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Safety Committees: How To Build an Effective Program From the Ground Up

Presented by:

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Gil Molina

Thursday, February 21, 2013

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Eastern

12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Central

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Mountain

10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific

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Definition

A Safety Committee is a joint employer and employee group established at a workplace for the purpose of workplace safety and incident reduction and prevention.

Common Myths:

- **A Committee is a way of postponing action**
- **A Committee is a group of people who individually can do nothing and who collectively decide nothing can be done.**

What We Will Cover:

- OSHA and Safety Committees
- Why have a Safety Committee
- Myths
- Value of Safety
- Role of Your Committee, Running a Committee
- Membership, Roles and Training
- Tips, Dos and Don'ts
- Examples
- Specific Topics Worth Considering: Violence; Disaster Preparation

Federal and State OSHA

- While **Federal OSHA** does not currently require safety committees,
- **14 different states** have requirements regarding safety committees

State Requirements re: Safety Committees

Some states make safety committees mandatory:

- **Connecticut**- employers with 25 or more employees or above average incidence of injuries
- **Minnesota**- employers with 25 or more employees or above average incidence of injuries
- **Montana**-employers with 5 or more employees
- **Nebraska**-every employer
- **Nevada**-employers with 25 or more employees at each worksite
- **New Hampshire**-employers with five or more employees

More States:

- **North Carolina**-Employers with poor safety records and more than 11 full-time employees per work site
- **Oregon**-employers with 11 or more employees
- **Tennessee**-employers whose claims experience places them in the top 25 percent of all covered employers
- **Washington**- employers with 11 or more employees on same shift
- In **Pennsylvania**- employers can reduce their work comp premiums by 5 % each year for up to 5 years by setting up a workplace safety committee

California Code Section 3203 re IPPs

To comply with the communications requirement of IIPP – employers may use Safety Committee which to qualify must:

1. **Meet regularly** – at least 1/4ly
2. Have **written minutes**
3. Review **worksite inspections**
4. Review **accident investigations**
5. Evaluate **employee safety suggestions**
6. When asked, **verify abatement** of OSHA citations

US Dept. of Labor has proposed requiring written safety plans and safety committees:

Employee participation is favored by current leadership of Fed-OSHA –

“Workers would have a greater voice in the workplace. Workers would participate in developing and implementing the safety and health plan, and have a role in evaluating the plan’s effectiveness in achieving compliance.”

Dr. David Michaels, Asst. Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, DOL

This proposal, part of a proposal for required written safety plans, is targeted for a December 2013 effective date.

The First Safety Committee

The first safety committee was established in **1911** by George Eastman at Eastman Kodak

Why Have a Safety Committee?

OSHA:

Safety is a **non-delegable duty** – but managers can not be every where all the time. A safety committee adds capability to your safety effort – **more focus, more eyes and ears, more places** – at **no extra \$\$\$.**

Other Reasons its Smart to Have a Safety Committee:

- From a plant superintendent... *“...Originally when you first asked us to form a committee, if you’ll excuse the butcher’s language, I though it would be nothing but a load of - - , a pain in the - - It has saved me money, money through compensation, money through things they’ve seen that were unsafe, things falling, getting damaged. We think it’s a must for any operation, we really do. These guys have really gotten into it, and we would not be without it.”*

Safety Committees Get Employees Involved!

- Participate in work area self-inspections
- Participate in accident investigations
- Recommend corrective actions
- Promote safety training
- Tell the company what is really going on
- Can be an advocate to fellow employees

Myths about Safety Committees

- That Safety Committees **relieve managers and supervisors of responsibility for safety**
- That Committees **take the place of any other safety program**
- That Committees **only involve employees**

The bottom (\$) line value of a safety committee

- If you reduce hazards and reduce injuries, you **save the company costs and increase profits.**
- **Is this a focus of your safety committee?**

Expect 1 near miss for every 10 hazards

- **1 minor injury for every 10 near miss incidents**
- **1 lost time injury for every 10 minor injuries**
- **1 permanent disability for every 10 lost time injuries**
- **1 fatality for every 10 permanent disabilities**

So-what is a good Safety Committee worth to you?

\$ Value of Safety

- Average CA workers' comp. claim costs \$39,198
- Indirect costs of work injury- supervisors time, replacement workers, paperwork, etc are at least equal to cost of claim
- **If a work injury costs \$80,000 or more- what is the value of identifying hazards and training employees to avoid injuries?**

What is the role of your Safety Committee?

