

## **Section 7: SAFETY COMMITTEES AND BULLETIN BOARDS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Worker health and safety is an important issue in the workplace. Preventing accidents, creating a safety culture, and providing a safe and healthful work environment demands time, energy, and resources. An effective Safety Committee is a critical element in any safety program.

A well-managed Safety Committee enhances awareness of work-related safety issues, provides a forum for the discussion and resolution of those issues, and fosters communication between employees and management. Safety Committee meetings offer an opportunity for management to demonstrate its commitment to workplace safety and to convey the message that it expects a similar commitment from employees.

A Safety Committee is a functional body in which each committee member represents a group of employees. This gives everyone a voice but keeps the meeting size to an effective number of participants.

Safety Committee members bring employees' issues to the committee and take information back to co-workers regarding the committee's findings and actions, management's positions, and other health and safety-related news. The Safety Committee can assess training needs and organize and sponsor training and other informational events as it deems necessary.

### **APPLICABILITY**

A functional Safety Committee is a core requirement under Washington Department of Labor and Industries WAC-296-800-130. Every employer with 11 or more employees is required to establish a safety committee to address employee safety and health concerns. All King County employees and work groups must have representation on a Safety Committee or attend Safety Meetings. Because of the geographic distribution and the many different sizes, functions, and types of organizations within King County, work groups may have different types of safety representation.

State regulations permit Safety Meetings in place of a Safety Committee when:

- Employees work on different shifts with 10 or fewer employees on each shift, or
- Employees work in widely separate locations with 10 or fewer employees at each location

Crew Chief/Crew "tool-box" safety meetings may be held in place of regular Safety Committee meetings for groups that have unusual work shifts or

dispersed work locations, but these meetings must meet certain minimum requirements in order to comply with State regulations:

- For routine work-crew operations, safety meetings must be held at least monthly.
- For construction projects lasting less than a month, Crew Chief/Crew safety meetings must be held at the beginning of each job, and at least weekly thereafter.
- Monthly safety meetings must include discussions of the results of any safety inspections performed, any citations, and accident investigations and any other work-related health and safety issues that arise.
- Project/weekly meetings should include a discussion of the hazards associated with a particular job and the appropriate safe work practices.
- Attendance and subjects discussed must be documented.

Work groups are encouraged to allot time for the discussion of safety issues in regular staff meetings. Staff meetings provide an opportunity for employees to bring safety issues to the attention of the safety committee representative and for the safety committee representative to report back to the staff. However, the informal, undocumented discussion of safety issues in a staff meeting does not constitute a Safety Meeting and does not take the place of a Safety Committee.

King County employees should first take work-related safety and health concerns to their immediate supervisors. Imminent hazards should immediately be brought to the attention of the supervisor and the Safety and Claims Management office (206-477-3350). All other health and safety issues that are not resolved in a timely manner within the immediate work group are addressed most effectively by the work group's Safety Committee.

### **SAFETY COMMITTEE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

To be effective the Safety Committee must be well-organized and have:

- clear goals
- action strategies
- sufficient resources
- well-informed, committed members

The following simple steps can assist you in establishing a safety committee or reviving an existing one.

#### **1. Establish the need for the committee**

Every King County employee should have an employee-elected representative on an active, effective health and safety committee. Every employee should be:

- aware of the committee's existence
- able to name his or her representative on the committee
- familiar with the purpose and activities of the Safety Committee

If your work group is not currently represented on a safety committee then you need to either establish a new safety committee or re-activate the existing one.

## 2. Organize the committee

The committee should be organized with the following parameters in mind:

- A Safety Committee typically consists of between five and ten members
- Each employee-elected member should represent about five to thirty employees

Large Departments might have several Division-wide Safety Committees, or even several committees within a large Division. In those instances, a Central Safety Committee comprised of one representative from each Division Safety Committee and at least one representative of the Department's leadership team can address Department-wide safety and health issues.

Establish a charter document that commissions the safety committee and establishes the rules. The charter document should clearly outline the scope of the committee, membership needs, roles and responsibilities, committee procedures, and goals.

Attachment 1 provides a sample Safety Committee Charter document.

