

Developing Effective Safety Rules and Regulations

Safety rules are necessary for any organization. Companies usually have general or specific safety rules. Unfortunately, many of them are “canned”: that is, they are taken verbatim from another source and do not reflect the hazard of the operation or management’s safety policy.

The writing of rules should be assigned to several people working together. The collective experience and judgement of several people will result in a balanced, more accurate and complete set of rules. The responsibility for rule enforcement lies with management. This should be clear in management’s safety policy statement. The following suggestions should be considered when formulating the rules:

1. Before the writing begins, a study of applicable OSHA, state, and other related regulations must be done so that ideas from those sources can be incorporated into workable safety policies.
2. Employees and supervisors should be solicited for their suggestions.
3. Only rules that are logical and enforceable should be drafted. A rule that cannot be enforced may impair the effectiveness of other safety regulations.
4. Rules should be easy to understand. Short sentences, simple words and commonly known expressions will help achieve understanding.
5. Positive statements are more effective than negative remarks. Statements need to specify what is to be done rather than what is prohibited.

Safety rules are not effective unless they are enforced. It is important that supervisors are thoroughly familiar with all the rules, even those outside their range of responsibility. Setting a good example helps make enforcement easier. Often, violations of the rules are overlooked until an accident occurs. If the employees are corrected for each infraction of a safety rule or safe practice when it is observed, fewer occasions will require discipline.

All employees should receive their own copy of the rules and additional copies should be posted on bulletin boards as a constant reminder. A good practice is to have employees sign a receipt showing they had the rules explained to them, they understand them and agree to obey them. The signed statement needs to be placed in their personnel files.

Formulating and putting into writing a company’s rules has several distinct advantages:

1. The interest and philosophy of management will be evident.
2. The rules can be structured to the hazards on the operations.
3. Written rules will allow for more consistency than oral orders.