- **Hazard Identification and elimination**
- Safety Communications
- Employee Participation
- “Cheerleader” for Safety
- Generate ideas for management
- **IMPORTANT-** Each committee needs a clear **Mission and Goals**

One Company's Statement:

"The main objectives of the committee is to gain support from all concerned for their Health and Safety efforts by encouraging such thing as:

- **Motivation, education and training so that employees recognize and correct hazards.**
- **Achieving hazard controls by using designed procedures.**
- **Ensure hazard control procedures form part of supervisory training.**
- **Compliance with Regulations and standards.**
- **To achieve these objectives they must also form part of the Companies Safety Policy."**

Same Company's comments on how effective can a Committee be?

- **"This will depend on the way they function within the organization and actually make improvements to Health and Safety."**
- **"Encouraging proactive measures from all members of staff"**
- **"Communication is essential so we all can move to the future."**
- **"Partnership - its our moral duty to protect each other.**
- **"Participation - each member must take an active role in the committee."**
- **"Dedication - we must put the commitment into our role as a committee member and lead by example."**

Set Smart Goals for the Safety Committee

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**ctionable
- **R**easonable
- **T**ime-bound

Running Safety Committees

- **Need a Chairman** – calls meetings, sets agenda, keeps things on track, encourages participation, spokesman
- **Recorder or Secretary** – keeps attendance, minutes, sends notices
- **Agenda** – “Old or Unfinished Items”; Any accidents/injuries since last meeting; Specific Topics.
- **Management** - needs to attend and support

Commitment – ABCs of Safety Committees

- **A**llow participation by all members
- Ensure there is a **B**enefit to participation
- **C**ommunicate progress
- **D**evelop a safety culture
- **E**ducate members
- **F**ollow up and monitor results

Foster A Safety Culture

A safety culture is a company environment in which all employees are dedicated to their own safety and their co-workers' safety as well.

It represents an attitude towards employee safety, including all habits at work and respect for company policies for employee health and safety.

The company includes safety objectives in its mission and overall strategic plans, not just in the safety committee's operations.

The Value of a Safety Culture

- A safety culture is contingent upon widespread employee awareness, training, motivation, and recognition systems.
- Its success depends upon employee engagement and buy-in.
- **Strong safety cultures have the single greatest impact on accident reduction of any process employed in organizations**

Leadership

- **Top management must demonstrate buy-in to safety. This is more than “walking the talk.” They have to practice the message.**
- **Establishing and supporting a Safety Committee is one demonstration of Leadership.**

Safety Committee Membership

- ***Selection of Committee can make or break the program***
- Must have top management support and involvement
- Can be a path to recognition and promotion for participants
- Need a cross section of employees and rotation
- Should be “volunteer” not “***voluntold***”

Benefits of Serving on a Safety Committee- to Members

- Members will engage in major training and development opportunities.
- They will have the opportunity to have a potential impact on the company's bottom line and on the health and welfare of employees.
- They will develop extensive communication skills, both oral and written.
- Members will learn complex problem-solving skills.
- These skills are of great benefit to one's future administrative and/or management career.

What Does Management Get?

- **A trained group of potential leaders for company positions**
 - **Who know the company**
 - **Who have demonstrated leadership skills**
 - **Who know how to communicate**
 - **Who know how to solve problems**

To Be Effective – Committee Needs Training

What training is helpful?

A. Safety Committee Operation

- conducting effective meetings
- problem solving
- planning and goal setting
- conflict resolution skills

More Committee Training

B. Hazard Identification and Control

- IIPP
- OSHA logs and loss reports
- Job Hazard Analysis
- Conducting Hazard inspections in use of checklists

C. Hierarchy of Hazard Controls

- Elimination; Substitution; Engineering Controls; Administrative Controls; Personal Protective Equipment

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Committee Training cont.

D. Accident Investigation

- Cause and Effect analysis

E. Motivation and Communication

- Cost/Benefit Analysis
- Learning styles and effective communications

Problems to Avoid

- Boring meetings
- Long discussions which go nowhere
- 1 person dominating meetings
- “Gripe” sessions
- Management ignoring committee recommendations

Committee Do's

- Do:**
- always start on time
 - written agendas
 - written minutes, soon after meeting
 - orientation for new members
 - membership rotation
 - top management attention
 - make Committee visible-recognition**

Committee Don'ts

Don't:

- expect immediate results
- allow meetings to become “gripe” sessions
- deal in generalities – **get specific facts**
- put too many people on committee (5 to 15, with 5 to 7 being ideal)

What Makes Committees Fail?

