

# SAFETY COMMITTEES

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An effective health and safety committee can be an important part of a company's safety efforts. This is why so many companies throughout the country use them. However, a safety committee works only when it's done right. This risk bulletin will highlight some ways to make sure your committee is an asset to your overall safety program.

## SETTING UP THE COMMITTEE

Your company must first determine what role the safety committee will play within the facility. This can be done by developing a charter for the team, which will define the roles and responsibilities of the members and outline the overall authority of the safety committee. The charter will confirm how often the group will gather, training for safety committee members and topics for review during the meetings. A procedure can be included as to how recommendations from the committee will be addressed.

The charter should also outline the need for minutes to be taken at each meeting, and how information from the committee will be communicated to other company employees.

Once developed, the safety committee can operate in a number of different ways, but should begin by defining long and short term goals. A new committee may initially limit their activities to reviewing accident reports, conducting facility inspections and responding to employee concerns, until it becomes more experienced. More established committees may include expanded roles, such as:

- Safety policy/procedure development
- New process and equipment evaluation
- Create/maintain interest among employees regarding safety

## MEMBERSHIP

One of the first issues to address is to determine who should be a part of the committee, and how many members should be included. The committee should include representatives of both management and production, and have enough members so that every part of the organization feels represented. You may want to emphasize the natural divisions of the company, i.e. process, facilities, production, logistics, etc. However, if the company has too many divisions, this may encumber the committee and reduce effectiveness. One possible solution to such a problem would be the development of sub-committees for specific tasks.

It can also be a challenge to determine which employees will represent their respective departments or divisions. Should you ask for volunteers, or “conscript” employees to sit on the committee? If there are elections, this could lead to “turf wars” or infighting within departments. In a union shop, there may be requirements within the labor agreement as to who can participate in the team.

When determining participants, several factors should be considered. The employee should have an interest in safety and be receptive to new ideas. The members should also have the ability and willingness to participate in projects or meetings and be able to express thoughts and ideas. They should also have a familiarity with the operations at the facility and the associated exposures.

It is recommended that members rotate on/off the committee periodically. This may assist in promoting fresh ideas and different perspectives. This may also maximize the scope of involvement from employees in all areas of the company.

It is important that your committee plan to meet on a regular basis such as monthly, bimonthly or quarterly to ensure that it can address hazards as they come up. Whatever schedule you choose, try not to deviate from planned meeting dates unless it is unavoidable. Any cancelled meeting should be rescheduled as soon as possible.

## RESULTS

For a safety committee to be successful, it is vital that it produce results from these meetings. The group must have the authority to develop and assign recommendations, and management must support these proposals. Recommendations should be developed to consider current company values, as well as the overall safety aspect. Making unrealistic proposals may harm the committee’s credibility, both with employees and management. All recommendations should outline

proposed actions and identify who is responsible for following up on each one. Once recommendations have been developed, they must be communicated to all employees within the facility. Any progress on these items should be captured in the safety committee minutes and may be shared with employees as well.

## BEWARE OF PITFALLS

Developing and maintaining an effective safety committee can be difficult under the best of circumstances. Companies can unwittingly undermine their efforts in several ways. If the committee lacks focus, it may flounder. Without setting clear responsibilities, authority and accountability there is no direction. Without identifying goals, there may be a lot of talk but very little decision or action taken.

Without taking time to identify who should be on the committee, a company may also hinder progress. If members do not have an interest in safety, they may not contribute during meetings. They may not feel the need to attend monthly meetings.

One of the greatest hurdles to overcome is lack of communication. This may occur in several ways. There may be delay in sending out an agenda for the monthly meeting, which does not allow members proper preparation for the meeting. If minutes are not kept, important concepts may be forgotten or not relayed to non-member employees. If results are not conveyed in a timely manner, the committee may be considered irrelevant as well.

A safety and health committee can be an effective tool used to improve a company’s safety program. By taking the appropriate steps, your company may reduce employee exposures and improve accident/injury rates. If you would like further assistance, please contact your Allianz Risk Consultant.

## RESOURCES

- [OSHA Safety and Health Programs in the States](#) – State specific Requirements for Safety Committees
- [Canadian Safety Committees](#) – Resources for Safety Committees in Canada

## SAFETY COMMITTEE CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to determine if changes need to be made to make your committee more effective. Please make sure to review your local or state guidelines on safety committees also.

YES	NO	ITEM
		The safety committee has the appropriate representation from management and employees based on your state requirements.
		Safety committee members represent your company's major work areas.
		A chairperson and secretary have been named for the safety committee.
		Regular meeting dates have been chosen.
		Employee representatives serve on the committee for one year.
		Every safety committee meeting follows an agenda which is distributed prior to the meeting.
		The minutes are maintained for the period of time required by your state.
		Safety committee minutes are available to employees.
		All reports and recommendations are included in the minutes.
		The safety committee has a method for collecting and reviewing employees' safety-related suggestions and reports of hazards.
		The safety committee conducts periodic workplace inspections of all locations.
		The inspections follow a standard procedure for the identification of hazards.
		All hazards identified during an inspection are documented with a hazard description and location.
		The safety committee has a procedure to review inspection reports.
		The safety committee has a procedure to investigate workplace accidents.
		The safety committee makes recommendations to management to reduce or eliminate workplace hazards or unsafe work practices.
		The safety committee makes recommendations to management to ensure accountability for safe work behaviors at all levels of the company.
		Safety committee members understand the purpose of their committee and how it functions.
		Safety committee members have received training on workplace hazard identification and accident investigation

# SAMPLE SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date of Today's Meeting

## MEMBERS PRESENT


## MEMBERS ABSENT


## OLD BUSINESS

Review of previous month's meeting including status of outstanding recommendations.

## NEW BUSINESS

- Accident Investigations
- Facility Inspections
- Near Misses
- Employee Safety Concerns
- New processes or equipment
- Training

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW UP ITEMS

RECOMMENDATIONS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	RESPONSE DATE

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