

A FOUNDATION FOR A SAFE WORKPLACE

*How to
manage safety
and health
at your
workplace*



About this guide

“A foundation for a safe workplace” is an Oregon OSHA Standards and Technical Resources publication. Thanks to the following individuals for sharing their ideas and technical help:

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Photo credits

The photographs in this guide show Americans at work in the early decades of the last century, between 1910 and 1943. During those years Americans became increasingly concerned about the safety and health of the nation's workers. In 1908, Congress passed a federal employers' liability law that raised the cost of accidents to railroad workers in interstate commerce, and 44 states had passed workers' compensation laws by 1921. The dramatic rise in accident costs that resulted from these laws started the modern era of occupational safety: employers began to emphasize safe practices and manufacturers began to design safety into machines. America's workplaces have changed dramatically since these photographs were taken, but the concepts presented in this guide had their roots during these years.

Credits

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Laying a foundation for your workplace

What does it take to achieve and maintain a safe workplace? Look at any business that has a safe, healthful workplace and here's what you'll find:



- Business owners and managers are as **committed** to workplace safety as they are to any other critical part of the business.
- Supervisors and employees are held **accountable** for following safe work practices.
- Employees are **involved** in the day-to-day effort to maintain a safe workplace.
- Supervisors and employees know how to **identify** and **control** hazards.
- Accidents and near misses are **investigated** thoroughly and their causes prevented from happening again.
- Employees learn safe work practices through classroom training and instruction.
- Business owners and managers **evaluate** their business safety goals at least yearly and use the evaluation to set new goals.

You can manage workplace safety and health just as you manage any other part of your business if you start with a strong foundation. Safety and health professionals have long recognized that the most effective way to establish that foundation is to develop seven critical elements:

- Management commitment
- Accountability
- Employee involvement
- Hazard identification and control
- Accident and incident investigation
- Training and instruction
- Evaluation

Keep in mind, however, there isn't just "one way" to manage workplace safety and health. The seven activities described in this guide are time-proven and effective — they've worked for many other businesses and if you apply them they'll work for yours. But don't think that you need to be bound by only these seven activities — they're just words after all. Feel free to change or tailor them so that they meet the needs of your workplace.

Management commitment



Workplace safety starts with commitment from the top. Managers must be committed to workplace safety and supervisors must understand that safe production is the only way to do business.

Show commitment. What you say is important, what you do is critical. Lead by example; show your commitment to a safe workplace just as you do to any other crucial part of your business. Examples of management commitment:

- You have a *written policy* that emphasizes what workplace safety and health means to your business. A written policy establishes your commitment to a safe, healthful workplace; it should include clear expectations for all employees.
- You insist on finding the causes of accidents and near misses and work with your employees to ensure that they don't happen again.
- You give employees the authority they need to carry out their safety and health responsibilities.
- You dedicate your time and commit the resources necessary to achieve safety and health goals.
- You attend safety committee meetings, review the meeting minutes, and act on the committee's recommendations.
- You make sure employees follow safe work practices — and *you* follow them, too.

Accountability

Have you dedicated the time and resources necessary to achieve your business safety and health goals? Does your written policy state how supervisors and employees will be held accountable for their safety and health responsibilities? All employees, including supervisors, must have a clear understanding of the consequences for failing to perform their safety and health responsibilities. You can strengthen accountability by doing the following:



- Develop a written disciplinary policy that has clear workplace safety expectations for all employees: it's fair, applies equally to everyone, and is understood by all.
- Hold supervisors responsible for developing proper attitudes for workplace safety and health, for enforcing safety and health rules, and for the safety record of those they supervise.
- Include employees' safety and health responsibilities in their job descriptions and performance evaluations. Ensure that they understand fulfilling those responsibilities is a condition of employment. Give them enough authority and training to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Develop workplace rules that address safety at your business and enforce them.
- Establish a recognition program that rewards employees for their contributions to the safety effort.

Employee involvement



Employees operate the equipment, use the tools, and do the tasks that expose them to hazards, so it makes sense to involve them in the day-to-day effort to keep the workplace safe. In fact, you can't establish a strong safety foundation without employee involvement.

A safety committee is one of the best ways to involve employees. It's the perfect setting for getting together and working out safety and health concerns. Employees can volunteer for the committee or be elected by their peers. Employees should also have a way to **report hazards** or make safety suggestions. Their concerns should receive a prompt response, which shows that you value their input and are committed to a safe workplace. Other ways that employees can get involved:

Developing safety policy. Employees' suggestions can help develop a new policy or improve an existing one.

