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Personnel Notes

"Organizing a Safety Committee" by Linda Gregurek of Trussway, Ltd.

Safety Committees are very important to your company if you structure them to be effective. To accomplish this goal you must first design and develop the committee. Next, there are five basic steps that must be followed to achieve a successful Safety Committee.

STEP 1: SECURE MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

This is the most important step in achieving a successful committee. Management should participate in setting goals and objectives for the safety program, listen to the committee's suggestions objectively and be prepared to adopt its suggestions. The committee participants will lose interest quickly if all suggestions are ignored or dismissed.

Committing to financial support for new equipment, repairs, meetings and incentive programs will also be necessary. Management can further support the safety program by setting an example. Wear protective equipment such as hard hats, safety glasses, etc. in required areas of the plant.

When employees do not follow safety policies, you must be prepared to enforce discipline per your procedures. Make your supervisors accountable for safety in their departments. Stress to employees that safety is your number one priority. Your awareness and commitment will impress upon others the importance of safety. Make safety everyone's responsibility. An employee who is injured and off the line will decrease production and efficiency. Working in a safe environment will also improve employee morale.

STEP 2. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

Employees will be instrumental in making the program work. Seek ideas and input from them and make them a part of this campaign for safety. Do not let safety take second place to production. Seek members for your committee from all aspects of the organization. Don't overlook the fact that accidents also happen in the office with administrative staff and on the road with sales staff. Put personalized safety signs in all areas that require protective equipment. Post other reminders in the eating and break areas.

STEP 3: SET GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Have a mission statement promoting safety and health for all employees. Include in the

statement management's commitment to the program as well as their intention of making this a cooperative effort. Design the purpose of the committee (e.g. safety training, communication, hazard control, motivation and incentive programs, promoting safety awareness, etc.). Committee responsibilities could include ways to decrease lost workdays, reduce accidents and near misses, increase production and much more.

STEP 4: SELECT THE COMMITTEE

Choose members that have the time available to dedicate to the safety committee. Make sure that the members are instilled with an interest in safety and health and will contribute to the cause. Each person should have an objective point of view in order to conduct investigations and/or inspections. If at all possible, have a representative from each department and all shifts. If there are various locations involved, you should consider having a committee at each one. Management should give one member of the committee the authority to implement recommendations. Production managers, general managers, supervisors and foremen are good candidates for safety committees. Human Resource managers are likely candidates because they are aware of OSHA requirements and state requirements (if applicable), workers' compensation as well as the policies and procedures implemented by your company. If you use a temporary service, ask that a representative from their company be on the committee in addition to a representative from your worker's compensation carrier.

STEP 5: DEFINE THE COMMITTEE'S ROLE

Communicate to your employees that the committee has been formed and who its members are. Set an annual calendar with the meeting dates. Encourage the members to participate by creating an agenda for each meeting. Recording attendance should be the first item on the agenda. Review accidents for the prior month, lost time, clinic calls and near misses. Sometimes when doing this, another member may have an idea that will keep the same accident from happening again. Create an action item list and assign members an item to complete with a due date. Items on the action list could be repairing a piece of machinery, setting up a training seminar or researching an OSHA standard.

Keep the lines of communication open by letting your members have a period of time at each meeting to discuss an issue or give a suggestion with no repercussions. Always respond to suggestions and recommendations as soon as possible. It is important to show responsiveness in order to keep everyone's attention. Have plant inspections on a quarterly basis and let the safety committee members do the inspection. Invite a representative from your workers' compensation carrier to attend the inspections. Listen to the recommendations of the committee members.

CONCLUSION

Safety Committees are an important part of creating a safe and healthy work environment. If you promote safety's high importance to this committee, they in turn will spread the word to others. If your employees see positive results from this committee, they will know your number one priority is.....SAFETY!

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