- No direction
- No successes
- Frustration
- Not knowing why they are there
- Feeling it is a waste of time
- Asking the Safety Committee to be the **“Safety Police”**

How a Safety Committee can Gain Credibility

- **Be trained** – speak from knowledge
- **Listen**
- **Look at all the facts**, see the reports first hand, talk to witnesses
- Consider **the financial impact, return on investment** of recommendations
- **Keep employees informed**
- Sponsor **employee recognition and incentive activities**

Ways to Spice Up Committee Meeting

- **Have supervisor present accident report of his/her employee – with pictures**
- Bring in **outside speaker**
 - Fire Department, Highway Patrol, Ambulance Company
- Plan events to excite employees –**food** always gets attention!
- Plan safety awards – **recognition** works!

Fine Tune Activities:

- Review photos of your company's work injuries and accidents, plan how to use them for your safety training
- Recognize your own "Safety Heroes" those who work safely, help others.
- Check Youtube.com for fun and appropriate safety training videos
- Committee do a parking lot "seat belt and cell phone check" at end of shift as employees leave.

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Sponsor "Fun" Safety Treats and Reminders



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Other Possible Safety Committee Activities

- Poster contests for employees or children of employees
- Review safety literature and products
- Promote stretch exercises to mitigate repetitive motion injuries and low back strain
- Safety Committee visit injured workers while off work
- Issue a safety newsletter or web page

**If your Safety Committee is used
solely for inspections or
accident reviews, you are
creating an environment for
FAILURE**

What Accounts for Work Accidents?

- **Hazardous Conditions – 3%**
- **Unsafe Behavior – 97%**
 - Inadequate Supervision
 - Inadequate Training
 - Inadequate Enforcement of Safety Rules
 - Inadequate Safety tools, equipment, practices

These should be the focus of your Committee

Unsafe Conditions

Tools - - - -



- - - - **Materials**

Environment - -



- - - - **Machinery**

Equipment - -



Unsafe Practices

Horseplay --



-- Shortcuts



Unsafe Conditions

Tools



Materials

Environment



Machinery

Equipment



System Weaknesses

Vision Culture
Objectives Strategies
Programs Plans
Accountability
Supervision Training



Unsafe Practices

Horseplay --



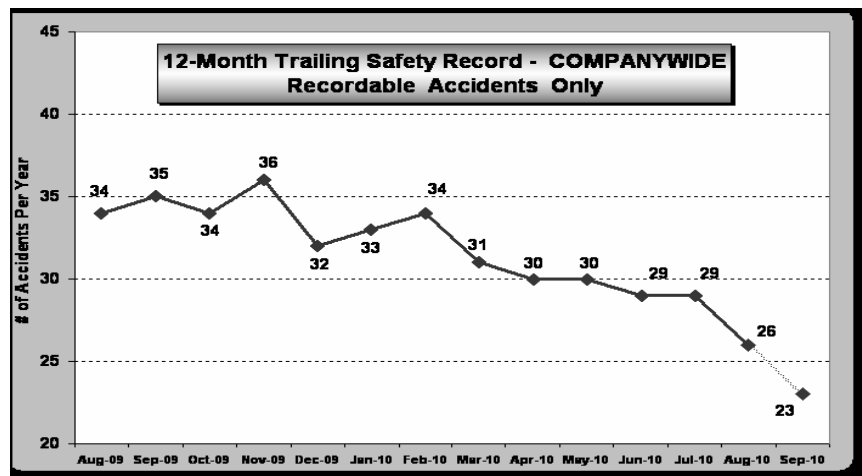
-- Shortcuts



Another Way to Look At It What causes accidents?

