

SAFETY FOR SMALL BUSINESS

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HOW WELL DO YOU MANAGE SAFETY?



As a business owner you realize the importance of having your employees work safely. But do you know “How Well You Manage Safety”? The checklist below is a self-evaluation tool that will give you an indication. The items in the checklist have proven to be basic elements of a well-performing safety program.

Management Commitment / Safety Responsibility and Accountability

- ☐ Safety and health responsibilities for managers and supervisors clearly defined. Supervisors accountable for safety management performance.
- ☐ Cost chargeback programs in place.
- ☐ Ownership and safety participation encouraged.
- ☐ Safety the first agenda item at top management meetings. Job Safety Analysis completed for all major jobs.

Post-incident Safety Management

- ☐ Written procedures to report and investigate all work-related incidents, accidents, injuries, illnesses and near misses.
- ☐ Periodic evaluation of the procedures’ effectiveness.
- ☐ Documentation of corrective actions necessary to correct the hazards. Periodic follow-up on all incomplete corrective action by top management. Return to Work Program.

Hiring Practices / Safety Orientation Program

- ☐ Systematic hiring process including application, interview and background check. Drug testing and post-offer physicals (contingent on passing these tests).
- ☐ Safety orientation for all new employees containing information common to all employees and appropriate to business operation.
- ☐ Orientation including oral and written instruction, emergency procedures, accident and hazard reporting procedures and company safety procedures with document signed by employee.

Safety Committee

- ☐ Active safety committee composed of employee and employer representatives that meets at least quarterly.
- ☐ Safety committee activities to assist the employer in fact-finding.
- ☐ Top-level management oversight and active involvement in the safety committee. Team-building techniques and two-way communication between management and employees.

Job- or Task-specific Training

- ☐ Provide written and documented employee training program including specific safety rules, procedures and hazards.
- ☐ Provide job- or task-specific training appropriate for each employee. Offer continuing regular refresher safety training.
- ☐ Maintain current materials and expand knowledge and awareness of safety issues in the workplace.
- ☐ Provide Job Safety Analysis training for all employees.

Self-inspection / Hazard Assessment

- ☐ Perform periodic self-inspections for hazard assessment. Identify corrective actions needed.
- ☐ Document corrective actions taken.
- ☐ Provide Personal Protective Equipment after engineering controls have been attempted.
- ☐ Undergo Job Safety Analysis review.

Written Safety Program

- ☐ Written program that includes policy statement expressing management's commitment to safety.
- ☐ Involvement of employees in the company safety program.
- ☐ Conduct a Hazard Assessment of the workplace.
- ☐ Develop pertinent safety programs for hazards identified from Assessment.
- ☐ Development and implementation of a Hazard Prevention Plan (Safety training, motivation, education).
- ☐ Regularly scheduled inspections of the workplace. Return to Work Program.
- ☐ Statement of all applicable safety training to all employees.
- ☐ Designate a safety representative to monitor safety program.

RTW – Return to Work

- ☐ Written job description standards to explain physical demands of jobs. Employee and supervisor training.
- ☐ Physician packet with physical demands of job and letter to doctor expressing commitment to transitional duty.
- ☐ High level of communication with injured employee, doctor and claims examiner. Transitional duty jobs formulated in advance.

WRITE A COMPANY SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT



A company policy:

- Can be as simple as a one-paragraph statement committing you, as the business owner, to a safe workplace.
- Tells your employees you believe in a safe workplace.
- Lets your employees know they must follow all the safety guidelines and regulations.

Make sure you lead by example. Follow your own guidelines. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Involve your employees

- Start now by seeking employee advice to help establish this safety plan.
- Assign responsibility for activities such as identifying hazards, planning solutions, conducting inspections, holding safety awareness educational sessions, etc.
- Include safe work performance as part of all employee evaluations.
- Respond quickly to all reports of unsafe conditions or work practices.
- Recognize employees who demonstrate safe and high-quality performance.



SAMPLE SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT



It is the policy of this company to provide all employees with a safe and healthy workplace. An effective health and safety program is an integral part of conducting business; safety must be part of everything taking place within our operation, and it must be everyone's responsibility.

