



**TEAMSTERS**

# **Safety & Health FACTS**

Safety and Health Department, International Brotherhood of Teamsters  
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## **HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES**

Many Teamster local unions have found that the most effective way to identify and control hazards is to establish a health and safety committee. Health and Safety committees keep day-to-day watch on worksite conditions, identifying and solving problems before they become serious.

There are two types of health and safety committees:

**Union health and safety committees** consist entirely of local union members, stewards, and staff. Just as local unions need committees for contract enforcement, political action, and other activities, many have found that it pays to have a group of people who develop experience in handling health and safety matters.

It is important to establish a separate union health and safety committee which functions independently of the company. Any local union may set up such a committee without contract language. However, the capabilities of this committee can be strengthened by negotiating worksite access or paid time for health and safety stewards or committee members.

**Joint labor-management health and safety committees** consist of both union and management representatives. Joint committees provide local unions with a structure to discuss health and safety concerns with the employer. In many cases, union health and safety committee members may also serve on the joint labor-management health and safety committee.

Joint committees provide local unions with a structure to resolve differences about health and safety concerns in an orderly fashion. The rights, responsibilities, and structure of the joint committee should be spelled out clearly in the contract in order to produce a focused and effective group.

## **UNION HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES:**

The union health and safety committee should include people who have contact with members in each work area on each shift. To operate effectively, the committee needs a formal structure with regular meetings, minute taking, and a system to inform union members of the status of committee projects.

Union health and safety committees can perform many duties, some of which are listed below:

- ♦ Talk regularly with members and stewards about health and safety problems;
- ♦ Conduct workplace surveys to identify hazards and document problems;
- ♦ Investigate accidents, near-accidents, injuries and illnesses;
- ♦ Stay updated on new federal and state regulations;
- ♦ File federal or state OSHA or DOT complaints (in consultation with local union officers and IBT Safety and Health Department if needed);
- ♦ Develop health and safety proposals for negotiations and bargaining with management;
- ♦ Work with stewards to support health and safety grievances; and,
- ♦ Keep health and safety records including: past health and safety grievances; copies of OSHA citations after inspections; member complaints; records of work-related injuries and illnesses (OSHA 200 log and/or employer incident report); state and federal standards; health and safety literature.

## **JOINT LABOR-MANAGEMENT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES:**

Joint labor-management health and safety committees are a forum where union and management representatives meet as equals to discuss health and safety problems. They can perform many of the union committee functions: workplace inspections, accident investigation, records review, chemical and equipment monitoring, etc.

To ensure that these committees function effectively, they should be structured as follows:

- ♦ There should be an equal number of union and management members, with a co-chairperson, or rotating chairpersons, chosen by each side;
- ♦ The union should choose its own committee members;
- ♦ The committee should meet regularly, at least once a month and whenever else either side feels it necessary;
- ♦ Either side should be able to place health and safety matters on the agenda for committee meetings (see [Figure 1](#) for a sample agenda);
- ♦ The committee should perform inspections before it meets in order to examine new problems and to determine progress made since the last meeting;
- ♦ The union should be provided with copies of all information related to safety and health in the employer's possession;
- ♦ All proposed changes in the workplace should be discussed by the committee well in advance so the committee can make recommendations concerning possible effects on safety and health;
- ♦ Union members should keep their own records of what is said at committee meetings;
- ♦ The official minutes of meetings should be approved by both sides (see [Figure 2](#) for a sample committee meeting minutes form);
- ♦ Committee members should receive their normal pay while doing committee business;
- ♦ Ideally, union and management representatives should receive training in hazard recognition and control; and,
- ♦ Management should provide policy support and a budget for activities and recommendations of the committee.

[Figure 3](#) lists some of the do's and don'ts for labor-management health and safety committees.

**Figure 1**

**SAMPLE JOINT LABOR-MANAGEMENT  
HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE  
MEETING AND AGENDA**

TO: Joint Labor-Management Health and Safety Committee Members  
FROM: Committee Co-Chairs  
RE: Joint Committee Meeting  
DATE: November 11, 200-

The Joint Labor-Management Health and Safety Committee will meet on December 1, 200-, located in Building 1-A Conference Room, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The agenda is as follows:

**AGENDA**

1. Review monthly workplace survey results
2. Old Business
  - Update on right-to-know training program
  - Ventilation problem in Building 2B
3. New Business
  - Medical monitoring program for asbestos among custodians
  - Procedures for storing hazardous waste

If you have any questions or wish to add agenda items, please submit them to either co-chair by November 24, 200-.

**Figure 2**

**SAMPLE MINUTES FORM FOR  
HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING**

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Employer Department

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Date Shift

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Members in attendance

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Old business

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Corrective actions and dates completed

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New business

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Suggested actions and proposed dates for correction

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Other business (e.g., OSHA inspections, job injury reports, educational activities, etc.)

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Union representative Employer representative

**Figure 3**

## **LABOR-MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE DO'S AND DON'TS**

### **DO**

- ♦ Keep the discussion centered on the issue involved.
- ♦ Keep personalities from becoming involved.
- ♦ Hold all meetings as scheduled. Cancel meetings only in an emergency.
- ♦ Be prompt in attending meetings.
- ♦ Submit the agenda in advance to allow all parties sufficient time to investigate problems.
- ♦ In submitting the agenda, identify all items to be discussed.
- ♦ Maintain an agreed-to procedure on recording and drafting the minutes, as well as methods of distribution.
- ♦ Maintain accurate minutes on subjects discussed at the previous meetings that have been completed or resolved as well as those items still open.
- ♦ Be sure the committee concept is explained to and understood by employees and supervisors.

### **DON'T**

- ♦ Don't start the first meeting with extremely difficult issues. Get accustomed to this problem-solving technique by dealing with relatively minor problems first.
- ♦ Don't allow the meetings to become gripe sessions.
- ♦ Don't deal in generalities. Be specific about the problem and its suggested correction.
- ♦ Don't anticipate that you know the answer to a question before it has been discussed. Ask questions to get the facts.

- ♦ Don't treat any issue on the agenda as unimportant. Each item deserves thorough investigation and discussion.
- ♦ Don't delay in communicating solutions developed for serious problems or the outcome of issues discussed.
- ♦ Don't start scheduled meetings late or allow them to drag on beyond the allotted time. This has often brought failure.
- ♦ Don't look for immediate results.