- People
- Equipment
- Materials
- Environment

The Results of One Co.'s Safety Committee



Example of Hazard Inspection

Bldg Finding

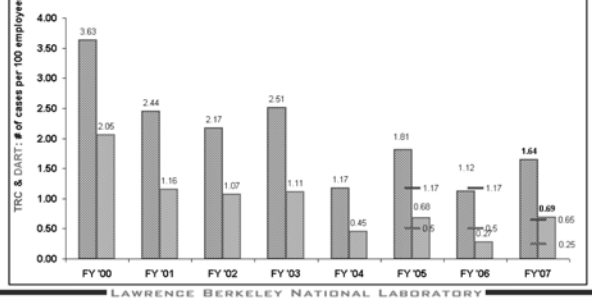
- No seismic support for equipment
- Blocked electrical panel in lab
- Tripping hazards in lab
- Inappropriate attachment to cable tray, misuse of tray
- Hand made door sign unclear
- H₂ cylinder not inventoried
- Inadequate housekeeping
- Hood labeled out of service but running

Example of Helpful Data for Committee to Evaluate

Total Recordable Case Rate and Days Away, Restricted or Transferred Rate



Berkeley Lab Site-Wide TRC & DART Rates
(Includes all construction & service contractors)
Through December 31, 2006, As Of 1/11/07



Lab Ergonomic Injury

- Student developed nerve inflammation in arm:
 - Extensive bolting and unbolting of vacuum system
 - Fine manipulative work under microscope with no arm support
 - Operation of ergonomically poor adjustment knobs
 - Contributing factor—The postdoc that usually helped had left, so the work was done by one person rather than two.



Kroger's Example -

- **Kroger Manufacturing**
 - Benchmarked themselves against Proctor & Gamble and Dupont
 - Developed the following key safety principles:
 - “Nothing we do is worth getting injured over.”
 - “Our work is important, but the safety of our employees is our most important responsibility.”
 - Decided that safety would be managed as a key priority.

United Parcel -

- **UPS**
 - **Comprehensive Health and Safety Process produced 3600 Health and Safety committees worldwide.**
 - **The committees are composed of non-management and management employees.**
 - **Their efforts reduced incidents of lost time by 45% since 2004**
 - **They also reduced OSHA recordable auto accident frequencies dramatically.**

Some Current Topics to Consider for Your Committee:

- **Violence in the workplace** is a leading cause of work related death. (19 mass gun violence episodes have occurred in work settings in past 30 years) 2 million US workers experienced violence at work in 2011.
- **Disaster Preparation** for enhancing life safety when a disaster occurs and *recovery preparedness*

Company's Responsibility

The success of a Safety Committee is the responsibility of the employer:

- Do you have clear expectations of committee and training for committee?
- Well defined safety policy?
- Provide time and support to the committee?
- Respond to committee requests and recommendations?
- Do you have a measurable Hazard Identification and Correction Process?

Measure of Success

Safety Committees can be a useful and effective tool to

- Conduct hazard inspections;
- Monitor corrections of hazardous conditions
- Educate employees about safety and
- Participate in promoting a safe work place.

Employees need to

- *Learn safety procedures*
- *Follow the safety rules*
- *Report unsafe conditions*
- *Report work injuries immediately*

Resources:

- **Determining Significant Hazards At Work -**
<http://www.iapa.ca/main/documents/pdf/SIGHAZWEB.pdf>
- **Shasta College Campus Safety Committee – an example**
<http://www.shastacollege.edu/safetycommittee>
- **Best Practice Safety Committees by the Maine Municipal Association -**
<http://www.memun.org/RMS/LC/bestprac/SafetyCommittees.pdf>
- **Safety Committees -** <http://safety.blr.com/workplace-safety-topics/safety-administration/safety-committees/?var=true1>
- **General Federal OSHA web site-** www.osha.gov.
- **Feel free to send e-mails with questions to Don Dressler at**
www.DonDressler1@hotmail.com **Website:**
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Don Dressler

Don Dressler of Don Dressler Consulting of Irvine, California has been working with safety recordkeeping for over 15 years as the head of an agricultural trade association's safety and loss control staff and since 2003 as a safety and human resources consultant and attorney.

Dressler focuses on safety, employment and human resources issues, accident investigations, OSHA compliance and workers' compensation. He serves as Risk and Safety Consultant to the California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers, Group Safety Manager for the 3,500 members of the Attorneys and Accountants Association safety group sponsored by the American Association of Attorney/Certified Public Accountants and also legal advisor to the California Association of Agricultural Labor, an association of California farm labor contractors.



Gil Molina

Gil Molina is CEO of the California Association of Agricultural Labor, one of the most active farm labor contractor associations in California. Molina is a former U.S. Department of Labor wage and hour investigator. He has expertise in dealing with compliance issues in agricultural employment matters. He is fluent in Spanish and frequently conducts safety and supervisory training, Cal-OSHA compliance training, and heat illness training for supervisors and employees.