The company will provide safe conditions for each of its employees; in return, the company expects all employees to recognize their obligation to conduct themselves with regard not only for their own safety but also for the safety of their fellow employees.

To ensure that a safe working environment is maintained, all employees must actively promote safety and accident prevention as an integral part of their normal job functions.

Each employee is responsible for implementing this policy by continually observing safety practices, guidelines and standards throughout the workday.

Since safety and quality operations are integrated and inseparable, similar methods of control are required to address accident prevention as are used to maintain process quality, efficiency and customer relations.

Of even more importance are the loss of earnings and physical injuries suffered by employees as a result of accidents. These factors justify a constant and intensive accident prevention program.

Full cooperation of all employees is essential to successfully achieve this safety policy.

SAFETY RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Supervisors can be the key for effective safety management in an organization. Supervisors of all levels should be responsible and held accountable for the employee safety performance in their locations, departments or other supervisory units. Accountability is an enhancement over mere responsibility, in that it means that safety performance will be measured and evaluated against a known standard, as stated in a job description. The safety performance expectations of all supervisors and employees should be clearly stated in their respective job descriptions. Measured performance can be evaluated in respect to the standards of performance appraisal format, with resultant positive or negative ramifications. This approach treats the safety performance of a supervisor much the same as production, quality or other performance factors have traditionally been treated. A system of accountability communicates the message that employee safety supervision is a part of overall supervisory duty just like any other performance criterion.



There are several approaches to supervisory safety accountability.

First, **Chargeback accountability** charges back a department, division or location for its share of workers' compensation premiums based at least in part on claims performance (instead of just a chargeback based only on payroll and class code exposure units). This type of accountability may only be applicable to upper-level supervisors.

Next, **Safety Goal accountability** establishes measurable safety performance goals for a supervisor and is often most applicable to mid-level supervisors. Goals can involve the number of claims (or recordable accidents) or the number of lost-time claims (or recordable lost-time accidents). In the safety field, the Incidence Rate is the standard means of measuring the accident frequency in a business unit, the whole organization or a subunit. An Incidence Rate can be compared to an average rate per Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Incidence Rate is calculated as follows:

Incidence Rate = $N/EH \times 200,000$ where:

N = number of injuries and/or illnesses or lost workdays

EH = “employee hours,” total hours worked by all employees during calendar or policy year

200,000 = normalizing factor, base for 100 FTE workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

Finally, **Safety activity accountability** establishes performance criteria regarding the frequency and type of safety-promoting activities a supervisor should conduct. It may be most applicable to first-level supervisors. Examples of activities for which supervisors are often held accountable include conducting safety “toolbox” talks, new employee safety orientations, safety job observations and accident investigations. The measurement aspect of accountability implies the need for these activities to be documented.

Nonsupervisory employees should also be held accountable for their safety performance; this typically is for individual performances rather than for that of a unit. Job descriptions should state requirements such as following safety rules and procedures, attending and participating in safety meetings or trainings, reporting unsafe circumstances to the supervisor, or specific individual safety duties such as equipment maintenance. Not only should supervisors have their safety performance evaluated as part of a performance appraisal, they should also evaluate the safety performance of each of their employees in performance appraisals. Be aware that employees should not be discouraged from filing legitimate workers’ compensation claims, and they should not be penalized or punished for filing a claim.

The prospect of hiring a replacement for a departing employee or filling a newly created position is often seen as a monumental task. Rather, it's an opportunity to provide work for another person who will bring new ideas to your business.

Hiring the right employees for the job is a difficult task and should be taken seriously. It will have an impact on your business in many ways. It will affect your customers, your productivity and your safety efforts.

With new employees, most injuries that happen are to those with less than one year of service. As you move into higher-hazard occupations, such as construction, injuries may increase in that first year. Hiring employees is an important process that can have a major impact on reducing injuries in this area.

The following guide should be used for reference for fair and legal hiring practices. We encourage you to consult with an attorney familiar with employment law to ensure the procedures you intend to follow are appropriate.

