

Safety Zone: Safety Committees

Every organization's loss control program can benefit from a well-constructed and functioning safety committee. The success of the committee will depend on the purpose, makeup, responsibilities assigned, and support received from top management.

The basic function of the safety committee is to help create and maintain all employees' active interest in safety. To achieve this goal, there must be a spirit of cooperation and a commitment to safety as a shared responsibility between top management and the employees. A robust safety attitude of the members will have a positive influence on others. Display of interest in safety by committee members promotes positive safety performance throughout the entire organization.

The makeup of the committee can vary depending on the needs, size, and type of organization. Consider the following when forming a safety committee:

- 1. Chairperson** – The person appointed must display leadership and command abilities. They should earn respect from other members through their positive actions.
- 2. Type** – The committee can be comprised of management personnel only or management and employees. It can also be formed specifically for special safety projects.
- 3. Membership** – Membership is usually limited between four and ten members. These members must be knowledgeable of the specific workplace hazards and have experience with operations, and possess a cooperative attitude.
- 4. Meetings** – These should be scheduled at least monthly. There should be a planned agenda and meeting length should not exceed one hour.

The agenda of a meeting will vary but a typical one is outlined here:

1. Record of attendance.
2. Consideration of unfinished business.
3. Review of recent accidents and trend analysis, with periodic performance-to-goals reports. Loss runs and accident trend data suitable for these types of meetings should be available from your workers' compensation carrier. Make sure to include "near-miss" events.
4. Reports on special projects of the committee.
5. Report on inspections performed by committee.
6. Special program features- films, speakers, demonstrations.
7. Presentation of new business.

The committee secretary should prepare a written record of the meetings' proceedings. Minutes of the meeting should be distributed to all members, key management, and copies posted on employee bulletin boards. Maximum benefit will be obtained by publicizing the committee's efforts.

The duties and functions of the committee will be determined according to the responsibilities assigned to it by top management. Typical responsibilities of the safety committee and its members include:

- Conducting periodic safety inspections.
- Reviewing the circumstances and causes of accidents and near-misses. Develop recommendations for corrective measures to reduce recurring mishaps.
- Suggestions to management for improvement to the safety program.
- Assisting management in setting goals, formulating standards and rules.
- Increasing the knowledge and understanding of safety for all personnel through educational activities such as video training, safety talks and demonstrations, etc.
- Observing unsafe conditions and work practices and reporting them to supervisors. (Caution: this is not an exercise in "ratting-out" rule-breakers, it is intended to identify opportunities to improve organizational approaches to safety, not blame or catch and punish employees.)
- Listening to suggestions by employees, reporting them to the committee, and making appropriate recommendations to management.



Top-level management leadership, support and participation in the committee is critical to its success. Deciding to make a committee and assigning it responsibilities are not enough. If committee members see management has little interest in their efforts and few of their findings are acted upon, they will quickly lose interest and the committee will become ineffectual. Adequate facilities and sufficient time must also be provided to conduct the committee business.

Safety committees make positive contributions to the safety effort. They are the catalyst to get the entire organization engaged in a mindset of safety, for the health of the entire organization. They aid and advise both management and employees through monitoring, educating, investigating, and evaluating safety efforts.

For additional [safety resources](#) and other risk management subjects, visit the [AmTrust Loss Control website](#).

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