



Safety Committees

A safety committee is an important part of a nonprofit's risk management program. Many organizations struggle with their safety efforts because their programs lack clear direction and support. By forming a safety committee, an organization can help its employees and volunteers follow a clear path that is supported through monitoring efforts. The purpose of the safety committee is to provide information to senior management about organizational and operational issues that are causing injuries and accidents. The function of the committee is to monitor the effectiveness of the safety and risk management program. Where change is necessary, the committee should provide the direction to integrate the changes into the day-to-day operation of the organization.

Focus:

The safety committee is intended to be an operations review committee that focuses its attention on risk identification and mitigation within the organization. The committee needs to identify errors in operations that are contributing or potentially contributing to accidents, and act to correct them. Committee activities should focus on these topics:

- Staff training
- Hazard identification (inspections) and mitigation
- Accident/incident analysis and investigation
- Risk and safety audits
- Review of overall program, at least annually

An effective safety committee is a direct result of the efforts of the individuals assigned to the committee and the support provided by senior management. The executive director should appoint people to the committee who have an interest in preventing illness and injury to employees, volunteers and clients, and who represent a cross-section of the staff (various job classifications, programs, etc.) and volunteers. The optimum committee size is five or six people. The safety committee should be required to meet quarterly, at a minimum, or as often as it determines is necessary.

An existing committee can be used in achieving the committee goals when feasible. When an existing committee is used, its agenda must consistently reflect the risk and safety functions that are characteristic of a dedicated safety committee.

Analyze:

While safety training is the responsibility of all managers, it is the safety committee that has the responsibility for ongoing monitoring and management of employee safety and risk management training. Specific responsibilities of the committee in employee training include:

- Periodic review and update of safety training curriculum and materials
- Encouragement of regular, planned safety talks and planned safety observations by supervisors
- Annual review of program area safety rules
- Monitoring to ensure that all new employees are receiving approved safety training and orientation
- Monitoring of safety training record-keeping requirements

Hazard analysis should be conducted in each department on a quarterly basis. These inspections should be documented and reports should be forwarded to the safety committee along with the supervisors' planned actions for correcting hazards. It is the safety committee's responsibility to review each department's analysis, as well as planned corrections to determine if they are being done correctly and according to schedule.

Trending:

The safety committee is responsible for assuring that supervisors are complying with requirements for accident reporting and investigation. In addition, by reviewing all accident, incident and investigation forms quarterly, the committee will be in a position to identify trends that might be missed by supervisors. In this review process, the committee is looking for:

- Trends that might indicate unsafe conditions that could be corrected
- Complete and accurate reporting that facilitates effective investigation
- Complete investigations that lead to effective corrective action
- Prompt and appropriate corrective action that prevents future occurrences of the accident or incident

The safety committee should plan and conduct an annual safety awareness campaign to fulfill its responsibility for encouraging awareness of safety issues among all staff members. This campaign might include any or all of the following:

- Employee newsletter
- Posters and payroll envelope stuffers
- Publication of accident statistics and trends
- Recognition of safety-conscious employees
- Celebration event

Recognition:

Recognition of employees is strongly encouraged. A supervisor who has had no accidents or incidents in his or her department for the quarter, or an employee whose actions exemplify the “no one will get ill or injured as a result of his or her participation” philosophy, should be recognized in front of peers. This type of reinforcement will go a long way toward meeting the committee’s goals.

While every nonprofit may have a slightly different approach to its safety committee’s organization, if the committee follows the course outlined above it will enhance the safety and risk management practices of the whole organization. It is important to remember that the committee needs to be part of an overall emphasis on safety, which includes other actions such as including safety responsibilities in job descriptions and performance standards.

Information from the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) was used to develop this document.

More information on safety is available at the Safe-Wise Consulting [Online Resource Library](#)