Allocating safety resources. Employees' suggestions and safety committee recommendations can help determine what resources are necessary to achieve safety goals.

Emphasizing safety training. Employees can recommend training topics and develop training plans, suggest who should do the training, train co-workers, and evaluate training sessions.

Identifying and controlling hazards. Employees and a management representative need to inspect the workplace frequently and document hazards; they must report new hazards to the person responsible for correcting them. Employees must maintain their equipment, keep work areas clean, and use personal protective equipment properly.

Evaluating the safety and health effort. Employees can help evaluate yearly trends in accidents and near misses, evaluate the effectiveness of emergency procedures, and review the past year's strengths and weaknesses. Using evaluation results, employees can develop goals for achieving a safer workplace.

Hazard identification and control

Have you identified the hazards in your workplace and do you know how to control them so that they won't cause an accident?

Identifying hazards

Conduct a baseline workplace hazard survey. A baseline survey is a thorough evaluation of your workplace — including work processes, equipment, and facilities — that identifies safety or health hazards. A complete survey will tell you where the hazards are, what they are, and how severe they could be. Have an experienced safety and health professional survey your workplace with you.



Perform regular workplace inspections. Baseline surveys are snapshots. They tell you where hazards were when you surveyed. Regular workplace inspections tell you whether you've eliminated or controlled the hazards and help you identify new hazards. Quarterly inspections by safety committee representatives trained in hazard recognition are a good way to get the job done.

Watch for hazards. Watching for hazards is something that everyone can do on the job. Examples of what to watch for: unsafe work practices, missing equipment guards, and poorly maintained or defective equipment. Require employees to report hazards immediately to someone who has authority to act on the report. Employees who report hazards need to be kept informed when and how the hazards will be controlled.

Document workplace injuries and illnesses. Keep a log of all workplace injuries, illnesses, and near misses to help you evaluate injury and illness trends. If your business has more than 10 employees, you must use the *Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses (OSHA Form 300)* and the *Injury and Illness Incident Report (DCBS Form 801)*. You may not need to keep an OSHA Form 300 if your business has 10 or fewer employees, but you do need to record injuries and illnesses on the **801**.

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Develop job-hazard analyses. Job-hazard analysis (JHA) is a method of identifying, assessing, and controlling hazards associated with a specific job. A JHA breaks a job down into tasks; each task is evaluated to determine if there is a better, safer way to do it. A job-hazard analysis works well for jobs with difficult-to-control hazards and those with histories of accidents or near misses. JHAs for complex jobs can take a considerable amount of time and expertise to develop. You may want to enlist the help of a safety and health professional for such tasks.

Use material safety data sheets to identify chemical hazards. If your employees handle hazardous chemicals or chemical products, you'll need to develop a written hazard-communication plan that identifies the chemicals and describes how employees are informed about chemical hazards. Employees must know how to use material safety data sheets (MSDS). An MSDS has detailed information about a hazardous chemical's health effects, physical and chemical characteristics, and safe practices for handling. You must prepare a current hazardous chemical inventory list and have a current MSDS for each hazardous chemical used at your workplace.

Look for new hazards whenever you change equipment, materials, or work processes. Assess the hazards that could result from changes and determine how to control them. If your business works at multiple sites — construction contracting, for example — you may need to do a hazard assessment at each site.

Periodically invite safety and health professionals to evaluate your workplace. If you need help evaluating workplace hazards, contact Oregon OSHA Consultative Services or your workers' compensation insurance carrier. Both provide free, confidential safety and health evaluations and can help with more-difficult hazard assessments such as air-contaminant monitoring, ergonomic evaluations, and job-hazard analyses.

Attend an Oregon OSHA *Hazard Identification and Control* workshop. Have safety committee members and others responsible for identifying and controlling hazards attend these workshops, offered at various locations throughout the state by Oregon OSHA's Public Education and Conferences Section. The Public Education and Conferences Section offers many other excellent safety and health classes at no cost. For more information, call the registration coordinator, (503) 947-7443, toll-free in Oregon, (888) 292-5247, option 2; or visit www.orosha.org.

Controlling hazards

Use engineering controls and consider administrative controls. An engineering control is any change in a facility, equipment, tool, or work process that eliminates or reduces exposure to a hazard. For example, if you replace a noisy machine with a quiet one, modify a machine's parts to make it quieter, or change the sound path of a machine so that the noise never reaches the worker, you're using an engineering control. Engineering controls that are effective, practical, and affordable are the best way to control hazards. Administrative controls are another way to control hazards, but, unlike engineering controls, they don't eliminate hazards. Administrative controls change work practices to temporarily reduce employee exposure. Rotating employees among jobs, changing their work schedules, and requiring them to take periodic rest breaks are examples.

