



September 2018

Safety Committee Development

You have taken the time from your busy schedule to sit in a room to talk about safety. This sounds like a great idea, but when the meeting turns into a monthly gripe session you begin to wonder... why are we here? Safety committees can be a great way for an organization to gain valuable insight into workplace safety issues and increase employee involvement across the organization. So what can be done to make a successful committee, below are a few ideas that may be helpful as your organization works to increase the effectiveness of your safety or other workplace committees.

Focus on the positive – Many organizations start a safety committee when there are problems. Maybe the accident rate has increased or the worker's compensation costs are "over budget". This mind set can lend itself to starting with a negative outlook. It is important for the committee organizers and leaders to develop goals and objectives that are focused on positive outcomes.

Focus on items that IMPACT the organization – Spending time and energy on issues that have no real relevance to the organization can create frustration for committee members. Establishing clear goals and objectives for each meeting that are targeted on impacting positive outcomes can help avoid individual agendas and griping sessions that can bog down any committee meeting.

Get a good leader – I am a big proponent to not having the safety manager or coordinator lead the safety committee. They should certainly be part of the group, but selecting the right person with a positive attitude and the ability to facilitate involvement can have a much greater impact on the committee and the organization. Selection is important, it is more important that the individual be respected by their peers and be effective facilitator / moderator to lead the group than know everything there is to know about safety.

Be open for ideas – Some of the best ideas are never brought up in committees for fear of being shot down as a "stupid idea". Ground rules should be clear that all ideas are welcome for discussion. Having a "safety think tank" mindset may well open the organizations eyes to new ideas and a better way to accomplish a task.

Hold members accountable and responsible – Keep attendance and assign tasks to committee members and hold them accountable. Failure to do so will suck the life blood out of the committee.

Communication to all employees – The committee should not be the only employees in the organization looking to improve safety, so it is important to seize every opportunity to get more people involved. Hold regular employee dialogue sessions to get input and share positive outcomes and results for all employees to see.

Involve Leadership – Without management support and commitment the committees’ activities are doomed for failure. Keep good minutes showing the progress of the committee and it is a good idea to delegate at least one top manager on the committee who can serve as a communication conduit to the rest of the leadership team.

Safety committees can be an important part of your overall safety program. It just takes a little planning and structure to help ensure the committee is successful.

If you have questions about safety committee development or managing your risk, please drop me a note or call and I will be glad to assist.

Mark

Mark Gaskamp
Marsh Wortham – Austin
512.532.1536
mark.gaskamp@worthaminsurance.com