



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMS

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Abstract

An occupational health and safety program is a specific action plan to prevent occupational accidents and diseases. Since companies are all different, a program designed for one is not necessarily appropriate for the others. This document summarizes the main elements of an occupational health and safety program. This should help small and medium-sized enterprises to formulate a program tailored to their particular needs.

Keywords: Occupational health, Occupational safety, workers, management, welfare, well-being.



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INTRODUCTION

Any company (especially small and medium-sized enterprises) wishing to improve their performance in health and safety at work is concerned. This requires a strong involvement of management and all staff.

What are the elements of the program?

Each company will select a number of items in its program to which it will attach relative importance depending on its specific needs, but the following points must be considered in all occupational health and safety programs:

1. Individual Responsibilities.
2. Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee.
3. Occupational health and safety rules.
4. Appropriate working methods.
5. Orientation of employees.
6. Training.
7. Inspection of workplaces.
8. Reports and investigations of accidents.
9. Emergency measures.
10. First aid and medical care.
11. Promotion of health and safety.

12. Special needs of the company.

What are the responsibilities of each person for OSH?

Health and safety are the joint responsibility of management and workers. However, it is the management which is responsible for any non-compliance with the legislation on occupational health and safety.

The responsibility of a person can be defined as his obligation to perform the tasks entrusted to him. In order to fulfil its responsibilities, a person must be authorized to make the necessary decisions and direct others as necessary. Although a superior may give an employee the authority to act on his or her behalf, the superior remains responsible for the results obtained by the person so delegated.

This principle of individual responsibility applies to all employees of an enterprise, including the chief executive officer. All employees need to know what is expected of them in terms of health and safety.

To be able to fulfil their individual responsibilities, people must:

1. Know what these responsibilities are (communication required).
2. Have the authority to carry out their responsibilities (organizational matters).
3. Possess the necessary skills and knowledge (training or accreditation required).

Once these conditions are met, supervisors can assess the safety performance of each employee in the same way as other job requirements. Health and safety are not added elements in addition, but rather the necessary and permanent aspects of the responsibility of each employee.

What is the purpose of a joint health and safety committee?

For a safety program to be effective, all employees must be involved. The Joint Health and Safety Committee is a forum for collaboration between workers and management. The general responsibilities of these committees are sometimes specified in legislation.

It is within the Joint Health and Safety Committee that there is a linkage between the practical knowledge of the workers, the overall vision of the directors and the general policies and procedures of the company.

To function properly, the health and safety committee must have the appropriate structure. Its objectives and tasks should be well defined and its meetings should be conducted according to a well-established procedure. To this end, the employer will establish the mandate of this committee and provide it with the necessary resources.

The employer must establish a committee that is organized and operates in accordance with the law and that is effective and includes the largest possible representation of employees. It must also provide resources (time, money, meeting rooms, etc.) so that the committee can do its work. These requirements are known as "warrants". The most common mandates are:

1. To affirm the commitment of senior management to act on the recommendations of the committee.
2. Define how long a person will sit on the committee (if not specified by law).
3. Establish how a committee member will be chosen, etc.

Once selected, the committee members establish the structure, tasks and procedures of their committee.

Establish a hierarchical structure. In general, committee members are accountable to the chair of the committee and the committee is accountable to all employees. More precisely, when it comes to responding to a recommendation, someone should be responsible for action in this area, preferably a director with the authority to undertake or expedite the implementation of the necessary measures.

The Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee shall be actively engaged in the development, implementation and monitoring of all phases of the health and safety program.

How to implement health and safety programs in the workplace?

A good health program and safety at work provides clear guidelines, being strictly followed, reduce the incidence of accidents and occupational diseases. The key to success lies in the way the program is implemented and maintained.

Senior management of the company must show its support program through means such as:

1. Giving time, money and human resources needed for the program.
2. Provide employees with the necessary training and accreditation.
3. Put all relevant information on the health and safety available to all affected employees.
4. Incorporate health and safety performance at all employee performance assessment levels.
5. Attend meetings on health and safety.

We need to know the content of the program to all employees, but especially to workers, supervisors and members of the joint health and safety committee who come to take office. Any change in policy or procedure should be brought to the attention of all. All program elements must be present in a main document, but if some of these elements, such

investigations following accidents or incidents have been the subject of books aside, the consultation of these works must be mentioned in the main document.

Why is it necessary to implement appropriate work practices?

Regulations in various jurisdictions contain only minimum occupational health and safety requirements.

