

Management's Role in Safety and Health



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Terminal Learning Objectives

At the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe how management demonstrates leadership in the areas of safety and health;
- Enumerate OSHA's recommendations for management leadership;
- Explain the benefits of developing a safety and health policy with clear goals and objectives;
- Give examples of visible leadership by management;
- Explain the importance of employee involvement in establishing a safety and health policy; and
- Describe methods to establish accountability and evaluate a Safety and Health Program.

Management and Leadership

Management demonstrates leadership by providing the resources, motivation, priorities, and accountability for ensuring the safety and health of its workforce.

This leadership involves setting up systems to ensure continuous improvement and maintaining a health and safety focus while attending to operational concerns.

Enlightened managers understand the value in creating and fostering a strong safety culture within their organization.

Safety should become elevated to the status of an organizational value, as opposed to something that must be done to satisfy outside requirements.

Only when management makes safety important will others in the organization follow suit.

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The Value of Safety and Health

Integrating safety and health concerns into the everyday management of the organization allows for a proactive approach to accident prevention and demonstrates the importance of working safely to the entire organization.



Managers must exhibit leadership and undertake a variety of actions to uphold safety and health in their workplace.

The best Safety and Health Programs involve every level of the organization, instilling a safety culture that reduces accidents for workers and improves the bottom line for managers.

When Safety and Health are part of the organization and a way of life, everyone wins.

Management Actions Matter

OSHA recommends that managers take the following actions to ensure that management leadership is in place:

- Establish a safety and health policy;
- Establish goals and objectives;
- Provide visible top management leadership and involvement;
- Ensure employee involvement;
- Ensure assignment of responsibility;
- Provide adequate authority and responsibility;
- Ensure accountability for management, supervisors, and rank-and-file employees; and
- Provide for periodic program evaluation.

Now let's look at these actions in more detail.

NOTES

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Establishing a Safety and Health Policy

By developing a clear statement of management policy, a manager helps everyone involved with the worksite understand the importance of safety and health protection in relation to other organizational values.

A safety and health policy provides an overall direction or vision, while establishing a framework from which specific goals and objectives can be developed.

The intended message from a good safety and health policy can be packaged and delivered to employees through a Safety and Health Program.

While this section will focus on management's role in safety and health, the contents of a Safety and Health Program will be covered in much more detail in another section of this course.

Establishing Goals and Objectives

Managers should make their safety and health policy company specific by establishing clear goals and objectives. They should make objectives realistic and attainable, aiming at specific areas of performance that can be measured or verified.

Some examples of objectives include:

- Having weekly inspections and correcting hazards found within 24 hours; or
- Making sure that, before beginning work, all new employees are trained about the hazards of their jobs and the specific safe behaviors used to counteract them.

Knowledge Check

Visible Leadership with Regard to Safety and Health



The values and goals of top management in an organization tend to get emulated and accomplished.

Successful top managers use a variety of techniques that visibly involve themselves in the protection of their workers.

If employees see the emphasis that top management puts on safety and health, they are more likely to emphasize it in their own activities.

Managers should look for methods that fit their style and workplace.

NOTES

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Examples of Visible Leadership

A manager or supervisor can become visible to his employees by:

- Setting an example by knowing and following the rules employees are expected to follow;
- Being accessible to employees;
- Participating in safety and health inspections;
- Personally stopping activities or conditions that are hazardous until the hazards can be corrected;
- Participating in or helping to provide training;
- Tracking safety and health performance; and
- Participating on the Workplace Safety and Health Committee.

Employee Involvement

The best worker safety and health protection occurs when everyone at the worksite shares responsibility for protection.

Basic principles of excellence have shown that wise managers use employees' unique knowledge to help find problems and resolve them.

In addition, no one else has as much at stake to avoid accidents as the employees who are likely to be injured.

The more that employees are involved in a variety of safety-related activities, the more likely that they will avoid unsafe behaviors and the more likely that the overall safety culture of the organization will be strong.

Without employee involvement and cooperation, accidents are difficult to prevent.

NOTES

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Management Leadership and Employee Involvement

Management leadership and employee involvement are complementary.

Management leadership provides the motivating force and the resources for organizing and controlling activities within the organization.

Employee involvement provides the means through which workers develop and express their commitment to safety and health, for both themselves and their fellow workers.

