

Management Leadership in a Safety and Health Program

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Why is management leadership in a safety and health program so important? There are many reasons, including increasing worker protection, cutting business costs, enhancing productivity and improving employee morale. When losses don't happen, profitability should increase; and in today's trying economic times, preventing losses should be every manager's concern. Remember, safety practices should be judged by what they save an organization, not what they cost the organization!

Management demonstrates leadership by providing the resources, motivation, priorities, and accountability for ensuring the safety and health of its workforce. Safety should become elevated so that it is a value of the organization as opposed to something that must be done or accomplished. Integrating safety and health concerns into the everyday management of the organization allows for a proactive approach to accident prevention and demonstrates the importance of working safety into the entire organization.

The first step in building a successful safety and health program is developing a clear safety and health policy. In doing so, you help everyone involved with the worksite to understand the importance of safety and health protection in relation to other organizational values. A safety and health policy provides an overall direction or vision while setting a frame-work from which specific goals and objectives can be developed. These goals should be clearly established and the objectives should be realistic and attainable.

If top management places a high value on safety and health in an organization, employees are more likely to emphasize it in their own activities. Besides following set safety rules themselves, managers can also become visible by participating in safety and health inspections, participating in or helping to provide training, taking part in the organization's safety committee and tracking safety and health performance.

A crucial element of any safety and health program is program evaluation. Once your safety and health program is up and running, you will want to assure its quality, just like any other aspect of your company's operation. Each program goal and objective should be evaluated in addition to each of the program elements. The evaluation should not only identify accomplishments and the strong points of the safety and health program but also identify weaknesses and areas where improvements can be made. Be honest and identify the true weaknesses. The evaluation can then become a blueprint for improvements and a starting point for the next year's goals and objectives.

The positive side effects of a strong safety and health program are endless. But, in order for the program to be effective, it must be clearly supported by management. Managers must understand the value of creating and fostering a strong safety culture within their organization. When safety and health programs are part of the organization and a way of life, everyone wins!

References

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Workplace Safety Pro. J.J. Keller & Associates, Inc. Neenah, Wisconsin, 2005.