## 3. Elect/Select the committee members

The number of employee representatives on a safety committee must equal or exceed the number of management representatives. Employee representatives must be elected by employees for a term of one year. There is no limit to the number of terms an individual may serve if re-elected.

Employees often volunteer to serve on the safety committee, but even volunteers should be confirmed through an election process. The election can vary from a formal paper-ballot or show of hands to an e-mail balloting process. The election process should be documented and retained at least until the next election.

State rules stipulate that no more than half of the members of a safety committee may be selected by management. Management must select at least one representative to serve and participate on the safety committee. A safety committee cannot work without management's support and participation.

It is important for all Safety Committee representatives to show up for meetings, participate in those meetings, and serve as advocates for health and safety in the workplace.

#### 4. Document the committee's activities

Documentation records include meeting minutes, reports to and by the committee, accident investigation and review reports, hazard assessments, surveys, improvements, training organized or provided by the committee, and any additional relevant activities.

Safety Committee meetings and Safety Meetings must be documented. Written meeting minutes should be posted on the Safety Bulletin Board (see below) and/or distributed to all employees via e-mail. Safety Committee and Safety Meeting minutes must be kept on file for at least one year by the committee, and available for inspection. A copy of meeting minutes must be forwarded to Safety and Claims Management (mail stop ADM-ES-0500, or mailed to 500 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98104).

#### **DUTIES**

The Safety Committee elects a chair and a secretary, and decides on the frequency of their meetings. For the first month or two while it is getting started, the Safety Committee may need to meet once a week. Thereafter, the committee itself should determine the frequency of the meetings. Work groups commonly schedule monthly meetings, but in some cases, such as office work environments, bi-monthly or quarterly meetings suffice. Minutes of each meeting, including attendance and subjects discussed, must be retained for at least one year.

The Safety Committee's primary duties include:

- Provide a forum for open two-way communication between management and employees
- Consider health and safety-related issues brought before the committee and following up on those issues as deemed appropriate by a simple majority
- Review safety and health inspection reports to assist in the correction of unsafe conditions or practices
- Review accident and injury reports and investigations since the last meeting
- Evaluate the accident prevention program on an on-going basis and making changes as deemed appropriate by a simple majority

#### **ACTIVITIES**

Safety Committees can be assigned a wide variety of activities, but should remain focused on the following three major categories:

Evaluation Activities – Methods of gathering and evaluating safety information in the workplace include:

- Reviewing and addressing employees' health and safety concerns
- Conducting safety inspections
- Conducting Hazard Assessments
- Reviewing accidents and/or analyzing accident investigations
- Reviewing safety suggestions

Development Activities – The creation and implementation of safety-related programs and projects includes:

- Developing and implementing an employee safety feedback (safety suggestion) system
- Assessing training needs and developing safety training
- Developing and communicating safety policies and procedures
- Selecting safety equipment vendors
- Evaluating and recommending safety equipment
- Recommending items for inclusion in the operating and capital improvement budget

Communication Activities – Methods for the communication of safety information throughout the organization include:

- Communicating safety information to employees through newsletters or bulletin boards
- Conducting safety promotions (such as safety fairs)
- Providing safety training opportunities
- Maintaining a safety bulletin board (posters, suggestions, committee minutes, etc.)
- Generating safety improvement suggestions, ideas, and incentives

Sample documents, forms and information are attached to assist in establishing and managing an effective Safety Committee. If you need help setting up or improving the effectiveness of your committee, or if you have other questions, please call the Safety and Claims Management office at 206-477-3350.

### **SAFETY BULLETIN BOARD**

State regulations require a Safety Bulletin Board in every fixed establishment with eight or more employees. The safety bulletin board must be centrally-located in an area accessible to all employees such as a meeting, break, or lunch room. The bulletin board must be dedicated to safety-related items such as Safety Meeting minutes, citations or other legally required notices, safety bulletins, newsletters, posters, accident statistics and other safety educational material.