Publicize the opening.

- In-house posting
- Private employment agency
- Job Service
- Newspaper / Job-posting website
- Professional publications
- College / Trade School / High School

Use a lawful employment application.

Systemize the hiring process.

Document the process.

- Screen / Interview Candidates
- Check References / Background Checks.

Make contingent offers of employment.

- Conduct Pre-placement Physical Exams
- Pre-placement Medical Physical Examination Program

Conduct interviews.

Publicize the Opening

In-house Posting

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides opportunities for career development.• Job search can begin quickly.• No advertising cost.• Often effective because current employees know the job and know of qualified applicants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reaches a limited number of prospects.• Tends not to aid in diversifying the workforce.• May want to bring in new skills from outside.

Private Employment Agency

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can reach target applicant from wide geographical area.• Can locate difficult-to-find skills.• Can increase diversity in applicant pool.• Does not require staff to screen inquiries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entails costs for service.• May cause a time delay.

Job Service

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reaches large numbers of potential candidates.• Inexpensive – no advertising costs and no need to screen applicants.• Can increase diversity in applicant pool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targets only unemployed, not necessarily those wanting a job change.

College / Trade School / High School

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can attract recent graduates with current state-of-the-art skills.• Inexpensive.• Helps foster good community relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students may lack practical work experience.• May involve time delay.

Newspaper / Professional Publications / Job-posting Websites

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reaches large number of potential candidates.• Provides means of reaching minority candidates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires staff to screen responses.• Advertising costs.• May result in time delay.• May receive large number of unqualified applicants.

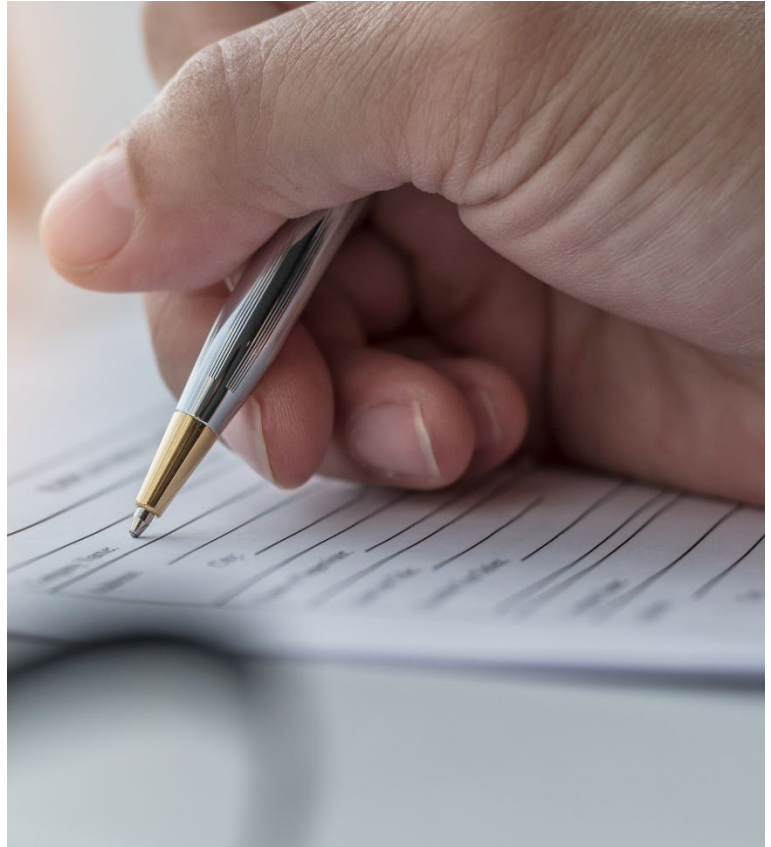
Use a Lawful Employment Application

Why use an application form?

- An application form ensures that the employer gets all relevant information from each applicant in a readable, consistent format.
- An application form is an effective way of documenting who applied for each opening.
- An application form can put applicant on notice of certain terms and conditions of employment.

