BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

Safe workplaces are sound businesses.

Every workplace should have a safety and health program that includes **management leadership, worker participation, and a systematic approach to finding and fixing hazards.**

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rate of worker deaths and reported injuries in the United States has decreased by more than 60 percent in the past four decades since the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act was passed. However, every year, more than 5,000 workers are killed on the job (a rate of 14 per day), and more than 3.6 million suffer a serious job-related injury or illness.

Safety and health programs help businesses:

- Prevent workplace injuries and illnesses
- Improve compliance with laws and regulations
- Reduce costs, including significant reductions in workers' compensation premiums
- Engage workers
- Enhance social responsibility goals
- Increase productivity and enhance overall business operations

When management leadership is sincere and is supported by actions, workers know that safety and health are important to business success. This means that the steps they take to improve safety and health will be valued by the business.

Top management demonstrates its commitment in many different ways, including:

- Developing and communicating a safety and health policy statement.
- Providing the resources needed to implement and operate the program.
- Factoring safety and health into operational planning and decisions.
- Recognizing or rewarding safety and health contributions and achievements.
- Leading by example, by practicing safe behaviors and making safety part of daily conversations.

Workers often know the most about potential hazards associated with their jobs. When they are involved in finding solutions, they feel invested in the program. To maximize participation, however, workers must feel free of any fear of retaliation or discrimination (e.g., for reporting an injury or hazardous conditions).

Workers can participate in many ways, including:

- Developing the initial program design.
- Reporting incidents (including near misses) so they can be investigated.
- Analyzing hazards associated with routine and nonroutine jobs, tasks, and processes.
- Defining and documenting safe work practices.
- Conducting site inspections and incident investigations.
- Training current coworkers and new hires.
- Evaluating program performance and identifying ways to improve it.

Traditional approaches to finding and fixing workplace hazards are often reactive. Finding and fixing hazards using a proactive approach, before they cause injury or illness, is far more effective.

A systematic find and fix approach means:

- Involving workers, who often have the best understanding of the conditions that create hazards and insights into how they can be controlled.
- Reviewing all available information about hazards that might be present.
- Conducting inspections to identify new or emerging hazards.
- Investigating incidents to identify root causes and potential solutions.
- Evaluating options using the "hierarchy of controls."
- Considering how to protect workers during emergencies and nonroutine activities.
- Checking that existing controls are intact and remain effective.

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Monthly Toolbox Talk
Safe and Sound Week
August 12-19

SAFE + SOUND

10 WAYS

TO GET YOUR PROGRAM STARTED

If you are not quite ready to implement a complete safety and health program, here are some simple steps you can take to get started. Completing these steps will give you a solid base from which to take on some of the more structured actions you may want to include in your program.

1 — **Establish safety and health as a core value.** Tell your workers that making sure they finish the day and go home safely is the way you do business. Assure them that you will work with them to find and fix any hazards that could injure them or make them sick.

2 — **Lead by example.** Practice safe behaviors yourself and make safety part of your daily conversations with workers.

3 — **Implement a reporting system.** Develop and communicate a simple procedure for workers to report any injuries, illnesses, incidents (including near misses/close calls), hazards, or safety and health concerns without fear of retaliation. Include an option for reporting hazards or concerns anonymously.

4 — **Provide training.** Train workers on how to identify and control hazards in the workplace, as well as report injuries, illnesses, and near misses.

5 — **Conduct inspections.** Inspect the workplace with workers and ask them to identify any activity, piece of equipment, or materials that concern them. Use checklists to help identify problems.

6 — **Collect hazard control ideas.** Ask workers for ideas on improvements and follow up on their suggestions. Provide them time during work hours, if necessary, to research solutions.

7 — **Implement hazard controls.** Assign workers the task of choosing, implementing, and evaluating the solutions they come up with.

8 — **Address emergencies.** Identify foreseeable emergency scenarios and develop instructions on what to do in each case. Meet to discuss these procedures and post them in a visible location in the workplace.

9 — **Seek input on workplace changes.** Before making significant changes to the workplace, work organization, equipment, or materials, consult with workers to identify potential safety or health issues.

10 — **Make improvements to the program.** Set aside a regular time to discuss safety and health issues, with the goal of identifying ways to improve the program.