



Basic Elements of a Safety Program

You care about your workers. You want to keep them as safe & healthy (and thus productive) as possible on the job.

Injuries & illnesses lower their productivity & may lead to absences, both of which reduce your profits. This four-point safety program, paraphrased from OSHA, can help you protect your workers & profits. It addresses the needs of smaller businesses as well as larger ones. Many sources offer safety programs; you might wish to merge parts of them with this one to customize your company's program.

Point 1: Management Commitment & Worker Involvement
Your safety & health attitude is reflected by your workers. You demonstrate the importance of your safety & health program through your actions. If your actions show that you consider safety & health to be important & an integral part of your operations, your workers' actions will show that, too. Communicate this program clearly to all of your workers. Involve them in the formation of your program. They may offer unique ideas that can eliminate or minimize hazards & also increase productivity. This involvement can cement their commitment to the safety & health program. Consider forming a joint worker-management safety committee. Committee participation can maintain worker interest in the program.

Actions you can take include:

- Post your program where all workers can see it & give all workers & new hires a copy
- Personally take part in accident analysis to show your concern. Obey safety rules & require your supervisors to obey them
- Let workers use their special knowledge by making hazard inspections, doing safety training, & helping to analyze accidents
- Make adherence to your safety program everyone's duty, as part of work duties
- Budget enough time, personnel, money, & authority to implement hazard controls
- Reward workers who follow the program; train/correct those who do not due to lack of knowledge or stubbornness. Review the program's effectiveness yearly and make changes as needed

Point 2: Worksite Analysis

Learn what hazards are present in your premises & jobsites.

Actions you can take include:

- Ask your insurer, the local chapter of the National Safety Council, a private Loss Control Consultant, or OSHA to visit your premises or jobsite, especially when changes occur, to help you identify hazards. Involve employees in completing periodic hazard inspections
- Encourage workers to report hazards immediately; thank them-do not criticize them for reporting
- Look at past accident/illness records to identify trends which may need special prevention efforts. Do a thorough analysis of each accident/illness to identify the root cause

Point 3: Hazard Prevention & Control

Implement actions to eliminate or minimize hazards.

Actions you can take include:

- Establish safe work practices, make sure all workers understand & follow them
- Enforce safe work practices; if needed, develop disciplinary measures with the help of the employees. Perform regular equipment maintenance to prevent breakdowns & unsafe conditions
- Plan for emergencies & conduct practice fire/emergency drills
- Provide necessary first aid materials & training, designate a nearby hospital or clinic to treat injured/ill workers

Point 4: Train Workers, Supervisors, & Managers

You should train all of your personnel at the initiation of your program. You should also train new hires before they begin their work assignments. Train workers before they begin new work assignments or when tasks or hazards change. Provide refresher training. Instruct workers to avoid starting any task that looks unsafe. Combine safety/health training with job training, so workers will learn only the safe, healthy way of doing their assignments.

Actions you can take include:

- Train your workers & have them demonstrate their understanding of the training by completing a quiz or demonstrating the safe way of performing an assignment
- Pay special attention to training new hires & workers beginning new assignments; they may be more likely to become injured or ill because the work is unfamiliar to them
- Train supervisors & managers to recognize hazardous conditions & unsafe acts & how to correct and/or discipline workers
- Train supervisors & managers how to hold all personnel accountable for adherence to your program

Once implemented, you should maintain written records showing who was trained, dates of training, content of training, & quiz results. Have workers sign, showing they attended training and/or received a copy of your program. Keep these records in case you need to provide proof of an injured or ill worker's training.

Implementing your safety & health program can reduce the chance of injury or illness. It can also increase your productivity & profit, not only because fewer workers miss work, but also because the safe healthy way of doing things is often faster. Involving your workers can increase their loyalty to you as well as their commitment to your program. If you wish to expand your program to offer safety & health advice for off-the-job activities, you can show even more concern for your workers.