FUNDAMENTAL 55: Safety Audits



Key Takeaways:

– Learning about the safety audit and its purpose.
– Understanding the importance of safety audits and the objectives of a safety audit program.
– Learning how to plan and conduct a safety audit.
– Comprehending how to inspect the work area and work practices.
– Learning how to formulate recommendations for corrective action recommendations, make audit reports, and conduct follow-ups.

Course Description

OSHA audited over 39,000 organizations in one year, with over 17,000 of those inspections labeled as “programmed”, meaning unexpected safety auditing.

Safety audits embody accountability.

Safety audits assure that effective program elements are in place for identifying, eliminating, or controlling hazards that could adversely impact a company’s physical and human assets. When performed properly, this type of audit helps reduce injury and illness rates, lower workers compensation and other business costs, empower employees by involving them in activities affecting their own safety and health, increase job satisfaction, and make the company more competitive.

Despite OSHA not requiring it, a voluntary safety audit program is a sound business practice that demonstrates a company’s interest in and commitment to continuous improvement of its health and safety effort.

A good safety audit should maintain a safe place of work through hazard recognition and removal, to verify employees are following the most effective safety procedures, to make certain the facility, equipment, and operations meet the required local, state, and federal, health, and safety requirements and best industry business practices to produce a safe place of work. As well, safety audits assure that necessary administrative records supporting the required health, safety, and medical activities are maintained.

Formal safety audits – Need to be conducted on a regularly scheduled basis –

Show the company has made a commitment to safety and is monitoring and enforcing its established Safety Policy and procedures – Need to be an official part of the company's health and safety program – Must involve employees, supervisors, middle and upper level operating management, and health and safety professionals – Create a schedule of safety audits for each workplace and work process The optimal time to perform a safety audit is when operations and work practices can be observed as they are normally conducted and when there will be the least number of distractions to the normal work procedures. To perform a thorough audit of a job or area, it is best to use a checklist. Many different types of audit checklists are available with the number of items on the list varying from only a few to hundreds depending on the complexity of the audit. Every type of checklist has its specific purpose. The regularity to which audits are conducted depends on the potential for property damage, personal injury, or catastrophic events, and how quickly conditions that could present a hazard can develop. More conditions are past records of equipment failures, accidents, near accidents and injuries, and whether regular audits are required due to requirements external to the company. The higher potential severity or consequences of an unwanted occurrence, the more frequently audits should be made. As well as a job safety analysis form, a detailed checklist needs to be used that reflects regulations as well as best business practices and consensus standards applicable to health and safety requirements specific to the company's operations and exposures. Checklist item examples might include: – Machinery and tools – Equipment, processes, and raw materials – Materials handling and storage – Hand and portable power tools – Vehicle fleets – Organization and administrative procedures – Walking and working surfaces – Housekeeping practices – Fire protection and life safety – Emergency response procedures – Radiation, hazardous chemicals, and hazard communication program – Electrical hazards – Lock out and tag out – Hazard signage – Personal protective equipment – Elevators – Hoists and slings Hazard recording – Discuss the location and description of each hazard identified – Supply sufficient detail so that the hazard can be located by those responsible for carrying out the specified corrective action – Recognize machines and operations by their correct names – Detail the locations by name or number and detail the hazards identified Audit reports should: – Describe corrective actions in the order of priority – Discuss exactly what must be done to correct the hazardous situation – Explicitly identify who is responsible for taking the corrective action