

## **MAKING SAFETY COMMITTEES WORK**

**By  
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One of the Nine Key Safety Program Parameters that has been issued by the Division of Safety & Hygiene, for Group Rated Companies, is employee involvement and recognition. It is believed that the more involved employees are in the Safety Program, the more willing they will be to participate in it and follow the guidelines established. I personally believe this. One of the ways to get employees involved is to set up an active Safety Committee.

I realize many companies have tried this in the past and have not been successful. Often times these simply turn into complaint sessions. The employees come to the meeting with a list of safety related items that they believe should be corrected. Unfortunately, at the next meeting many of the same items are still on the list.

Many times key management employees are not available for the meetings. After a while the initial interest and excitement is lost and the committee fades away and nothing has been achieved.

This happens many times because the real focus of the Safety Committee is not clearly spelled out before hand. A Safety Committee should be developed to help ensure the success of the Safety Program. It's role is to promote the Company's Safety Program. The committee members, both management and employees, need to understand this. The Safety Committee should be a communication vehicle for employees to use when there are safety concerns, but also a vehicle for management to use to promote safety to their employees.

A good Safety Committee supported by management, can help make a Safety Program work much better. First, you need the right type of employees. These employees should be interested in safety, get along well with other employees and their supervisors, want to help, have decent communication skills and are willing to take the time necessary to make the committee work properly.

Management must support the committee, by having the necessary management employees available as needed, follow up on the ideas and suggestions presented during the safety committee meeting, promote the committee and use it to promote the Company Safety Program. The Safety Committee should be used as a bridge between management and employees.

When setting up the committee try to keep the committee to a proper working number. A committee that is too big for your operations, can be hard to manage and probably will not be productive:

- \* Set the commitment up front and establish the role and purpose of the committee.
- \* Start with an agenda of what you want to see the committee help achieve.
- \* Someone should take notes of meeting results.
- \* Assign members of the committee to help achieve the list of items on the agenda.
- \* Post the results of the committee minutes and items that are being worked on.
- \* Advertise the success of the committee. However, do not allow the committee to become a complaint session, that is not the purpose of the committee.

The Safety Committee should help with the following:

- \* New Employee Safety Training, train the committee members and use them.
- \* Develop new written safety procedures and policies.
- \* Counsel employees where necessary on safe work procedures.
- \* Keep employees comprised of the company's safety performance.
- \* Promote employee safety suggestions and follow up on these.
- \* Help conduct accident investigations, both employee injuries and vehicle accidents.
- \* Report unsafe working conditions and practices as they see them.
- \* Other activities that will spread the work load of the Safety Program and utilize your employees.

Effective Safety Committees supported by management can go a long way to build a joint cooperative safety attitude. Everybody can win and is that not what an effective Safety Program is really trying to achieve.

If you have any questions or need assistance with your safety program, please call American Safety & Health Management Consultants, Inc., at 1-800-356-1274.