

# Effective Safety Committees & Teams



### **It's all about vision**

You don't have to climb a mountain and sit on a big rock for six days to gain a vision about the role and mission of the safety committee.

It takes a little more thought to understand how to help a safety committee perform an effective role and fulfill its mission.

Take a look at the concept of "role" and how it applies to the safety committee.



### **Just who do you think you are?**

The definition of "role" in the dictionary:

- The characteristic and expected social behavior of an individual;
- A function, position or title.

Roles are labels that help define who we are, how we should personally behave, and what we should be doing as an individual or as a member of a group.

Every role you "play" has a set of expected behaviors and activities that are considered appropriate for that position.



### Why is it so important to know what role the safety committee plays?

#### What we **do** depends on who we think we **are**.

If safety committee members think they are consultants to others, they will do and say things that send a message that they can be trusted.

Employees will seek their help and appreciate their work.



If safety committee members think they are cops, they will do and say things in a manner that is likely to result in mistrust.

An effective safety culture can not exist in a climate of mistrust.

### What is the Safety Committee's Role?

The role of the safety committee should be to act as an internal consultant group with expectations and responsibilities similar to that of an outside consultant hired by the company.

A consultant might be asked to:

- ✓ Survey and interview employees to find out what they are thinking and feeling
- ✓ Observe employees to analyze behaviors
- ✓ Inspect the workplace to uncover hazardous conditions
- ✓ Audit safety programs
- ✓ Uncover the surface and root causes of safety problems
- ✓ Develop and submit written recommendations
- ✓ Monitor the progress of corrective actions and system improvements
- ✓ Evaluate the long-term quality of the safety culture.

### **A Safety Committee is a Consultant Team, Not a Cop Squad**

None of these responsibilities requires the safety committee to actually control safety programs or "police" employees.

When the safety committee assumes the role of a consultant group within a company, it need not, and should not, be expected to purchase equipment, or correct hazards.



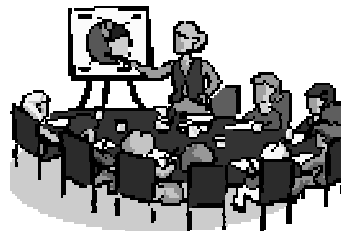
Writing "tickets" for violating safety rules can be especially disastrous to the success of the safety committee's effectiveness.



These responsibilities are considered "doing" safety and they more properly belong to line managers, from the CEO down through first line supervisor.

Ensuring safety is a line function, not a staff function.

A company writes a mission statement that explains **what they do** to support their vision. This is a statement about their role in the community and society in general.



The purpose of the safety committee should be viewed as its mission and reflects what the safety committee does to support its assigned role.

## Forming effective committees

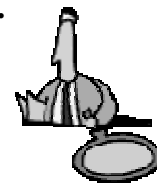
1. Determine the purpose
2. Identify committee members
3. Define the scope of authority
4. Identify operating procedures
5. Provide written policy support



### **What safety committee's do (mission) depends on who they think they are (role).**

Major purposes of the safety committee

- ✓ Help protect the employer by providing useful information
- ✓ Help protect the employee by responding to safety concerns
- ✓ Bring labor and management together in a cooperative way to solve problems
- ✓ Help the employer educate and motivate all employees about the importance of safety
- ✓ Help the employer educate and motivate all supervisors and managers to identify hazards and take corrective action.

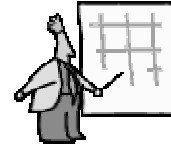


The safety committee must communicate effectively

Receive safety concerns from employees

Report those concerns to the safety committee,

Provide timely feedback to employees on the status or response to those concerns.



Failure to effectively fulfill this important responsibility has the potential to render the safety committee unsuccessful in its ability to help the employer solve safety-related problems.

***When you keep people in the dark, they think the worst!***

Communicate regularly with management, both in and out of the safety committee setting.

It's vital that managers be directly involved in and participate as members of the safety committee.

Safety committees generally communicate formally through written recommendations and safety committee minutes.

The key to ensuring that the safety committee is able to fulfill its purpose is quality education and training.



A successful committee must:  
run effective meetings,  
write concise minutes  
& provide viable recommendations



Often the perceived lack of support for committee activities is due to poor business practices by the committee

## The Function of the Safety Committee

In an effort to increase interest in safety the committee creates a safety incentive program .

If its members don't have the knowledge, skills, or abilities to manage an effective program it can easily become a dismal failure.



It's not good enough just to do the right thing. ..  
you've got to do the right thing, right!

## A Few Do's & Don't



- ⦿ Come prepared
- ⦿ Be on time
- ⦿ Contribute positively
  
- ⦿ Don't be silent
- ⦿ Don't play dirty politics
- ⦿ Don't fight growth

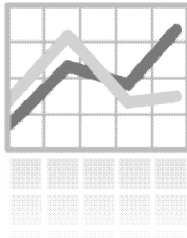
## The best practice approach

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- ⦿ Combine management & employees 50-50
- ⦿ S&H staff should serve as adviser
- ⦿ Stagger terms every two to three years
- ⦿ Rotate chairs every six months
- ⦿ Continuously train all committee members
- ⦿ meet regularly
- ⦿ plan for alternates
- ⦿ work professionally

**Important points to remember about a committee's "function":**

Function describes the actual result or effect of an activity, whether intended or the unintended.



It depends on the stated purpose and the ability of the committee to carry out an activity, and having the tools to achieve its purposes..

Without the ability, or the necessary tools, to meet those goals, it will have great difficulty in fulfilling its purpose.

The safety committee can actually hurt, not help its safety program (unintentionally) .