Although regulations are necessary to protect the health and safety of workers, care must be taken to avoid having too much or too little. If there are not enough regulations, people feel that workplace health and safety matters little or is just a matter of common sense. If there are too many regulations, employees may feel that their intelligence is underestimated and that regulations are usually superfluous. The following principles can be used to establish useful regulations:

1. The regulations must specifically address the health and safety concerns of each company.
2. The joint health and safety committee must be involved in the development of regulations.
3. Regulations must be stated in clear and understandable terms.
4. It is preferable to make statements of positive rather than negative ("the employee should" rather than "the employee should not") statements.
5. The rationale for a regulation must be explained.
6. All regulations must be applicable, because if people can override one of them, they will be inclined to neglect them all.
7. Each employee must have access to the written text of the regulations in their language of communication.
8. Regulations need to be reviewed from time to time to assess their effectiveness and make the necessary changes.

Compliance with health and safety regulations must be considered a condition of employment. Regulations are explained to employees when they take office, when they are transferred to a new position or after a period of rehabilitation. After a reasonable period of time, it will be verified that the employee has understood the regulations that apply to his / her work.

Procedures should be established for chronic offenders. Supervisors are responsible for correcting unsafe actions, including breaches of regulations, and must be supported in

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carrying out this task. The following principles are taken into consideration when establishing this type of procedure:

1. Ensure that employees are aware of the regulations.
2. Ensure that no one is pushing the employee to disobey the regulations.
3. No regulation shall be exempt from compliance.
4. No breach of regulations should be ignored.
5. Discipline should be used for formative and non-coercive purposes.
6. Any penalty must be applied promptly.
7. The first-time sanction guidelines must take into account the particular circumstances.
8. Penalties must be applied privately and recorded.

How to promote employee participation in health and safety programs?

Even after the implementation of a health program and effective security, we must continue to maintain the enthusiasm and interest of employees.

The security awareness can be promoted by the following means:

1. Realistic targets and progress reports.
2. Communication of all relevant information.
3. Staff Recognition good performance.
4. Education and training, including general meetings, informal follow-ups and individual coaching.

How important is employee orientation?

Health and safety education must begin as soon as an employee takes office or is transferred to a new position. It is recognized that the incidence of accidents is higher among inexperienced workers. Although experience can only be acquired over time, it is possible to reduce the incidence of accidents by giving workers health and safety training and the basics of their trade. Orientation sessions normally explain the functions of the work unit, relationships within the organization, administrative arrangements, policies and various regulations.

The following health and safety points should be part of any orientation session:

1. Emergency response.
2. Location of first aid stations.
3. Health and safety responsibilities, including those dictated by law.
4. Reporting accidents as well as hazardous conditions and actions.
5. Use of personal protective equipment.

6. Right to refuse dangerous work.
7. Possible hazards, even in the immediate working area.
8. Rationale for each health and safety regulation.

A new employee often only remembers a portion of the information that is presented to him the first few days. Therefore, it is useful to distribute materials during the orientation session. This can also be used as a reminder to the instructor. Learning can then be reinforced in a real situation by the presence of an experienced work mate who, in turn, will become more aware of security issues.

New and new employees should be encouraged to ask any questions that come to their mind regarding approved work processes. Questions such as the following will be part of the orientation of the new employee:

1. What are the hazards of work?
2. Is safety training available?
3. What protection mechanisms should I use?
4. Do I have to wear personal protective equipment and if so, will I be taught how to use them?
5. What should I do if a fire or other state of emergency develops?
6. Where are fire extinguishers, first aid kits, first aid stations and emergency relief?
7. What are my occupational health and safety responsibilities?
8. If I notice something dangerous, to whom should I declare it?
9. Who is responsible for answering security questions?
10. What should I do if an accident happens or if I get injured?

Shortly after the orientation session, it will be necessary to verify the knowledge acquired by the employee to evaluate both the quality of the training and the level of understanding of the employee.

CONCLUSION

If OSH is neglected, everyone loses: from workers to national health systems. But it also means that improving policies and practices in this area can benefit everyone.

Countries with poor quality occupational safety and health systems employ precious resources to deal with preventable injuries and diseases. Whereas a strong national strategy has many advantages, such as:

1. Increased productivity due to reduced absences due to illness;
2. Reduction in health care costs;
3. Retention of older workers;
4. Promoting the use of more efficient technologies and working methods;
5. Reduction in the number of people who have to reduce their working hours to care for a family member.