The following items should be kept on your safety bulletin board. Those items that are required by State regulations are noted:

- Your Rights as a Worker poster (required)
- Job Safety and Health Law poster (required)
- Notice to Employees – Self-Insurance poster (required)
- Safety meeting minutes
- OSHA 300A form summarizing accidents during the previous year (required to be posted from February 1<sup>st</sup> until April 30<sup>th</sup> each year)
- Any State citations or appeals (must be posted - follow directions on back of form)
- Names of safety committee members and work phone numbers
- Safety posters or other safety information
- Notices for audiometric exams or other medical exams or monitoring
- Notices for upcoming meetings, training, or other safety-related events
- Blank safety suggestion forms

## Attachment 1

### Safety and Health Committee Charter

This document establishes the existence of a standing Safety and Health Committee within the King County (*Department/Division*) and sets forth the protocols for the selection, organization, and operation of that Committee.

The objective of the Safety and Health Committee is to serve as a forum for employees and management to directly participate in a collective effort to make the (*Department/Division*) a safe and healthful place to work.

It is the role of the Safety and Health Committee to establish and maintain an open dialogue between the management and staff, to contribute to the visibility and effectiveness of our health and safety program, and to enhance our efforts to provide a safe and healthful workplace for every employee. Management and employee participation are crucial to the success of this effort.

The Safety and Health Committee shall consist of at least one employee-elected representative from each work group, i.e. (*identify appropriate groups*). Representation should be no fewer than three and no more than fifteen members on the committee. Elections are to be held once a year. There is no restriction on how many terms an elected Safety Committee member may serve. At least one individual, but no more than half of the members of the committee, shall be selected by (*Department/Division*) management to serve on the committee. The name of each current Safety and Health Committee member and the group s/he represents shall be posted on the safety bulletin board in each lunchroom.

A Chair and a Secretary shall be elected by the committee for a term of one year, but there is no restriction on how many terms they may serve, if re-elected. The committee Chair will call the meetings, set the agenda, and direct the meetings. The committee Chair may call an emergency meeting at any time s/he deems it necessary. The committee Secretary will take minutes of each meeting and distribute them to the members.

Safety and Health Committee meetings shall be held monthly, or as frequently as the committee deems necessary to effectively perform the following functions:

- Evaluate and review identified safety and health issues and/or reported deficiencies
- Determine measures for the correction of identified unsafe conditions or practices

- Review all work-related accidents, injuries and/or illnesses including identification of the cause(s) and the actions necessary to prevent a recurrence
- Review the results of inspections performed to help correct health and safety hazards
- Evaluate the department's health and safety program, including recommendations to improve identified deficiencies

Findings and/or recommendations carried by a simple majority shall be brought to the attention of the (*Department/Division*) Director in writing as deemed appropriate by the committee. The Director shall respond to all such written findings and recommendations in writing within 30 days.

Minutes of each meeting including attendance, topics of discussion, recommendations, and findings shall be prepared and posted on the Safety Bulletin Board, and maintained for a period of at least one year.

King County (*Department/Division*) health and safety program was developed and implemented in a spirit of cooperation to provide a safe and productive working environment for all employees. The program relies on participation by both management and staff. Every employee is encouraged to actively participate in the Safety and Health Committee either as a committee member or through an elected representative.



## Safety Committee Meeting Planner

Meeting Logistics: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

TOPIC	AGENDA	INTENDED RESULTS

## Safety Committee Members

Instructions:

Use this worksheet to identify members of the Safety Committee. Information should include methods for communication and distribution of Safety Committee minutes and announcements.

Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Member	Title	Division/ Section	Mail Stop	Phone Number

## **Chairing the Safety Meeting**

Suggested Order of Business:

Call to order by the chair - The chair is in charge, and responsible for maintaining order. The chair should keep topics safety-related, and should time the meeting to give people a chance to respond and an opportunity to speak. The meeting should also be paced so that the secretary has adequate time for note-taking.

Read/adopt previous minutes - Read the minutes for the previous meeting. The chair will ask for corrections and comments at the end of the reading. The secretary will enter the corrections in the new minutes. The last meeting's minutes may be sent out with the current month's meeting notice and agenda, thus eliminating the need to read the minutes during the meeting. Comments and adoption of the minutes still need to take place.