Enforce workplace safety and health rules and work practices. These include any Oregon OSHA requirements that apply to your workplace and your own business' requirements for working safely. To make them effective, document them, ensure that employees know and understand them, and enforce them.

Ensure that employees know when and how to use personal protective equipment. Personal protective equipment is another way to control a hazard; but it's only a barrier between the hazard and the user. If PPE fails, the user risks exposure. Today's PPE can protect workers from head to toe, shield their lungs from air contaminants, and spare their hearing from harmful noise. But PPE is not always easy to use and can do more harm than good when used incorrectly. Before you purchase PPE, know the specific hazards it protects against and be sure that it fits the user. When you're unsure, have experienced safety professionals help you — especially when you're selecting chemical-protective clothing or respirators. And always train employees how to wear, use, and maintain their equipment before they use it for the first time.

Practice good housekeeping. Keep passageways, storerooms, and work areas clean and sanitary. Keep electrical cords away from areas where people could trip over them. Keep floors clean and dry; use drains, false floors, platforms, or mats in wet areas. Keep floors and passageways free from protruding nails, electrical cords, splinters, holes, or loose boards.

Plan for emergencies. Any workplace *could* have an emergency such as a heart attack, fire, natural disaster, a threat of violence, or a hazardous substance release. A well-rehearsed emergency plan can protect lives, equipment, and property. Oregon OSHA requires most businesses to have emergency plans; businesses with more than 10 employees must put their plans in writing. You should have well-stocked first-aid kits and a procedure for summoning ambulance or paramedic services. If your business has 10 or fewer employees, the emergency plan doesn't have to be in writing; however, you must ensure that your employees understand the plan so they can respond promptly and appropriately to an emergency.

Maintain equipment on schedule. Preventive maintenance keeps equipment running properly, reduces downtime, and prevents accidents. Keep maintenance logs that show when the work was done, what was done, and the next scheduled maintenance date. And always follow equipment manufacturers' maintenance requirements.

Document how you control hazards. Keep records that show what you've done to eliminate or control hazards. Identify the hazard; describe what you did to correct it, and record the date it was corrected.

Accident and incident investigation



Investigating accidents

Almost all accidents and incidents are preventable and each one has a cause — poor supervision, inadequate training, or lax safety policies, for example. If you can eliminate the cause, you can prevent another accident. Develop a procedure that determines who will do the investigation and

ensures that the investigation will be thorough and accurate. Use an ***accident investigation form*** that documents when, how, where, and why the accident occurred. Get statements from witnesses and others involved in the accident, then prepare a report that describes how the accident can be prevented from happening again. Your safety committee should help investigate the accident, identify the cause, and prepare the report.

Investigating incidents

An incident is a miss or a “close call.” Though no one is injured, always investigate a near miss. One way to investigate near misses is to have a “no-fault” incident reporting system: Employees fill out a simple *incident-report form* that describes the incident and how it happened. Investigate the incident as if it were an accident. Employees should be told what will be done to prevent an accident.

Training

All employees need to know their safety and health responsibilities, what hazards they could be exposed to, and how to control exposures. New-employee orientations, emergency drills, classroom sessions, and hands-on practice are the best ways to learn. Be sure to keep a record of each employee trained, the type of training, the training date, and the trainer.

All employees. New employees should have orientation training that covers your business’ safety and health policy, workplace safety rules, hazards, and procedures for responding to emergencies. All employees must be advised of the Oregon OSHA requirements that apply to their jobs. They must be trained to do their jobs safely before they begin, retrained whenever there are changes that create new workplace hazards, and trained periodically to maintain their skills.

Supervisors. Supervisors must know the hazards, the hazard-control methods, and emergency procedures associated with their jobs. They need to know applicable Oregon OSHA requirements and have the skill to train and motivate employees they supervise.

Managers. Managers need to understand the importance of leadership in achieving and maintaining a safe workplace. They must know applicable Oregon OSHA requirements and how to comply with them. They need to know how to evaluate the direct and indirect costs of accidents, compare costs with those of similar businesses, and assess the impact of accidents on employee absenteeism, productivity, and morale.



Evaluation



At least once each year, evaluate your safety and health effort. Are you achieving your goals? If not, what are the reasons? Review injuries and illnesses, which can help you identify patterns. Were investigations thorough? Did the reports identify causes and recommend how to control or eliminate them? Reports that leave you wondering why accidents happened indicate that you need to improve accident investigation or reporting.