Tips on using application forms:

- Do not hand out application forms or accept applications when there are no job openings.
- Avoid unlawful pre-employment inquiries; have application reviewed by legal counsel for use in each state in which employees are hired. State laws differ.



Elements of an effective employment application:

- ADA Accommodation Statement

"Consistent with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, applicants may request accommodations needed to participate in the application process."

- Equal Opportunity Employer Statement

"ABC Company is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate based on sex, race, color, age, religion, marital status, national origin, handicap or veteran status. Interviews are given on a competitive basis, using job-related factors, after an application has been received and reviewed."

- Employment History

- Applicants should be instructed to show at least four previous employers (if applicable), including the current one. Applicants should be asked to explain periods of unemployment.
- Request names of prior supervisors for reference checking.
- Inquire directly whether applicant has ever been terminated or asked to resign from a previous position.

- Certification of Truthfulness of Application Form

Requires the applicant to read and sign a statement that the statements made in the application are truthful. Suggested language:

"My signature below certifies all information on this, and all attached pages is true, correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge and contains no willful falsifications or misrepresentations. Falsifications and misrepresentations may disqualify me from consideration for employment with ABC Company or, if hired, may be grounds for termination at a later date."

- Pre-placement Physical Examination Authorization

If pre-placement physical examinations are required, consent to the same should be placed in the application form for the applicant to sign. Suggested language:

"I understand that should employment be extended to me; such job offer may be subject to the satisfactory results of any job-related pre-employment physical examination required by ABC Company and my signature indicates my consent to such testing."

Legal Note: The ADA places limitations on pre-placement physical examinations.

These examinations cannot occur unless the applicant is first given an offer of employment (conditioned on successfully passing the physical).

The employer cannot selectively require applicants to undergo pre-placement physicals.

The employer must either require all entering employees to undergo the examination or select certain positions for which all entering employees will be required to undergo examinations.

- Drug Testing Authorization

If drug testing is required, consent to the same should be included in the form.

Systemize the Hiring Process

A well-organized recruitment and selection process will assist in the efficiency of the process. However, a more important reason for organizing the process is that it is essential to an effective defense of an employment discrimination charge alleging unlawful hiring practices.



Document the Process

Maintain a file to document critical information regarding advertising and recruitment efforts for each opening along with information regarding its application, interview and selection process.

The following records should be maintained:

- **Job opening record.** A listing of job openings by the date of opening. The information in this record should include opening date, when the position is filled and name of successful candidate.
- **Advertising / Recruitment record.** Keep record of all efforts to advertise and/or recruit for each opening. Keep dated copies of all advertisements and copies of letters to agencies, schools, etc.
- **Applicant log.** This log will show the final outcome for each candidate for the opening. Information included in the log should include applicant name, date application was received, application screening outcome (reject, interview), interview date and final outcome (offer, hire, rejection letter, etc.).

Screen / Interview Candidates

Screen incoming applications to determine best-qualified candidates; document rejections in the applicant log.

Interview best-qualified applicants. Initial interviews can be conducted over the telephone. Ensure managers are adequately trained to conduct effective interviews.

Ensure that interviews are conducted in physically accessible sites for applicants with mobility impairments and that reasonable accommodations are made when interviewing individuals with hearing impairments or other impairments affecting communication skills.

Check References / Background Checks

Call personal references listed by the applicant on the application. Determine the relationship to applicant and amount of time the reference has known the applicant. Ask the reference about trustworthiness, work ethic, attendance, etc. Document the responses. Use the same questions for all references for all applicants.

Call former employers. Don't be surprised when former employers will give no more than employment confirmation and dates of service. This information can still be of value. Document responses.

Call former supervisor if possible. Ask about past job performance. Caution: Do not inquire about unlawful areas such as history of workers' compensation claims or prior employment discrimination charges. Document responses.

Obtain criminal background checks. There are services that will conduct this type of check for you, or you can deal directly with your state police or Department of Justice. Background checks should be conducted only on your final candidate or group of candidates.

Make Contingent Offers of Employment

Make offer of employment contingent upon successful completion of pre-placement physical exam or drug testing (if required).

