

## BEST PRACTICES FOR SAFETY PROGRAMMING

The following best practices for injury prevention (i.e., safety programming) are recommended for maximum effectiveness:

### 1. Roles and Responsibilities

Establish clearly written safety roles and responsibilities for all workers in the organization, and ensure everyone knows and understands them. This should be shared with new hires during onboarding/orientation training so that they immediately begin to understand the organization's safety culture.

### 2. Planning and Loss Analysis

Establish a process to set injury prevention and other safety program goals. Create annual and quarterly goals that will achieve the desired results, and monitor progress towards them. Create focus by selecting only the most important 3-5 things to get done each year and each quarter. This takes some effort to think through and develop, but it is critical for reducing workplace injuries and creating a safe work culture.

Schedule and complete loss analysis activities at an appropriate frequency using workers' compensation, auto, and general liability loss runs (Note: Goals should also include the prevention of third-party injury!). Focus planning, goal setting, and daily efforts on prevention of the top most frequent and most severe types of collisions and injuries in the workplace. Use simple charts and bar graphs (easily done with Excel or other spreadsheet apps) to communicate performance to all within the organization. Create and maintain focus through loss analysis.

### 3. Program and Processes

Develop a written safety program (what to do) and internal safety processes (how to do it), which can be made into one document. These elements are necessary for internal standards to be established, communicated, and followed.

- TIP: For efficient and effective internet searches for templates, follow this advice: If, for example, a written safety program template is needed, type into a Google search, *safety program+\*.doc*, and then select the best template from the results. "Rinse and repeat" for any other type of program (e.g., security, vehicle maintenance, etc.); just modify the text phrase and desired file extension type (e.g., .doc, .xls, etc.) to obtain the most relevant search results.

It's also important to draw attention to the safety processes part. Keep the safety processes (i.e., how to do it) as simple as possible while still maintaining effectiveness. Keep it simple, document it, and follow it. Like a successful recipe, identify the

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ingredients, the amounts, the order of addition, and any other pertinent information that will bring the best possible results. For example, use a checklist for employee orientation so that no steps are left out and that they are performed in the proper order.

Lastly, perform an annual review and revision of all programming. Schedule dates/times to review regulatory, industry changes, customer requirements, and make any necessary revisions. Remember that regulatory requirements are considered the “minimum” that must be done for safety. Many successful organizations exceed these minimum requirements to more effectively prevent workplace injuries.

### 4. Education and Training

Identify all safety education and training requirements by creating a matrix (i.e., safety subjects and job positions within the organization) and then schedule dates/times during the annual planning process in which to complete it.

- TIP: For a robust education and training program, identify all customer-specific safety requirements (e.g., safety requirements that are applicable while at customer locations such as loading/unloading at construction or mine sites). Proactive organizations add these additional safety requirements to their training matrix.

Next, consider the difference between *education* and *training* as explained by E. Scott Geller, Ph.D., author of *The Psychology of Safety Handbook, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> editions*:

- Education – *People need to understand and believe in the rationale, theory and principles underlying a particular set of program procedures, and this is commonly referred to as education. Education targets thought processes directly, and might indirectly influence what people do. Education most directly affects attitudes, beliefs, values, intentions, and perceptions. Education = Attitudes and Beliefs.*
- Training – *Understanding, belief, or awareness is not sufficient, however, to implement a new procedure or process. People need to learn the specific behaviors or activities required for successful implementation... This requires training, and should include behavior-based observation and feedback. Training most directly affects behaviors. Training = Behaviors.*

Both education and training are necessary for an effective injury prevention program, and consider the needs for these four types:

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- a. Orientation – This process often includes the many aspects of business operations (i.e., work assignment, paperwork, fueling, etc.), but be sure to provide a solid emphasis on injury prevention right up front. Focus on critical areas of concern, which should include past injury experience resulting in high frequency (i.e., number of claims) and high severity (i.e., cost of claims). Create the context for new workers so they have a better appreciation for the safety programming and injury prevention efforts. The company safety culture will benefit by taking time to explain and create buy-in.
- b. Refresher – Injury prevention efforts often work best with short duration and high frequency training. Content (i.e., messaging) needs to be repeated before it is fully heard and understood. It is estimated that takes 7 times to repeat a message to accomplish this goal. So, think “short duration, high frequency” while providing new examples or stories so that the material stays fresh.
- c. Supervisory – Supervisors should receive additional education and training to recognize hazards (e.g., OSHA 30-hour outreach training), perform worker observations, provide coaching to reinforce safe work habits, and help to maintain/strengthen a culture of safety. Supervisors that are trained, competent, and routinely provide positive reinforcement directly influence worker retention and incident rates. Investment in supervisory level training provides continuous positive benefits to an organization’s injury prevention program.
- d. Employee Safety Committee – A well-educated and training committee provides numerous benefits to an organization’s injury prevention program. When healthy, these teams “drive” safety cultures to higher levels of performance, create better worker buy-in for programming elements and foster higher levels of job satisfaction.