

The primary goal of a safety and health program is to prevent workplace injuries, illnesses, and deaths, reducing the suffering and financial hardships these events can cause employees, their families, and employers. In many workplaces, a dedicated safety manager leads this proactive approach. However, when there's an absence of a full-time or part-time safety manager, it creates a challenge for businesses, particularly those smaller in size. When there is not a dedicated safety professional on staff, the following are best practices that a business owner can utilize to implement an effective safety program.

Lead by Example – Employees look to the owner for guidance, instruction, and approval. If the owner doesn't support safety matters by actively promoting and correcting unsafe behaviors and conditions, employees will not pay attention to safety. Everyone must follow the safety rules, no exceptions. When owners take the lead on demonstrating solid safety principles and following safety rules, then the employees will too.

Determine How the Safety Program Will Work – The owner is responsible for setting up, arranging, and overseeing the safety program. He or she will provide the framework of responsibility delegation and should have an understanding of how to incorporate employees into the practices of the safety program

Start by identifying hazards for tasks commonly faced by employees (e.g., climbing ladders, manual materials handling, and use of equipment). Seek input from employees on this list of hazards. Once hazards are identified, outline the necessary training and resources. Training topics can range from daily or weekly safety talks and job safety analysis (JSAs) to job hazard analysis (JHAs) and field safety inspections. The format of training can be formal classroom training and/or brief meetings at the job site or while on the production floor.

An important component of a safety program is designating the roles and responsibilities that employees or groups of employees will play in the self-directed safety program. Defining each employee's role will give shape to the safety program. Below are some examples of roles and responsibilities to consider including in your safety program.

Owner and Supervisors/Lead Employees

- Give guidance and answer safety questions.
- Hold employees accountable for assigned safety duties by ensuring safety practices and policies are followed.
- Correct unsafe behaviors and implement discipline.
- Support employees who stop a task to correct an unsafe condition.
- Seek employee input on how to change, improve, or modify work practices as well as the safety program.
- Conduct incident investigations.
- Be approachable.

All Other Employees

- Follow safety rules and practices and safety directions as given.
- Ask questions about safety concerns.
- Report observations of unsafe behaviors or conditions known.
- Correct an observed unsafe condition or behavior.

Train Employees – Communicate the safety program to employees. This includes the framework, identified hazards, and the roles and responsibilities. Emphasize that it is the responsibility of all employees to point out unsafe conditions and behaviors, to stop work and correct unsafe conditions, and share feedback and suggestions on anything related to safety.



Receive and Incorporate Feedback – Explain the need and expectation for feedback on the safety program. Encourage suggestions for improvement and listen to all comments and feedback. Regardless of suitability of suggestions, always be courteous. If a suggestion is not feasible, explain why. Use ideas you receive as a teaching opportunity. Handling an employee suggestion in an encouraging manner opens the door for future suggestions for improvement.

Regardless of the industry, the safety program will evolve over time. It is important to remember that the business is leveraging the skill, knowledge, and dedication of employees in reducing risks. Through the implementation of a solid safety program employees will have the necessary knowledge on what should be accomplished and how. With guidance and support, employees will take control to help develop and implement a workable and successful safety program, all without a dedicated safety manager.

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