It should be noted, however, that while employee involvement in a safety and health policy is valuable, the increasing number and variety of employee participation arrangements can raise legal concerns.

Therefore, it makes good sense for the employee to consult his or her labor relations advisor to ensure that their employee involvement policy conforms to current legal requirements.

Knowledge Check

Why Should Employees be Involved?

Besides being the right and smart thing to do, there are many advantages to getting employees involved in a safety and health policy.

They include:

- Since employees are the ones in contact with potential hazards, they will have a vested interest in effective protection programs;
- Group decisions have the advantage of the group's wider range of experience;
- Employees are more likely to support and use programs in which they have had input;
- Employees who are encouraged to offer their ideas and whose contributions are taken seriously are more satisfied and productive; and
- The more that employees are involved in the various facets of the program, the more they will learn about safety, what is causing injuries at their site, and how they can avoid being injured. The more they know and understand, the greater their awareness will be and the stronger the safety culture of the organization will become.

NOTES

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How can Employees get Involved?

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There are a variety of ways that an employee can get involved in a safety and health policy, including:

- Participating on joint labor-management committees and other advisory groups;
- Conducting site inspections;
- Analyzing routine hazards in each step of a job or process and preparing safe work practices;
- Participating in developing and revising safety rules;
- Training both current and newly hired employees;
- Participating in accident and near-miss incident investigations;
- Participating in decision making throughout the company's operations;
- Performing a pre-use or change analysis for new equipment or processes;
- Participating as safety observers and safety coaches; and
- Reporting hazards and being involved in finding solutions to correct the problems.

Assignment of Responsibility

Everyone in the workplace should have some responsibility for safety and health.

Clear assignments help avoid overlaps or gaps in accomplishing activities.

It should be stressed that safety and health is not the sole responsibility of the safety and health professional.

Rather, it is everyone's responsibility, with the safety and health professional serving as a resource.



Provision of Authority



Any realistic assignment of responsibility must be accompanied by the needed authority and by having adequate resources.

This includes appropriately trained and equipped personnel as well as sufficient operational capital funding.

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Accountability

Accountability is crucial in helping managers, supervisors, and employees understand that they are responsible for their own performance.



Managers should reward progress and enforce negative consequences when appropriate.

When managers and employees are held accountable for their safety and health responsibilities, they are more likely to press for solutions than to present barriers.

By implementing an accountability system, positive involvement in the safety and health policy is created.

Knowledge Check

Methods to Ensure Accountability

Care should be taken to ensure that performance measures accurately depict accomplishments and do not encourage negative behaviors such as not reporting accidents or near misses.

The following are some methods to use in order to establish accountability in safety and health:

- Charge backs – Charge accident costs back to the department or job, or prorate insurance premiums;
- Safety goals – Set safety goals for management and supervision, such as those for accident rates, accident costs, and loss ratios; and
- Safety activities – Conduct safety activities to achieve goals. These activities are typically developed based upon accident history and safety program deficiencies, and can include such activities as hazard hunts, training sessions, and safety fairs.

NOTES

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Program Evaluation Elements

Again, implementing a safety and health policy can be done through a thorough Safety and Health Program, which we will discuss later.

And, once the Safety and Health Program is up and running, the manager will want to assure its quality, just like he or she would any other aspect of the organization's operation.

Each program goal and objective should be evaluated in addition to each of the program's elements, which include:

- Management leadership;
- Employee involvement;
- Worksite analysis;
- Hazard prevention and control; and
- Training.

Making the Program Evaluation Effective



The evaluation should not only identify accomplishments and the strong points of the Safety and Health Program, but it should also identify weaknesses and areas where improvements can be made.

A manager should be honest and identify the true weaknesses.

The audit can then become a blueprint for improvements and a starting point for the next year's goals and objectives.

Knowledge Check

Summary

Management holds an important role in ensuring the safety and health of its workforce.

Management must undertake a variety of actions to uphold safety and health, which include establishing goals and objectives, ensuring employee involvement, and providing management leadership.

The leadership a manager provides should be visible, exemplifying the values he or she expects workers to follow. Setting a good example will have far-reaching effects for the whole organization.

Additionally, it is a manager's role to provide authority, ensure accountability, and, finally, evaluate the effectiveness of a Safety and Health Program.

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