TEAMSTERS Safety & Health FACTS

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OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Elements of a Safety and Health Program

Having a safety and health program in your workplace is one of the most effective ways of protecting worker safety and health. An effective program seeks a proactive approach to identify, evaluate, and control workplace hazards, specific job hazards, and potential hazards that may arise from foreseeable conditions. The main goal of safety and health programs is to prevent workplace injuries, illnesses, and deaths, as well as the suffering and financial hardship these events can cause for workers, their families, and employers.

Although compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards and the law is an important objective, a good program looks beyond specific requirements of OSHA to address all hazards. A good safety and health program intends to prevent all injuries and illnesses, whether or not compliance is an issue.

OSHA'S recently updated ***Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs***[1] present a step-by-step approach to implementing a safety and health program, built around seven core elements that make up a successful program.

The Importance of Worker Participation

Throughout these recommended practices, OSHA emphasizes the importance of worker participation in the safety and health program. For a program to succeed, workers (and, if applicable, their representatives) must participate in developing and implementing every element of the safety and health program. This emphasis on worker participation is consistent with the OSH Act, OSHA standards, and OSHA enforcement policies and procedures, which recognize the rights and roles of workers and their representatives in matters of workplace safety and health. Several action items described in these recommended practices rely on perspectives, expertise, and input that can come only from workers and their representatives.

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[1]https://www.osha.gov/shpguidelines/management-leadership.html

CORE ELEMENTS OF THE SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP

- Top management demonstrates its commitment to continuous improvement in safety and health, communicates that commitment to workers, and sets program expectations and responsibilities.
- Managers at all levels make safety and health a core organizational value, establish safety and health goals and objectives, provide adequate resources and support for the program, and set a good example.

WORKER PARTICIPATION

- Workers and their representatives are involved in all aspects of the program—including setting goals, identifying and reporting hazards, investigating incidents, and tracking progress.
- All workers, including contractors and temporary workers, understand their roles and responsibilities under the program and what they need to do to effectively carry them out.
- Workers are encouraged and have means to communicate openly with management and to report safety and health concerns without fear of retaliation.
- Any potential barriers or obstacles to worker participation in the program (for example, language, lack of information, or disincentives) are removed or addressed.

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION & ASSESSMENT

- Procedures are put in place to continually identify workplace hazards and evaluate risks.
- Safety and health hazards from routine, nonroutine, and emergency situations are identified and assessed.
- An initial assessment of existing hazards, exposures, and control measures is followed by periodic inspections and reassessments, to identify new hazards.
- Any incidents are investigated with the goal of identifying the root causes.
- Identified hazards are prioritized for control.

HAZARD PREVENTION & CONTROL

- Employers and workers cooperate to identify and select methods for eliminating, preventing, or controlling workplace hazards.
- Controls are selected according to a hierarchy that uses engineering solutions first, followed by safe work practices, administrative controls, and finally personal protective equipment (PPE).
- A plan is developed to ensure that controls are implemented, interim protection is provided, progress is tracked, and the effectiveness of controls is verified.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

- All workers are trained to understand how the program works and how to carry out the responsibilities assigned to them under the program.
- Employers, managers, and supervisors receive training on safety concepts and their responsibility for protecting workers' rights and responding to workers' reports and concerns.
- All workers are trained to recognize workplace hazards and to understand the control measures that have been implemented.

PROGRAM EVALUATION & IMPROVEMENT

- Control measures are periodically evaluated for effectiveness.
- Processes are established to monitor program performance, verify program implementation, and identify program shortcomings and opportunities for improvement.
- Necessary actions are taken to improve the program and overall safety and health performance.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION FOR HOST EMPLOYERS, CONTRACTORS, AND STAFFING AGENCIES

- Host employers, contractors, and staffing agencies commit to providing the same level of safety and health protection to all employees.
- Host employers, contractors, and staffing agencies commmunicate the hazards present at the worksite and the hazards that work of contract workers may create on site.
- Host employers establish specifications and qualifications for contractors and staffing agencies.
- Before beginning work, host employers, contractors, and staffing agencies coordinate on work planning and scheduling to identify and resolve any conflicts that could affect safety or health.

When More than One Employer is Involved

In today's economy, an increasing number of workers are assigned by staffing agencies to work at specific "host" worksites under the direction and control of the host employer. Examples include seasonal workers, such as delivery drivers and warehouse workers, as well as office and production workers who may be placed in both short- and long-term assignments. In these situations, it is important for the staffing agency and the host employer to communicate and coordinate to provide and maintain a safe work environment for their workers. These employers should pay particular attention to the "Communication and Coordination for Host Employers, Contractors, and Staffing Agencies" section to ensure protection of everyone on the worksite.

Recommended Control Measures To Prevent Injuries

Employers should select the controls that are the most feasible, effective, and permanent.

- Eliminate or control all serious hazards (hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm) immediately.
- Use interim (temporary) controls while you develop and implement longer-term solutions.
- Select controls according to a hierarchy that emphasizes engineering solutions (including elimination or substitution) first, followed by safe work practices, administrative controls, and finally personal protective equipment (PPE), in that order.
- Avoid selecting controls that may directly or indirectly introduce new hazards. Examples include exhausting contaminated air into occupied work spaces or using hearing protection that makes it difficult to hear backup alarms.
- Review and discuss control options with workers to ensure that controls are feasible and effective.
- Use a combination of control options when no single method fully protects workers.
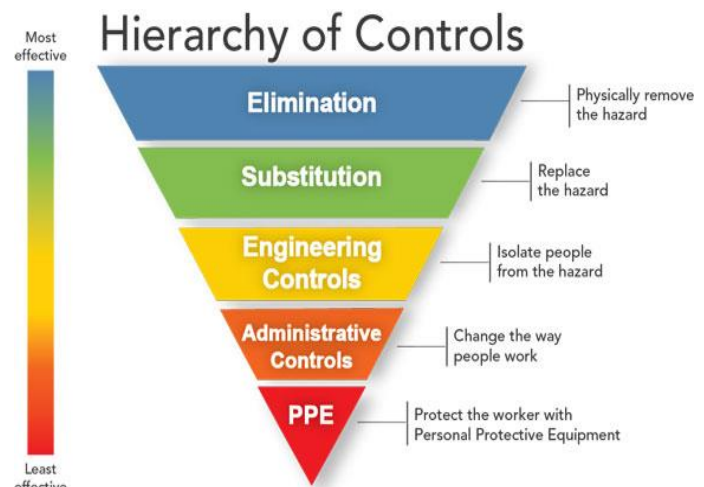
Support Materials for OSHA's Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs

- Safety and Health Program Audit Tool, that can be used to evaluate your program, how well it is implemented, and identify areas for growth. https://www.osha.gov/shpguidelines/docs/SHP_Audit_Tool.pdf

- Safety and Health Program Existing OSHA Standards Crosswalk, that can be used to jumpstart a safety and health program by identifying actions already taken to comply with OSHA standards
https://www.osha.gov/shpguidelines/docs/SHPs_and_Existing_OSHA_Standards_factsheet.pdf
- Walk-Arounds for Safety Officers
https://www.osha.gov/safeandsound/docs/SHP_Safety-Walk-Arounds-for-Safety-Officers.pdf
- Using the OSHA 300 Log to Improve Safety and Health
https://www.osha.gov/safeandsound/docs/SHP_That-Was-No-Accident.pdf

For more information, please contact the Safety and Health Department at (202) 624-6960.