



SAFETY COMMITTEES

GUIDANCE

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INTRODUCTION

Health and safety committees are an integral part to managing a safety program. They assist in communication from the ground floor through to the upper levels and across your organization and are key to involving your employees in managing the risks in the workplace. Your safety committee should be of a size that is commensurate to the risks in your organization and the employee representation should be balanced to reflect the level of risk.

HOW TO SET UP YOUR SAFETY COMMITTEE

When setting up your safety committee, it is important to involve employees from the start. Setting up a working group may help with this.

A working group may only need to meet a few times to identify the selection process for membership and expected tasks for the committee. It should include at least one, perhaps two senior managers committed to the process of setting up a safety committee. They should also be able to speak authoritatively on behalf of the organization.

Other members should either be interested volunteers or employees with the right skills or knowledge to help you. The working group can discuss and agree on the appointment process. Once you know who your representatives are, then you can start to consult with them about how the safety committee will work in practice.

HOW YOUR SAFETY COMMITTEE WILL WORK

The best way to set out the basic rules and procedures of how the safety committee will work is to have a written document detailing what they will do to manage health, safety and welfare together.

This should include its:

- purpose and objectives;
- membership;
- meeting arrangements;
- arrangements for reporting the outcome of meetings to employees.

The idea is to create the most effective process for your organization, and coordination between the work of the committee and the health and safety representatives on the committee.

MEMBERSHIP OF YOUR SAFETY COMMITTEE

There is no correct number of committee members as operations are different among agencies. How many management and employee representatives you have on your committee will depend on the size and spread of your agency and the types of work done.

Committee members can include:

- management representatives who have the authority to give consideration to views and recommendations;
- employee representatives, elected by your workforce, or who have asked to attend the committee and who have knowledge of the work of those they represent;
- representatives of others in the workplace such as union members or representatives;
- co-opted workers - people who are included because of their specific competences such as the company doctor, health and safety adviser, and other specialists.

For larger organizations, you may need a safety committee at the group or company level especially if decisions are taken at this higher level. This does not mean that you must duplicate committee work, but a single committee may be too large and impractical. In practice, you may have to set up several committees with arrangements for coordination between them.

It is good practice for management representatives to include:

- the person responsible for health and safety in the organization;
- a representative from the most senior level of management possible to show commitment and leadership.

GOOD PRACTICE

- Involve a variety of people – a safety committee made up of employee representatives.
- Consult representatives - consult employee representatives to agree on the membership and size of a safety committee.
- Represent all groups - ensure all significant employee groups are represented;
- Keep a balance - make sure employee representatives are not out-numbered by management representatives;
- Represent employees - consider agreeing to more employee representatives rather than equal numbers of employee and management representatives as this shows you are not dominating the committee.
- Keep a single location - ensure a committee's work is related to a single establishment not a collection of geographically different places;

MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Health and safety committee members representing the employer should:

- have the authority to consider views and recommendations;
- have the necessary knowledge and expertise to give the committee accurate advice about the organizations policy on relevant matters such as premises, processes, machinery, equipment, or procurement of safety equipment;
- be representative from across the supervisory level and include work engineers and personnel managers. Not just line managers.

It is good practice for management representatives to include:

- the person responsible for health and safety in the organization;
- a representative from the most senior level of management possible

Senior managers can show their support and commitment to the committee by:

- providing time and resources for the meetings and occasionally attending a meeting;
- submitting items for the agenda;
- giving feedback through their representative on the committee.

Through leadership you can build trust and confidence so the work of the safety committee will be taken seriously, and corrective actions identified will be immediately put to practice.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVES

Employee representatives should:

- be appointed by the employees they are to represent;
- be employed in or have knowledge of the work of those they represent;
- have worked in their role/position for enough time to understand operations

Have the company doctor, nurse, industrial hygienist or health and safety advisor as members of the committee;

Allow other specialists in your organization like project engineers, chemists, human resource professionals or training officers to be called into meetings to deal with specific matters requiring their expertise.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Your safety committee should meet regularly. The frequency will depend on the:

- size and demographics of the workforce;
- type of work done in the workplace and their associated risks;
- issues to be discussed and other relevant factors.

