

Unit Safety Committees

University of Idaho

SCOPE

The establishment of unit safety committees throughout the university is one of the important elements of the comprehensive Unit Safety Program that is currently being promoted by the University Safety and Loss Control Committee.

Unit safety committees are internal groups established by unit administrators. Although the structure of each unit's safety committee may vary, it should be composed of enough employees and/or management personnel to be a representative forum which can identify and resolve safety concerns and help effectively manage each unit's overall safety program.

An effective unit safety committee solicits ideas, addresses and/or coordinates solutions to safety problems, discusses and helps investigate accidents, audits the progress of safety, provides a conduit to distribute information, and serves as the liason with the University Safety and Loss Control Committee and the Environmental Health and Safety Office.

All members of the university community, students as well as employees, benefit from the increased safety awareness, reduction of workplace hazards, and the implementation of safety rules that a unit safety committee can help provide.

BASIC OBJECTIVES

In addition to serving as the liason with the University Safety and Loss Control Committee and the Environmental Health and Safety Office, almost all unit safety committees will share these basic objectives:

- reduce the incidence of injuries and illness in the workplace
- work as a team to brainstorm and implement ideas that will improve safety in the working environment
- act as a means of communicating safety information to all employees

MANAGEMENT

COMMITMENT

The commitment of upper management to safety sets the tone for the unit's support of the safety committee and sends a message that safety really is important. Mid-management and supervisor support and involvement are just as critical because those positions serve as an immediate example to their employees, and as the front-line enforcers of safety rules.

GETTING STARTED

Decide how many members are needed, who can or should serve on the committee, define *measurable* objectives the committee wishes to accomplish, and determine/develop practical tools and methods for achieving them that are in accord with the unit's overall purpose and mission.

COMMUNICATIONS

Since the main goal of a unit safety committee is to help increase safety, the committee must make timely and meaningful communications to the rest of the unit. Written communications should be clear, concise, easy to read, and without jargon.

FUNCTIONS

Safety committees typically assume a wide range of responsibilities. Committee functions may include, but are not limited to:

- reviewing and keeping records of committee meetings
- reviewing accident reports and analyses to determine both the causes of accidents and practical methods for preventing them
- soliciting, reviewing and keeping records of employee reports of hazardous situations and making related recommendations to management
- conducting and/or keeping and reviewing records of periodic walk-around inspections to monitor general safety compliance and identify potential hazards
- monitoring and discussing regulations, facility equipment/design, and work procedures that may impact safety within the unit

- establishing specific safety objectives and goals and assisting management with the development, updating and dissemination of safety rules, policies and programs
- issuing periodic reports, bulletins, and posters to raise awareness of safety issues and creating/administering incentive programs that promote safe work practices
- monitoring, conducting, and/or assisting in safety training
- conducting employee surveys to evaluate their attitudes toward safety

***RECOMMENDING
AND
IMPLEMENTING
SOLUTIONS***

In order to effectively address safety concerns, the unit safety committee should review the results from hazard assessments, evaluate and prioritize hazards, brainstorm for solutions, establish and recommend action plans to upper management for approval and, finally, be instrumental in implementing solutions.