HR SOLUTIONS

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Creating an Effective Safety Risk Management Program

Regardless of your industry, all organizations have reasons to care about employee safety, OSHA compliance and controlling Workers Compensation Insurance rates. There are strong correlations between all three topics. Good employee safety practices help comply with OSHA and control Workers Compensation rates.

Environments where there are high accidents and on the job injuries create legal risks with OSHA, hurts employee productivity, and increases the Workers Compensation insurance rates.

Does it apply to me?

Companies involved in manufacturing, construction, or that use machines or devices that are, by nature, prone to accidents are obvious candidates to have a comprehensive safety risk management program. These industries are also more likely to receive OSHA audits and feel the sting of higher workers' compensation costs. There are also state-by-state considerations where some states impose additional requirements beyond Federal OSHA. Although there are a number of organizations not covered by OSHA or have fewer requirements, all organizations have risks that must be eliminated or controlled. For example, organizations with less than ten employees and those in retail are not required to maintain the OSHA Log 300 and other documentation requirements. Nevertheless, many of these still have risk of accidents and injury.

Creating a Safety Program

An effective safety program creates a safe work environment, complies with OSHA, and reduces Workers Compensation insurance costs. The following provides useful guidelines in creating your safety risk management program:

1. **Safety Policies and Procedures** – Define and communicate safety expectations and procedures.

Procedures may include the following depending on your business:
a. General workplace safety rules
b. Accident and injury reporting
c. Safety risk reporting and responsibility
d. Hazard identification, assessment, and control
e. Hazard communications for chemical use, containment, labeling, and related risks
f. Emergency evacuation
g. Fire safety, control, and extinguishers
h. Exit routes
i. Safety signs
j. Walking and work surfaces
k. Medical and first aid
l. Housekeeping
m. Alcohol and drugs
n. Threats of violence, severe weather, earthquakes, fire, and bomb threats

The following specialty items may apply depending on your industry and safety hazards:
o. Lockout/tag out
p. Electrical hazards
q. Personal protective equipment
r. Respirator guidelines
s. Noise/hearing control and protection
t. Confined space issues
u. Infectious disease, blood borne pathogens or body fluids control
v. Material handling and lifting
w. Ergonomics
x. Driving safety
y. Equipment operations and safety guards
z. Tools and equipment use and upkeep
aa. Fall prevention, safety railing, and stairs
bb. Forklifts and other industrial vehicles

2. **Employee training** – Train employees and leaders in general safety, on-the-job safety

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hazards, hazard communications and training on each of the applicable policies, procedures, and guidelines. Make sure to keep training records that show training attendance for all classes.

3. **Accountability** - Assign responsibility and accountability for key safety areas. One individual should primarily be responsible to oversee the safety program. This individual then delegates responsibility to a safety committee, OSHA record keeping individual, safety trainers, and so on. Supervisors are responsible to oversee daily work safety.

4. **Record Keeping, Posting and Reporting** – Establish an OSHA record keeping process and post required information for employees. Employers must keep record of any work-related deaths, injuries, or illnesses. They must also keep records of their efforts to comply with OSHA and of their actions to prevent workplace injuries and illness. All employers must report to OSHA within eight hours of the incident, any accident that results in one or more deaths or the hospitalization of three or more employees. All employers covered by OSHA must post the following information:
   - An OSHA poster informing workers of their rights and obligations under OSHA,
   - any current citations OSHA officers have issued to the employer, and
   - any petitions the employer has filed for modification or abatement.
   In addition, if you are covered by OSHA's recordkeeping requirements described above, you must post a log and summary of occupational illnesses and injuries.

5. **Reinforcement** - Establish reinforcement that encourages awareness, teamwork, and safe practices. This includes positive rewards/incentives, supervisor observation, enforcement, and corrective actions. When establishing reinforcement, use caution not to discourage open, honest reporting of accidents. Some team incentive programs create high pressure for injured employees not to report injuries in order to avoid negative peer reaction when they report an injury and everyone loses the team reward.

6. **Supervisors** - Supervisors are the key implementers of the safety program. They play a critical role in identifying risks, communicating expectations, conducting job specific employee training, conducting job safety inspections, enforcing safety requirements, monitoring the work environment, carrying out corrective actions, and overall reinforcement. Train leaders in these duties and roles to ensure effective safety program execution.

7. **Accident Review** - Establish post accident review procedures to evaluate all injuries and accidents. It is good practice to have the injured employee provide a written report describing what happened. Also have the supervisor or some other assigned individual conduct a detailed investigation providing information about the injury, witnesses, causes, etc. It is a good practice to establish post accident drug testing, as well. Most accidents are generally related to policy violation, lack of training, or a need for re-engineering or change in work methods. Track patterns and implement changes based on the review.

8. **Safety Committee** – Depending on your organization size and level of safety risks, a safety committee can help conduct inspections, communicate safety expectations, assist with reinforcement, provide training, and serve as a voice for employees. A revolving committee is recommended where members serve for three to six months.

Creating a safe work environment is everyone's responsibility. Creating and communicating an effective safety risk management program, with good accountability, controls accidents, complies with OSHA, and reduces Worker's Compensation rates.

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Safety Risk Management Assistance
HR Service, Inc. provides safety risk management services including: safety handbooks, safety/OSHA risk assessment, safety training, and assistance creating a total safety program. Call (801) 685-8400 or email: Ken@HRServiceInc.com. Visit us on-line at: www.HRServiceInc.com