Document offer in writing, noting any contingencies. Specify starting pay and start date. Do not represent that employment is for any special duration.

Conduct Pre-placement Physical Exams

A well-managed pre-placement physical examination program can help reduce the number or severity of work-related injuries by eliminating individuals who do not have the physical ability to perform the job safely. The ADA requires that medical examinations be conducted as a separate, second step of the selection process, after a contingent offer of employment has been extended. The employer must either require pre-placement physical examination of all entering employees or of all entering employees in certain jobs. The job offer will be contingent upon passing the pre-employment physical.

Pre-placement Physical Examination Program

Select a qualified medical provider who is familiar with the workplace and the essential functions of the job. If possible, have the medical provider tour the facility and observe the job functions. An alternative is to provide a video of the job to the medical provider.

Give the provider current job descriptions that identify the physical job requirements.

Inform the medical provider that any recommendations or conclusions related to hiring or placement of an individual should focus on only two concerns: 1) the ability of this person to perform the job with or without accommodation; and 2) the ability of the person to perform the job without posing a direct threat to the health or safety of this person or other persons.

Keep all information obtained from post-offer / pre-placement medical examinations in files separate from the personnel file. These files need to be treated as confidential.



Conducting the Interview

The interview is extremely important in helping you evaluate the applicants. The following will help you ask the “right” questions and avoid the “wrong” questions.

CAN ASK

- What relevant educational experience do you have?
- Tell me about your work experience.
- Have you ever been terminated or been asked to resign from a prior position? If so, why?
- What special skills do you possess?
- Have you ever been convicted of a crime? (This can be part of application.)
- Our regular workday is 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with overtime as needed. Are you willing to meet these attendance requirements?
- This job requires lifting boxes weighing up to 50 lbs., 3-4 times per day. Are you able to perform this function with or without an accommodation from us? If not, is there an accommodation that can enable you to do so?
- How much time did you miss from your last job?
- Do you use illegal drugs? (This can be part of application.)
- This is a nonsmoking workplace. Are you willing to comply with that policy?

CANNOT ASK

- Have you ever filed a workers’ compensation claim or been hurt on the job?
- Do you have any health problems or disabilities?
- Are you planning to have children in the future?
- Are you pregnant?
- How old are you?
- What is your religious preference?
- What is your height and your weight?
- When did you graduate from high school?
- Do you have any military service training obligations?
- What is your ethnic background?
- Were you born in the U.S.?
- Have you ever had any emotional or mental problems?
- Are you an alcoholic?
- Do you smoke cigarettes?

ESTABLISH A SAFETY COMMITTEE



A safety committee may be one of the most effective tools to improve the overall safety and health of the workplace. A safety committee should be created, staffed and operate with its goal to promote a safety culture. The general rules for a safety committee as directed by the Montana Safety Culture Act of 1993 are as follows.

Be composed of employee and employer representatives and hold regularly scheduled meetings at least once every four months. Employer representatives may not exceed employee representatives. Include in its membership employee representatives who volunteer or are elected by their peers.

Include safety committee activities that assist the employer in fact finding. Safety committee members must receive appropriate training. They should be trained in hazard investigation, Job Safety Analysis and accident investigation to competently execute their duties.

It is recommended that the committee: document its activities (i.e., attendees, subjects discussed); report to the employer regarding assessing and controlling hazards; assess safety training and awareness topics; communicate with employees regarding safety committee activities; develop safety rules, policies and procedures; educate employees on safety-related topics; evaluate the safety program on a regular basis; inspect the workplace; keep job-specific training current; motivate employees to create a safety culture in the workplace; and review incidents of workplace accidents, injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

Safety Committee Procedures

The following guidelines should be followed:

- The frequency of the meetings should be determined by the committee but should meet at least quarterly. Larger and more hazardous locations should meet at least monthly.
- The safety committee should determine the date, hour and location of meeting.
- The length of each meeting should not exceed one hour except in special circumstances.
- The attendance and subjects discussed should be documented and maintained on file for a period of one year. Copies of the minutes should be provided to:
 - Management
 - Main Office
 - Employees (by posting on the bulletin boards in break areas, etc.)
 - All committee members

