Safety Programs: 10 Components to Consider

Workplace injuries affect the entire organization, not just the injured person. A severe injury may leave an employee out of work, affecting their income and family. A workplace injury can also affect co-workers, possibly interfering with employee morale and job satisfaction. The organization may in turn experience a decline in production in addition to the monetary costs directly related to the workplace injury.

The safety of employees should be a top priority for all employers. Organizations can prevent, or reduce the severity of workplace injuries and the financial burden by implementing an effective safety program, which incorporates program elements recommended by the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA). Consider the following components, based on OSHA guidelines, when evaluating your organization's workplace safety programs.

1. **Management Policy Statement**
   Management commitment to, and responsibility for, an organization-wide safety plan is an essential component of a well-functioning Safety Program. This commitment, along with the provision of resources to comply with applicable local, state, and federal safety requirements and appropriate industry standards, are the cornerstone of a successful program.

2. **Responsibility**
   Define, in writing, the duties of all levels of management, direct supervisors, safety coordinator(s), and employees as it relates to the Safety Program. Designate a Safety Officer.

3. **Risk Assessments/Inspections**
   Complete regular safety inspections for all areas of the workplace at least quarterly. Designate a team that represents supervisory and frontline staff. Document a written report (checklist or narrative) for each assessment. Identify in the report any unsafe conditions or unsafe acts found during the evaluation. Utilize a checklist or form that provides space to indicate any corrective action taken. Track identified concerns until resolution.

4. **Accident/Incident Investigation**
   Complete a thorough investigation of all incidents, including near miss incidents. An investigation is not meant to place blame or find someone at fault; but rather, to be a fact-finding activity. The investigation report will include information required to determine the principal causes of the incident by asking the questions who, what, where, when, and how. Along with the primary causes, add information on any injured persons and the details of what happened. Additionally, include corrective actions required, the time frame to make the corrections, and who is responsible for implementing the corrections.

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5. **Safety Committee Meetings**
    Develop a Safety Committee charter to define the purpose, goals, and objectives of the committee, as well as guidelines for membership. Consider having a multi-disciplinary committee with representation from frontline staff. Hold Safety Committee meetings at least quarterly. Maintain records showing the topics discussed, date of the meeting, and the names of the persons attending.

6. **Safety Policies/Procedures**
    Develop easy to understand and enforceable safety policies or rules that apply to the business operations performed. Share these plans with all new employees at the time of hire and then reinforce them periodically through Safety Committee activities and publications.

7. **Training**
    Implement a training program that will provide for orientation and training of each new employee as well as existing employees assigned to a new job. Ensure the program includes training on new equipment, with the initiation of new processes or job procedures, and with the identification of unsafe conditions noted during regular risk assessments. Consider specific training for persons who participate in safety meetings, perform safety inspections, or conduct accident investigations.

8. **Record Keeping**
    Maintain OSHA logs, and other safety records in compliance with federal, state, and local requirements. These could include risk assessment/inspection reports, accident investigation reports, Safety Committee meeting minutes, and training records.

9. **First Aid**
    Implement a first aid program, which will provide for at least one trained first aid person at each work location during normal business operations. Maintain a fully stocked first aid kit with proper supplies for the possible workplace exposures. Maintain emergency phone numbers for medical services and key company personnel along with the first aid kit.

10. **Emergency Preparedness Program**
    Develop a written emergency preparedness plan to help ensure the safety of employees, visitors, contractors, and vendors in the facility at the time of an emergency. Consider including plans for natural disasters, fires, explosions, chemical spills and/or releases, bomb threats, and medical emergencies. Consider appropriate governmental regulations and state and local emergency response committee requirements when developing the plan. Train employees in the emergency plan. Post evacuation routes throughout work areas, showing primary and secondary routes for employee evacuation to a safe, predetermined location for a headcount.

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[1] See US Department of Labor 1926 Subpart C: Safety and Health Program Management Guidelines https://www.osha.gov/Publications/Const_Res_Man/1926_C_SH_guide.html for a summary of the program elements.
[2] See Federal Register 54(18):3094-3916, January 26, 1989 for the complete original text of the non-mandatory OSHA guidelines.

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Safety Program Self-Evaluation Checklist

The following checklist may be used as a guide when evaluating your current safety program and to help identify areas where improvements may be needed. The safety program structure outlined here contains general recommendations based on OSHA standards and best practices. Not all operations are the same, and the items listed below may not apply to your specific organization. This list is not all-encompassing either, and there may be additional points to consider when evaluating your organization's safety program.

Safety Program Structure			
Item	Yes	No	Not Applicable/Comments
1. Safety Program has support from leadership			
2. Safety Program structure is in writing, with defined responsibilities from leadership down to front-line staff			
3. Safety Program addresses general office safety setting			
4. Regular risk assessments/safety inspections are completed and document-ed			
5. Safety policies are current and show evidence of regular review/revision. At a minimum, policies address:			
Employee safety			
Maintaining interior/exterior areas to avoid trip/fall hazards			
Ergonomics			
Security			
Fire safety			
Environmental safety			
Driver safety			
6. There is a designated Safety Officer			
7. Safety Committee meetings are held at least quarterly			
8. There is a mechanism for reporting safety and security- related incidents, as well as near misses			
9. Incident/Accident investigations are completed and documented when injuries result requiring treatment			
10. Incidents are reviewed, trended, analyzed and reported at Safety Committee meetings			
11. There is a mechanism in place for hazard reporting			

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Item		Yes	No	Not Applicable/Comments
12.	The hazard reports are reviewed, analyzed and trended, and reported at Safety Committee meetings			
13.	There is evidence of safety training for all new employees at orientation and periodically after that			
14.	Required OSHA logs are maintained for at least five years; there are guidelines in place for retention of other related documents, including accident/incident report forms.			
15.	Safety Program addresses life safety for residential and public assembly settings			
16.	The Safety Program addresses special functions or activities such as fundraising activities and bereavement camps			
17.	A Hazard Vulnerability Analysis has been completed			
18.	There is a written Emergency Preparedness Plan in place, and evidence of periodic drills			

Notes:

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