submitted at the meeting. Identify action to be taken and by whom prior to the next meeting.
- Offsite Tours and Training
- Guest Speakers
- Insurance and Loss Control Consultants
- Present safety awards

E. Common Safety Committee Mistakes

- The group has no clear-cut job to perform, or the committee has no reason to exist.
- There is talk, talk, talk...without decisions.
- People are appointed who are neither interested nor experienced.
- The chairpersons are not qualified by experience, desire, or ability.
- The group has no orderly plan, no time schedule.
- People do not show up for meetings and inspections.
- The work of the committee is not recognized by employees or management.
- Agendas are sent out late or distributed only at the meetings.
- Minutes are sent out late. They should be distributed within a week after the meeting with reminders of assigned tasks.

F. Essentials of an Effective Safety Committee

- Top management officials should attend safety committee meetings (at least periodically). They must show interest in the safety program to both supervisory management and labor.
- Mission Statement. Clear statement that supports the safety committee and states what management is looking for and what it is expecting to get from the committee. Gives the committee guidelines to meet the requirements of upper management.
- Improved inspections.
 - Implementing cooperative inspections that include workers and management representatives;
 - Making inspections fun and gratifying by noting not just the negative but the positive conditions in the workplace; and
 - Issuing rewards after inspections.
- Chairperson must show strong leadership, keep things moving.
- The committee should address legitimate safety issues only. The committee should not become a format for negotiating union business or airing grievances.
- Meeting agendas must be established and provided to members in advance. The agenda should establish a starting and ending time for the meeting.

- Minutes of each meeting should be circulated to all members and management within 2-3 working days following each meeting.
- Members must be expected by management to attend meetings and to schedule the necessary time.
- Acknowledgment. Recognition of the committee for its positive impact on the workplace. Bringing the success of the committee to everyone's attention makes others want to be part of it.
- The minutes should include the names of members who did not attend as well as those members that did attend.
- Let all employees of the organization know about the committee. Post minutes or notices, put articles in newsletters. Solicit input from “fellow” employees.
- Be positive. Give credit where credit is due. Keep employees informed of the committee’s activities.

**MINUTES Of The
CITY OF: _____
SAFETY COMMITTEE**

DATE:

TIME:

LOCATION:

A. Attendance

Present

Absent

B. Call to Order

C. Old Business

D. Accident Review

E. Inspection Report Review

E. Recommendations

F. Corrective Actions Taken

G. Suggestion Box Response/Department Suggestions

C. H. New Business

J. Review of Committee Goals/Planning

K. Next Meeting Date