Safety Committee Activities

In order to comply with the Montana Safety Culture Act, it is recommended that the safety committee document its activities (i.e. attendees, subjects discussed) and act as a fact-finding body and report to the employer regarding:

- Assessing and controlling hazards.
- Assessing safety training and awareness topics.
- Communicating with employees regarding safety committee activities.
- Developing safety rules, policies and procedures.
- Educating employees on safety related topics.
- Evaluating the safety program on a regular basis.
- Inspecting the workplace.
- Keeping job-specific training current.
- Motivating employees to create a safe culture in the workplace.
- Reviewing workplace incidents, injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES



Meeting Date: _____ **Start Time:** _____ **End Time:** _____

Meeting Location: _____ **Chairperson:** _____

Members Present:

Previous meeting minutes from _____ **were read.**

Review of previous meeting minutes:

Review status of all previous recommendations:

Safety inspection follow-up items and person(s) responsible:

SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Next scheduled safety inspection date: _____

Inspector(s):

Review of previous incidents, near misses and status of corrective actions:

Review of new incidents, near misses, corrective action recommendations and committee member(s) responsible for ensuring that corrective action is implemented:

Employee suggestions / comments and recommended action(s):

Safety training that has occurred since last committee meeting:

Future safety training ideas:

Additional items for discussion:

Next scheduled safety committee meeting (date): _____

SAFETY ORIENTATION FOR ALL NEW EMPLOYEES

Remember injuries that occur to new employees usually happen in the first year of employment. Many of those injuries occur in the first three months on the job. There is a definite correlation between having a good safety orientation program and reducing injuries.

Ideally, the safety orientation should occur before the employee begins work. However, it does become necessary at times for the orientation to occur over several days. It is important that the new employee – or any employee for that matter – not be asked to do something he/she has not been adequately trained to safely accomplish. This allows you to utilize the employee at low-hazard tasks until he or she completes full orientation. There are parts of the safety orientation that should not be postponed and need to occur the first day with each hire, such as general safety rules and emergency procedures.



EMPLOYEE SAFETY ORIENTATION CHECKLIST



Employee Name: _____ Date of Hire: _____ Supervisor: _____

Job Title: _____ Department / Location: _____

- ☐ Review general safety rules. Review safety disciplinary rules.
- ☐ Discuss example of unsafe conditions.
- ☐ Review procedure for reporting and correcting unsafe conditions.
- ☐ Review correct lifting techniques and available material on handling equipment. Discuss common musculoskeletal disorders.
- ☐ Review accident and incident reporting procedures. Identify available first aid personnel.
- ☐ Review location of first aid materials.
- ☐ Identify location of emergency eyewash station.
- ☐ Discuss emergency procedures and location of posted emergency numbers. Review required personal protective equipment (shoes, glasses, gloves).
- ☐ Discuss Hazard Communication Standards and Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) locations and uses.
- ☐ Schedule training for Hazard Communication.
- ☐ Schedule job-specific safety training (fall protection, forklift, respirator use).
- ☐ Take tour of the facility; point out exits, fire extinguishers and areas where Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is required.

JOB OR TASK SPECIFIC TRAINING



Specific training for the employee's job is very important. It is not good enough just to show an employee how to do the job. The employee needs to be shown how to do the job **Safely**. An excellent tool to develop safety procedures for a job is a Job Safety Analysis (JSA).

A JSA is a simple cost-effective method of preparing a detailed work description, which establishes a standard procedure for accomplishing a job. It identifies the basic steps of the job; potential hazards associated with those steps and recommends a procedure to accomplish the steps safely. The completed JSA can then be used for training new and existing employees on that job.

The best person to conduct a JSA is a highly motivated and experienced employee. He or she should be most familiar with the job and the steps needed to accomplish the job. Each step needs to be analyzed for potential hazards. Precautions to avoid or to eliminate those hazards need to be recorded. The precautions need to be specific; a general precaution such as "Be Careful" is worthless. The completed JSA then needs to be checked by the employees who do the job. These employees will be able to improve the analysis because of their knowledge of the job. The JSA needs to be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure it stays current.

