

Nine Keys to a Successful Accident Prevention Program

1. Top management support must exist and a written safety policy must be communicated to all employees.
2. Line supervisors should be held accountable for the incidence of job-related injuries just as they are held accountable for production and quality objectives, their performance evaluations should consider their units' safety performance.
3. Supervisors should have a solid understanding of and be responsible for the following activities:
 - Regular workplace inspections
 - Accident investigation
 - Employee relations and motivational techniques
 - Costs of accidents on production and company profits
 - Safety rules and procedures
4. Effective training, particularly of new employees, is critical. It is estimated that in some industries, new employees (less than 6 months on the job) account for 30 percent of all injuries. Poor work habits or safety behavior should be corrected immediately. A formal system of disciplining employees for unsafe behavior is recommended.
 - Train employees when new procedures are introduced
 - Train employees when safety performance is not meeting objectives and lack of understanding is identified
 - Train employees on the hazards of chemicals and proper controls using Material Safety Data Sheets available from the supplier or manufacturer
5. Establish a safety committee that includes top management, line supervisors and production personnel. Safety committees must discuss accidents, solutions, hazards and their correction. They must be focused on priorities and management should make every effort to implement the solutions they offer.
6. Post-accident procedures. Accidents can still occur, therefore it is necessary to have the following programs in place to control costs:
 - Proper first aid training and supplies
 - Prompt and thorough accident investigation
 - Prompt claims reporting to your insurance company
 - A return-to-work program or an offer of modified or alternative work that lasts at least 12 months
7. An incentive program might be adopted to motivate improved performance in safety. However, a program should be meaningful and fair, and should be evaluated periodically to ensure that it is effective.
8. Proper employee selection is important. A post-offer, preplacement physical should be considered for certain categories of jobs, such as strenuous jobs or jobs that involve exposure to chemicals. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) imposes strict requirements for physical exams, and care should be taken to comply with all such ADA procedures. It is advisable to check with a labor relations attorney, as "fair employment practices" law, in addition to the ADA, may be applicable.
9. Encourage and act on employees' concerns, safety suggestions and ideas.