



Why Safety Programs Fail

1. Lack of Management Commitment

If managers seldom notice hazards or comment on safety, if safety is infrequently discussed with supervisors, if management's priorities do not clearly and consistently include safety, or if a policy is not implemented, this signals a lack of commitment to safety. Management must create a "safety culture."

2. Failure to Assign Responsibilities

Management must communicate the responsibilities for safety. Safety achievement is one of the items upon which a manager's overall performance should be evaluated. At lower levels, supervisors share accountability for results but are responsible mostly for performance of certain activities such as safety training. Objectives should be set and accountabilities established and carefully monitored. A loss control program that hasn't had responsibilities and accountabilities defined and assigned does not have the management support to make it effective.

3. Failure to Establish Program Objectives

Safety programs sometimes look good on paper, but still fail to achieve significant results. Frequently, this is the result of failing to establish program objectives. An example of this would be the creation of a safety committee without any clear idea of what the committee is to accomplish. Base objectives on careful measurement and analysis of loss experience.

4. Misunderstanding the Safety Staff Role

A clear indication that management does not understand the proper relationship between safety personnel and line management is when loss control is considered solely the responsibility of the safety staff and virtually no one else in the organization invests any significant energy in the efforts. Effective loss control includes activities involving every segment of the organization. The function of the safety staff is to guide, assist, train and consult with line managers to achieve the organization's goals.

5. Lack of Supervisory Involvement

Accident investigations, inspections, employee safety training, safety meetings – all should involve supervisor's active participation in order to be effective. When managers fail to adequately utilize supervisors in the loss control program, they fail to take advantage of the fact that the supervisor has the most influence and control over the employee's attitudes and work habits.

6. Failure to Involve All Employees

When all employees are not thoroughly involved, the best that can be expected is apathy. Employees are often the first to recognize hazards on their jobs or in their departments and frequently have excellent ideas on how to correct an unsafe condition or change a job procedure to reduce the probability of an accident.

7. Nonexistent or Inadequate Training

Supervisors who have not been trained in the basic elements of on-the-job safety, or who are not skilled in communicating that information, will obviously be unable to assume their key role in the program. Adequate training is a far more cost-effective alternative. A successful safety program places demands on just about everyone in the organization from top to bottom.

8. Inconsistent Enforcement of Safety Rules

If enforcement of safety rules differs from supervisors to supervisor and from department to department, or if hourly employees are expected to obey the rules but management is not, or if the reasons for the rules are not known by those expected to obey them, the result is that people will not take the program seriously and enforcement serves only to undermine and weaken employees' perception of management commitment.

9. Poor Follow-Up

With no follow-up program for injuries, some injured workers will take advantage of the system. The answer to avoiding abuse lies in a program designed to minimize the time lost due to injury, and thus get the injured worker productive again as quickly as is medically and practically possible.

10. Lack of a Total System

A loss control program can be built up, step by step, one element at a time like a bridge. Truly effective loss control does not come easily. As with any other business objective, loss control results will come only with intelligent, aggressive, persistent program management.