LEADING FOR SAFETY

GUIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

This guidance is to support and assist leadership in ensuring a safety culture that protects employees from harm.

Protecting the safety of employees is an essential part of risk management and must be led by the leaders of the organization. Failure to include safety as a key organization risk in decisions can have catastrophic results. Leaders are pivotal in the success of a safety program, they set the example.

By following this guidance, you will help your organization find the best ways to lead and promote safety, and therefore meet its legal obligations. The starting points are the following essential principles. These principles are intended to underpin the actions in this guidance and so lead to good health and safety performance.

PUBLIC SECTOR LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Health and Safety policies are the law for public and private sector employers.

Montana is under federal OSHA jurisdiction which covers most private sector workers within the state. State and local government workers are not covered by federal OSHA. However, the Montana legislature enacted the Montana Safety Culture Act (MCA 39-71-1505) which provides rulemaking authority and defines the requirements of a Health and Safety program for state and local governmental employers. The Montana Department of Labor and Industry adopts a safety code for every place of employment conducted by a public-sector employer. This safety code adopts by reference the following occupational safety and health standards from the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration Act, (Code of Federal Regulations, as of July 1, 2014, Title 29, Parts 1910 and 1926).

The Montana Safety Culture Act requires management to implement an effective safety and health program and to communicate its commitment to the safety and health of its employees as an organizational goal. For employers with more than 5 employees, this commitment requires development of policies and procedures that assign specific safety responsibilities and safety performance accountability. Procedures should outline the steps to report, investigate and take corrective action of work-related incidents, injuries, fatalities and known unsafe work conditions. This requirement for safety policies and procedures mirror the requirement outlined in federal OSHA for private sector employers.

ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES

Strong and active leadership from the top:

visible, active commitment from the leadership;

establishing effective 'downward, upward" communication systems and management   structures;

integration of good safety and health management with business decisions.

Worker involvement:

engaging the workforce in the promotion and achievement of safe and healthy conditions;

effective 'upward' communication;

providing high-quality training.

Assessment and review:

identifying and managing safety and health risks;

accessing (and following) competent advice;

monitoring, reporting and reviewing performance

BENEFITS OF GOOD SAFETY

Addressing health and safety should not be a regulatory burden: it offers significant opportunities. Benefits can include:

- Employees are not injured while at work
- reduced costs and reduced risks – safety requires employees are listened to, accidents are fewer, the threat of legal action is lessened;
- improved standing among piers and partner;
- a better reputation for responsibility among customers and communities;
- increased productivity – employees are healthier, happier and better motivated.

COSTS OF POOR SAFETY

The human and financial cost of failing to address health and safety. Each year:

- workers are injured at work.
- worker fatalities.
- working days are lost due to work-related illness and injury.
- Productivity decreases.
- Indirect costs increase- damage to property, increased insurance premiums; litigation costs; and
- increased employee turnover

PLAN

The leadership should set the direction for effective health and safety management and need to establish a health and safety policy that is much more than a document – it should be an integral part of your organization's culture, of its values and performance standards. All leadership should ensure the communication of health and safety duties and benefits throughout the organization. Senior management must develop policies to avoid safety problems and must respond quickly when difficulties arise, or new risks are introduced; management must make sure that safety is properly addressed.

Core actions:

To agree a policy, leadership will need to ensure they are aware of the significant risks faced by their organization. The policy should set out the leadership team and managements responsibilities in leading the safety of its organization. It should require leadership to:

- 'own' and understand the key issues involved.
- decide how best to communicate, promote, and champion health and safety.

The health and safety policy is a 'living' document and it should evolve over time, e.g. in the light of major organizational changes such as restructuring or a significant acquisition or equipment or services.

How it can be done:

- safety should appear regularly on the agenda for leadership and senior team meetings.
- the senior leader can give the clearest visibility of leadership, but senior teams find it useful to name one of their number as the health and safety 'champion'.
- the presence of a health and safety director or senior teams' member can be a strong signal that the issue is being taken seriously and that its importance is understood.
- setting targets helps define what the leadership is seeking to achieve.

DO:

Delivery depends on an effective management system to ensure, the health and safety of employees. Organizations should aim to protect people by introducing management systems and practices that ensure risks are dealt with sensibly, responsibly, and proportionately.

Core actions:

Take responsibility and ownership of health and safety, ensure that:

- health and safety arrangements are adequately resourced.
- they obtain competent health and safety advice.
- risk assessments and job hazard analysis are carried out.
- employees or their representatives are involved in decisions that affect their health and safety.

Leadership and senior managers should consider the health and safety implications of introducing new processes, new working practices or new personnel, dedicating adequate resources to the task and seeking advice where necessary. They should consider is it necessary to 'design in' health and safety when implementing change.

How it can be done:

- be seen on the on the ground level, this emphasis the importance of health and safety.
- consider health and safety when employing senior managers.
- implement procurement standards for goods, equipment, and services.
- assess key contractors for health and safety, their performance could affect your employees.
- set up a sub safety committee to assess and manage risks in the workplace, chaired by a senior person within the organization.
- provide health and safety training to senior managers and managers.
- Support employee involvement in health and safety.

CHECK

Monitoring and reporting are vital parts of a health and safety culture. Management systems must allow the senior teams to receive both specific and routine reports on the performance of health and safety. A strong system of monitoring can ensure that actions to mitigate risks in the workplace are successful and events are bought to the attention of senior managers before they result in an injury.

Core actions:

Senior managers should ensure that:

- appropriate weight is given to reporting both preventive information (such as progress of training and maintenance programs), incident data (such as accident and injury absence rates):
- periodic audits of the effectiveness of risk controls for health and safety are carried out.
- the impact of changes such as the introduction of new procedures and work processes, or any major health and safety failure, is reported as soon as possible: and
- there are procedures to implement new and changed legal requirements

How it can be done:

- effective monitoring of injury absence can alert leadership and senior managers to underlying problems that could seriously damage performance or result in accidents and long-term absence.
- the collection of workplace health and safety data can benchmark the organization's performance against others in its sector.
- appraisals of senior managers can include an assessment of their contribution to health and safety performance.
- Leadership and senior managers can receive regular reports on the health and safety performance and actions of contractors.

ACT

A formal review of health and safety performance is essential. It allows the leadership to establish whether the essential health and safety principles – strong and active leadership, worker involvement, and assessment and review – have been embedded in the organization. It tells you whether your system is effective in managing risk and protecting people.

Leadership should review health and safety at least once a year.

- examine whether the health and safety policy reflect the organization's current priorities, plans and targets;
- examine whether risk management and other health and safety systems have been effective in reporting to leadership;
- report health and safety shortcomings, and the effect of leadership and management decisions;
- decide actions to address any weaknesses and a system to monitor their implementation;
- consider immediate reviews in the light of major shortcomings or events.

How it can be done:
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- performance on health and safety can be shared;
- leadership can make extra 'shop floor' visits to gather information for the formal review.
- good health and safety performance can be celebrated at central and local level.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

OSHA Recommended Practices for Safety & Health Programs

Montana Department of Labor & Industry

Montana Safety Culture Act

Montana Workers Compensation Bureau - for state agencies