Unfinished business - Discuss unresolved business recorded in previous meetings' minutes. Ask for any other old business that may have been missed. Give the group time to respond.

Review safety suggestions - Give a status report on old safety suggestions. Read new safety suggestions and new answers to old suggestions. Leave time for responses from the group. Encourage employees to write safety suggestions. Oral suggestions are more likely to get dropped. Also, encourage employees to resolve issues within their work group and with their supervisor's assistance. (See safety suggestion information sheet).

Review accidents and near misses - Read any accident reports made available since the last meeting. If possible, arrange for the employee to discuss the accident or near miss (note, however, that the safety meeting usually does not serve as the accident review board). Encourage co-workers to discuss near misses.

New business - Ask for ideas from the group; give them a chance to respond. You may have to start the discussion yourself. When new issues arise try to determine who will assume responsibility if a response is needed. Ask that person to report at the next meeting. Do not let the issue drop until it is resolved.

Special presentations - Plan in advance. Try to get guest speakers, demonstrations by vendors, or other information of interest to the group.

Comments and closing - Ask for comments from any safety office representatives, supervisors or management attending the meeting. Adjourn meeting.

## **Taking Minutes**

In general, the duties of the secretary are as follows:

- Record and keep minutes of the safety meetings.
- Read the minutes of the previous meeting at the next meeting.
- Record corrections to the previous meeting's minutes in the current minutes.

Minutes are records of meetings. They should be written accurately, clearly and concisely. The minutes should be prepared as soon as possible after the meeting was adjourned, while you can recall details of discussion and background details of your notes. One technique for taking minutes is to use headings, giving the subject of each paragraph a title. This makes it easy to locate each item of business given in the minutes and an easy way to arrange your notes. The tone of the minutes should be objective without adjectives expressing opinions.

The chair needs to work with the secretary in allowing the pace of the meeting to include adequate time for recording by the secretary. Full notes should be taken. Issues and the actions taken during the meeting need to be noted. If any motions are made the notes should include the name of the person asking for the motion. If a responsibility for taking action has been assigned or assumed the name of that person should be recorded. If a discussion becomes very involved, note the major points made. The language of minutes is fairly formal and follows traditional lines.

Both the secretary and the chair should review the final safety meeting minutes, which should then not be changed or rewritten. Changes to the minutes after reading them at the next meeting should be noted in the next meeting's minutes.

A copy of the minutes should be posted on the safety bulletin board, and a copy sent to Safety and Claims Management, mail stop: ADM-ES-0500, or mail to 500 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98104.

# King County Safety Meeting Minutes

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Division: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

List of Attendees	Members Absent

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call meeting to order

Introduce and list visitors (if any)

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Read/correct/adopt minutes from previous meeting

Review of unfinished business (progress report of items from previous meeting)

Review Safety Suggestions (new suggestions, status of old suggestions)

Review accidents and near misses

Review safety inspection reports

New business

Special presentations

Next meeting date, time, place: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary's signature \_\_\_\_\_

(send copy to Safety and Claims Management, MS: ADM-ES-0500)

## **Safety Suggestion**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Log number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Safety  
Suggestion: \_\_\_\_\_

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Put this form in the Safety Suggestion box or give it to a member of your Safety Committee. The Safety Committee will review your suggestion and make a recommendation to management concerning its implementation, and will get back to you with a response.

Referred To: \_\_\_\_\_

Date referred: \_\_\_\_\_

Response requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Safety Suggestion Answer**

Thank you for your safety suggestion. The following action will be taken in response to your suggestion: \_\_\_\_\_

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(signature) \_\_\_\_\_

Safety Suggestions are an opportunity for employees to identify safety problems and propose solutions, to recommend innovative solutions to previously-identified safety problems, and to recommend new products or equipment. Safety suggestions may be turned in to a Safety Committee member or put in a suggestion box, if available. Situations which are immediately hazardous to employees should be handled by directly contacting supervisors rather than using the Safety Suggestion system.

Each month the Safety Committee should review new Safety Suggestions, log them, and make recommendations as to action to be taken. The suggestion should then be assigned to the appropriate person within your organization to handle the suggestion.