The Montana Safety culture act requires safety committee meetings are held at least 3 times a year.

The committee's governing document should make it clear how often you will have meetings. As a guide, you should consider the following:

- Union appointed safety representatives can carry out inspections.
- It is good practice to plan meetings together in advance.
- You may want to arrange committee meetings around the same time as these inspections, so you take up matters promptly.
- If meetings are scheduled in advance for six months to a year all members will have enough notice.

If there has been a major incident or specific developments affecting health and safety, like the introduction of new machinery or organizational changes, the committee may want to hold special meetings.

Larger organizations with multiple locations, committees will also want to coordinate the work of committees. Planning corporate as well as local level meetings in advance would be good practice.

Best practice:

- Plan meetings in advance
- Communicate – Schedule all meeting dates on committee member calendars.
- Provide an agenda prior to each meeting
- Do not postpone or cancel committee meetings unless there are exceptional circumstances.

WHAT YOUR SAFETY COMMITTEE WILL DO

Committee meetings give you the opportunity to discuss with your employee representatives issues presented to members or issues needing immediate attention requiring communication to your workforce.

To insure you cover all relevant issues, the committee should agree on standing items for the agenda and allow for other items to be added as necessary. Consider standing items such as:

- Injuries or incidents that have occurred since your last meeting
- statistics on accident reported, occupational disease claims filed and all health-related matters presented to the committee or individual members.
- accident investigation reports and corrective actions taken or recommendations for corrective actions;
- inspections of the workplace by enforcement authorities, management, or employee health and safety representatives;
- risk assessments & job hazard analysis';
- health and safety training;
- emergency procedures;
- changes in the workplace affecting the health, safety and welfare of employees.
- Committee communications back to all employees on steps taken by the committee to ensure employee safety.

When your safety committee discuss accidents, injuries, and accident investigation results, remove all names of employees involved. **REMEMBER**, the intent of the safety committee is to eliminate the hazards or control the risks, that led to the event and prevent that event from happening again. We **DO NOT** assign blame.

Committees should:

- look at all facts impartially,
- consider what precautions were and were not taken,
- recommend appropriate corrective actions,
- monitor the progress of implementing the recommendations and corrective actions of the health and safety committee.

Best practice:

- Analyze all accidents and incidents no matter how minor they may appear.
- When analyzing all accident and injury records ask yourself: What happened? How did it happen? How do we prevent it from happening again?
- Address strategic operational issues - To be effective, health and safety committees must review strategic operational changes that impact the workforce or specific operations within the workforce.
- Allow employees to address day-to-day health and safety issues and resolve those issues at a local level.
- Your committee responsibility is to ensure corrective actions are taken to protect employees from injury.

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT -RESOURCES

What resources do employee representatives need as committee members?

All safety committee representatives are provided the same resources. Employee safety representatives must:

- time to prepare for meetings to ensure a productive meeting occurs;
- Have access the same information for the purposes of the discussion at the meetings; Be provided training to understand their role and allow them to perform their role effectively.
- training for representatives can help them to contribute equally to the committee's aims and purpose. Decision making

The committee can be powerful in making improvements in the workplace. When considering issues, the committee should:

- Discuss if action is needed;
- Recommend agreed actions;
- Record the discussion and actions in the minutes of the meeting which should be accessible to all employees;
- Follow up to ensure corrective actions are implemented;
- Review results from committee actions taken at prior meetings.

Productive safety committees require mutual respect and professional communication among committee members and regular communication back to all employees of the actions taken by the committee.

FURTHER INFORMATION

[OSHA Recommended Practices for Safety & Health Programs](#)

[Montana Department of Labor & Industry](#)

[Montana Safety Culture Act](#)

[Montana Workers Compensation Bureau - for state agencies](#)

REVIEW & AMENDMENT HISTORY

REVIEW NUMBER	BY WHOM	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES IF ANY	<u>Has the latest version been uploaded to the site in PDF FORMAT</u>
1.	LB	05/27/2020	DOA BRANDING	N
2.				
3.				