Training should be provided to new employees, employees starting a new job and to all employees on a regular basis for a refresher. Documentation of the training needs to be maintained. Records of the subject, who attended the training and when the training took place should be maintained.

JOB SAFETY ANALYSIS

Task Title: _____

Date: _____

JSA Number: _____

Prepared By: _____

Approved By: _____

Safety Committee Approval: _____

PPE Required: _____

Sequence of Basic Job Steps	Hazard or Potential Hazard	Recommended Action or Procedure

After any incident, first you must decide what potential safety hazards were involved. The best place to start is to look at the injuries that occurred in your workplace. You should review loss runs and/or OSHA 300 Forms.

- What types of injuries have there been?
- Where did they happen?
- Were there common factors, such as part of body, department, location, type of machinery, time of day, etc.?

Another program that is invaluable to identifying hazards and implementing corrective actions is an Accident Investigation Program.

Accident investigations should be completed by the injured employee's immediate supervisor.

Filling out an accident investigation report is not an investigation, although many people treat it as one. However, it can be used as a guide for determining what the investigation should reveal. It provides details and recommendations for the safety committee to discuss.

Accident Investigation

Accident investigations are important tools used to identify the cause of accidents. Either unsafe acts or unsafe conditions cause accidents.

A series of events leads up to an accident occurring. Remove one of the events and you reduce the potential for the accident.

Remember: Accidents are not investigated to find fault in individuals.

Benefits of Accident Investigation:

- Discover root causes of costly accidents.
- Prevent recurrence of accidents.
- Create awareness of problem areas.
- Discover ways to improve processes or procedures.
- Identify training topics.

What types of accidents Should Be Investigated?

Should all accidents be investigated or just those that result in serious injuries? This is a frequent question.

As an employer you should be interested in any incident that interrupts production and costs you money.

The time spent and level of detail developed in an investigation will vary based on the seriousness of the incident. For example, a minor injury or accident may warrant an in-depth investigation because initial information may indicate that a serious hazard exists.

All incidents should be investigated to some extent.

Who Should Investigate Incidents?

The employee's immediate supervisor should conduct the investigation. Supervisors are most familiar with the employees and can take immediate action to prevent recurrence.

When Should Incidents Be Investigated?

As soon as possible. This is an obvious answer, but, in reality, there is often a time lapse between the incident and an investigation. Incidents should be investigated immediately because:

- Facts are fresh in the witnesses' and injured employee's minds.
- Witnesses have not had a chance to talk and influence each other.
- Quick response will show management's concern for reporting, investigating and taking corrective action.

Beginning an Investigation

The first step in any investigation is to secure the area so no further injury or property damage occurs. The scene should not be disturbed unless a hazard exists. Any equipment involved in the incident should be kept and preserved for further investigation. Photographs and sketches of the scene and equipment are helpful as the investigation progresses, for memories tend to become less clear.

Conducting an Investigation Interview

Once the area is secured, the next step in an investigation is to interview the employees and witnesses. Follow these basic steps and take action to correct those items identified.

- Put the employee(s) at ease.
- Emphasize prevention as your goal (not faultfinding).
- Conduct the interviews at the scene, if possible.
- Let the employee tell his/her version of the incident without interruption.
- Repeat the employee's story, as you understand it. This allows the employee to correct the story if necessary.
- End each interview on a positive note. Emphasize prevention as your purpose.
- Let employees know that you may have follow-up questions later.

What Next?

Once the interviews are completed, analysis begins to find the causes. Accidents are caused by unsafe acts and conditions.

Unsafe acts

Unsafe acts account for 90 percent of all accidents. An unsafe act is any hazard created as a result of a human action or behavior. An unsafe act may be attributed to:

- Lack of adequate training.
- Improper operating procedures.
- Shortcuts to save time.
- Lack of proper equipment and tools.
- Poor leadership and/or management.