Does your workplace have hazardous chemicals, loud machinery, equipment that may need to be locked or tagged out, or respiratory hazards? Such hazards may require *written programs* for hazard communication, audiometric testing, or control of hazardous energy. Identify and review the programs that affect your workplace. Make sure that you've implemented them and that they're effective. Your safety committee can help identify hazards that require written programs and review existing programs.

For the next year. Use the results of the evaluation to set new goals. Describe what needs to be done to accomplish each goal, determine who's responsible for accomplishing it, and set a date for achieving it.

Tools for maintaining the foundation



On the enclosed CD, you'll find practical information that will help you establish a written safety policy, investigate accidents, assess workplace hazards, and evaluate your overall safety effort. Included on the CD are the following:

Company safety and health policy statement

Do you have a written policy that states what workplace safety and health means to your business? A written policy

outlines your commitment to a safe, healthful workplace; it should include clear expectations for all employees. Compare the example in this publication to your existing policy or use it to develop a new one.

Accident and incident investigation procedure

You must investigate every lost-time injury at your workplace. Use this five-step procedure to help you investigate workplace accidents and near misses.

Accident investigation report

Use this form for preparing a report of findings from accident investigation and for recommending preventive measures.

Employee safety and health concern form

Employees can use this form for reporting hazards or other safety concerns to a supervisor or the safety committee.

Overexertion symptom form

Employees can use this form for reporting overexertion injury symptoms to a supervisor or safety committee.

Checklists for maintaining the foundation

Use these short checklists to assess your overall safety and health effort.

How to get your safety and health effort recognized



Our safety and health achievement recognition program — SHARP — rewards your commitment to a safe workplace. When you become a SHARP participant, your employees, business partners, and community know you're a leader in workplace safety and health. To qualify, request that an Oregon OSHA consultant visit your workplace and conduct a comprehensive safety and health evaluation. The

evaluation focuses on the critical elements described in this guide: *management commitment, accountability, employee involvement, hazard identification and control, accident and incident investigation, training, and evaluation*. After the evaluation, the consultant will prepare a report of findings and recommendations. Once your business qualifies for its second year in SHARP, it may be exempt from Oregon OSHA scheduled inspections for one year. You can renew the exemption as long as you participate in SHARP.

SHARP shows that safety and health partnerships among management, labor, and government are successful. SHARP works in union and nonunion shops. More than 120 Oregon businesses have qualified for SHARP and more are working to qualify. We invite you to learn from our consultants and make your workplace safer by becoming a SHARP participant. To learn more, visit www.orosha.org or call the Consultative Services Section at your nearest Oregon OSHA office.

Oregon OSHA services

Oregon OSHA offers a wide variety of safety and health services to employers and employees:

Consultative Services

- Offers no-cost on-site safety and health assistance to help Oregon employers recognize and correct workplace safety and health problems.
- Provides consultations in the areas of safety, industrial hygiene, ergonomics, occupational safety and health programs, assistance to new businesses, the Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP), and the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP).

Enforcement

- Offers pre-job conferences for mobile employers in industries such as logging and construction.
- Provides abatement assistance to employers who have received citations and provides compliance and technical assistance by phone.
- Inspects places of employment for occupational safety and health hazards and investigates workplace complaints and accidents.

Appeals, Informal Conferences

- Provides the opportunity for employers to hold informal meetings with Oregon OSHA on concerns about workplace safety and health.
- Discusses Oregon OSHA's requirements and clarifies workplace safety or health violations.
- Discusses abatement dates and negotiates settlement agreements to resolve disputed citations.

Oregon OSHA services, cont.

Standards & Technical Resources

- Develops, interprets, and provides technical advice on safety and health standards.
- Provides copies of all Oregon OSHA occupational safety and health standards.
- Publishes booklets, pamphlets, and other materials to assist in the implementation of safety and health standards and programs.
- Operates a Resource Center containing books, topical files, technical periodicals, a video and film lending library, and more than 200 databases.

Public Education & Conferences

- Conducts conferences, seminars, workshops, and rule forums.
- Coordinates and provides technical training on topics such as confined space, ergonomics, lockout/tagout, and excavations.
- Provides workshops covering management of basic safety and health programs, safety committees, accident investigation, and job safety analysis.
- Manages the Safety and Health Education and Training Grant Program, which awards grants to industrial and labor groups to develop training materials in occupational safety and health for Oregon workers.

For more information, call the Oregon OSHA office nearest you. (All phone numbers are voice and TTY.)

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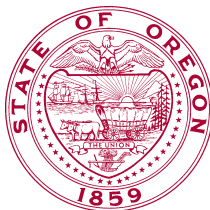
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