Health and Safety Committees



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Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Most workplaces in Canada and the U.S. are required or voluntarily have safety committees, or Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC). A safety committee or JHSC is made up of worker and management representatives that meet on a regular basis to discuss and deal with health and safety issues.

What's the Danger?

You can turn to your health and safety committee members when you're concerned about unsafe situations:

1. You don't feel comfortable discussing with your supervisor.
2. You've discussed with your supervisor, but nothing has been done; or with suggestions you think…
3. Could benefit other workers, departments, or the organization.

Examples

Representatives of the safety committee are there to help when you're concerned about the lack of a guardrail on the mezzanine storage level and you can't get anyone to install one. When a fire exit is blocked, or the dock lights are always burned out and your complaints aren't going anywhere, they can get help. Safety committee members come up with ideas to reduce hazards ranging from excessive noise to toxic solvents.

To do these things and more, they learn about hazardous conditions and practices – through reports, inspections, reviews of injury and illness case studies and incidents such as fires or acts of violence against workers.

How to Protect Yourself

Learn who your joint health and safety committee members are. They might be identified by hardhat decals, name tags, special colored safety headgear or other means.

Remember, the committee is a cooperative venture, not an “us versus them” arrangement. Labor and personnel issues don’t belong at the meetings. Committee members are not “safety cops,” nor should they take over the supervisor’s role in maintaining safe working conditions.

Continue reporting safety hazards and problems to your supervisor or the supervisor expected to take care of safety issues. Long-term safety issues go to the safety committee for discussion and a recommendation which is communicated to management.

Here’s what else you can do:

- Keep in mind that it’s your job to learn the safety policies and procedures for your workplace and to follow them.
- Actively participate in the safety process. Because you have experience in your area and expertise in the tasks you’re required to perform, you can make valuable suggestions, based on your work experience, to members of the safety committee.
- Become active in the committee so the way jobs are done in your workplace can be improved, made safer, and more efficient.

Final Word

Take an active role in your safety. Report concerns and share ideas with your safety committee representatives or consider joining yourself.