

Safety Committees – Getting Started

A safety committee is a great way to improve your company's safety program or improve the safety culture of your company. Employees who serve on your company's safety committee are encouraged to participate and make a positive impact to your workplace safety program. The safety committee can take on an advisory role by sharing in the responsibilities of starting a safety program and maintaining the safety program's continued success.



Here are some common questions and answers that will help your company start a safety committee, or perhaps add new ideas to your safety committee if it's stalled or become stagnate.

Why should your company establish a safety committee?

- It can organize or re-energize your company's safety program.
- Your company may be required to maintain a safety and health committee, depending on your company's safety record, industry, and state. Contact your local OSHA office for specific statutes governing your individual state.
- It provides an avenue for all employees to have an active role in positively impacting the company's safety program.
- It reduces communication gaps between management and labor, and helps promote a team atmosphere in the workplace for the greater good of the organization.

What if your company has more than one location?

- If your company has multiple locations with fewer than 50 employees who all do essentially the same thing, one committee is probably adequate. It is, however, a good idea to include representation from each location on your committee, if possible.
- If your company has multiple locations with 50 or more

employees at each location, a safety committee should be established at each location.

- Out-of-state locations with smaller offices or operations should have representation and be included in the safety committee meeting.

Who should serve on your company's safety committee?

- Your safety committee should include a mixed population of employees and management with representatives from both production and administration.
- Preferably, employee committee members should be elected by peers or volunteer for the position. Members should serve a predetermined number of meetings or years. If no employees volunteer, the employer can select the employee representatives.

What should be the safety committee's functions?

- Conducting visual surveys of the workplace to identify safety and health concerns at least quarterly.
- Implementing a system to gather safety-related suggestions and to report hazards and other information from employees.

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- Conducting regularly-scheduled meetings to discuss accident and illness prevention methods, safety and health promotions, hazards noted on inspections, and other pertinent subjects.
- Reviewing incidents that resulted in injury or illness, as well as the “near misses” that didn’t result in injury.
- Taking action to correct the identified hazards by developing suggestions for management.
- Promoting safety and first aid training for all employees.

- 12) Not responding to hazards identified by the committee or implementing corrective actions provided; the committee will soon feel that management does not care about safety or the committee.

What are some common mistakes when organizing and maintaining an effective safety committee?

- 1) Roles are not clearly defined.
- 2) Lack of a budget.
- 3) Inadequate size of the committee.
- 4) Lack of new member training.
- 5) No formalized meeting agenda.
- 6) Lack of follow-up.
- 7) Lack of communication.
- 8) Management domination or lack of support.
- 9) Lack of employee participation.
- 10) Inability to adapt to change.
- 11) Allowing meetings to become complaint sessions by not challenging employees to develop/offer solutions for identified hazards.

How can West Bend’s loss prevention consultants help your company?

- Our experienced loss prevention consultants will provide you with information to help your company start a safety committee and keep it on the right track.
- We have videos, training guides, and specific safety topics to help keep the information fresh and current with changing trends or new safety standards.
- West Bend’s loss prevention consultant will guide the safety committee in actions steps and resources to achieve its safety goals.
- We can also help by occasionally attending a safety committee meeting and providing feedback and suggestions on how the meeting can be more effective.

These sources provide some guidance, as well as more details, on organizing a safety committee:

- www.thesilverlining.com
- www.dli.mn.gov/WSC/Lmsc.asp
- www.osha.gov/SLTC/healthcarefacilities/training/activity_7.html