Unsafe Conditions

Unsafe conditions account for the remainder of the accidents in the workplace. Unsafe conditions are physical hazards related to equipment, materials, structures or other physical elements of a worker's environment.

Unsafe conditions may include:

- Poor housekeeping.
- Lack of guarding.
- Inadequate maintenance.
- Defective equipment or tools.
- Improper material storage.
- Slip and fall hazards.

Symptoms Versus Causes

It is important to understand the difference between symptoms and causes. The unsafe acts and conditions that we can see often result in accidents but are not necessarily the root cause. They may just be symptoms of a root cause. If only symptoms are corrected, accidents can continue to occur. Some examples of symptoms are:

- Careless operation of a forklift truck.
- Oil on the floor.
- Climbing a storage rack.
- Improper lifting techniques.
- Not wearing eye protection.
- Standing on the top rung of a ladder.

Causes are the underlying reasons for accidents that we cannot see and can only be identified by a

thorough investigation. Only when root causes are corrected can accidents be prevented. Some common examples of causes are:

- Inadequate employee training.
- Ineffective employee motivation.
- Lack of accountability.
- Failure to enforce safety procedures.
- Improper selection of equipment or material.
- Poor maintenance of facilities or equipment.

Coming up With a Solution

Once the root causes are identified, it is time to determine what can be done to prevent a similar incident from occurring in the future. All possible solutions should be considered during this phase of the investigation. Review each solution to determine feasibility and look at alternatives.

Select the most appropriate alternative and take action. Once a remedy is selected it is important that it be applied. Management should be actively reviewing the results. Supervisors need to be held accountable for the quality of their investigations, analyses and results.



INCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT



Instructions: Employees are to use this form to report all work-related injuries, illnesses or “near miss” events (that could have caused an injury or illness) – *no matter how minor*. This report will help us to identify and correct hazards before they cause future serious injuries. This form is to be completed by the employees and supervisor as soon as possible after the event .

Report Type: ☐ **Injury** ☐ **Illness** ☐ **Near Miss**

Date of Incident: _____ **Time of Incident:** _____

Who was involved: _____

Environmental conditions at time of incident: _____

Describe what was happening when the incident occurred.

Describe how the incident occurred (be as specific as possible).

Who else was involved in the incident?

Who witnessed the incident?

What equipment, process or activity not described above may be related to the incident?

Where did the incident take place?

Should it happen again, what is the worst-case scenario of this incident?

INCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

Why did this incident occur? Describe the immediate cause and all underlying (root) causes you can identify. Continue to ask "why" for at least 5 levels. Keep asking "why?" until you get to the root cause or causes.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How can similar incidents be prevented in the future? (Include management, employee, equipment and environmental considerations.)

Date & Time of Investigation: _____

Supervisor Name: _____ **Title:** _____

Person responsible for ensuring that these corrective actions are completed:

Name: _____ **Title:** _____

Corrective actions to be completed by (date): _____

Safety Committee Follow-up:

Were the corrective actions adequate to prevent recurrence?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

☐ N/A

Will the corrective actions result in any new hazards?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

☐ N/A

Is there training, equipment, etc., that would prevent recurrence?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

☐ N/A

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION



Job Title: _____ Employer: _____

Contact Person: _____ Contact Number: (____) _____

Work Hours Per Day: _____ Days Per Week: _____

Percent of Time Spent:

Sitting _____% Standing _____% Walking _____%

Comments: _____

While working, the employee must:

	Frequency	Comments
Hand / Wrist Work		
Grasp		
Push / Pull		
Fine Manipulation		
Reach		
Bend		
Kneel		
Squat		
Climb		
Lift 1-10 lbs.		
Lift 11-20 lbs.		
Lift 21-50 lbs.		
Lift 51-70 lbs.		

Frequency Key

Never = 0% of time **Occasionally** = 1% - 33% of time **Frequently** = 34% - 66% of time **Continuously** = 67% - 100% of time

General description of the job:

Essential functions of the job:

Types of machines, tools, special equipment:

Vehicles or moving equipment operated:

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