

SAFETY TRAINING

operation or plan to be worked out, or with any other subject in which both the foremen and the safety department are interested. To find a solution to the problem, the safety director may call a conference with a group of supervisors.

The conference leader should be familiar with the relationships of the members of the conference and with the general area of the subject matter.

It is of the utmost importance that the leader and members of the conference know the scope and limitations of what they are expected to do. If, for example, a conference group meets for the purpose of deciding how to put into practice a policy or a directive that has been issued, they should understand that it is not within their authority to have the policy or directive changed.

If the group meets to discuss improvement of procedures for the elimination of a hazard, they should know whether or not they may consider extensive alterations of buildings and installation of new machinery. If they do not know the limitations within which they must work, then the conference becomes a source of dissatisfaction and frustration or is regarded as simply play-acting.

If the job of a conference group is to recommend action and they do recommend action, they should, of course, know what becomes of their recommendation.

Often, however, a conference group will discuss a matter that affects only the members, in which case their conclusions are drawn for their own guidance. This is probably the most usual and most satisfactory kind of conference.

Conference leading

Every safety man should attempt to become a skilled conference leader. Since such skill comes mainly from practice, he should accept opportunities for holding conferences even if he has not had a great deal of experience. The application of good sense and an understanding of what a conference is supposed to accomplish will go far toward making the conference successful. The sequence of conference leading is as follows:

- 1 The leader states the problem.
- 2 He encourages free discussion.
- 3 He attempts to break the problem into segments to keep the discussion orderly.

4 He makes sure that members have given adequate consideration to all the significant points raised.

5 He notes any conclusions that are reached.

6 He states the final conclusion in such a way that it truly represents the findings of the group.

One who attends many conferences has opportunities to observe examples of successful and unsuccessful conference leading which should help him when he assumes the role of conference leader. The safety man should also seek help from training people and others who may give him sound advice on making his conferences productive.

Misuse of the conference method

If a conference leader, in his eagerness to get across his ideas or in order to cover ground quickly, departs from true conference procedures and steers the discussion in the way he wants it to go, then a meeting that is intended to be a conference becomes a conference in name only.

A closely guided or controlled conference is not an effective teaching method. Worse still, because it is called a conference, it may establish in the minds of conferees and leader a pattern of conduct that makes it difficult for them to serve usefully as members of a true conference. Conferences are almost indispensable in business, and any process that tends to make them unproductive should be avoided.

Other Methods of Supervisory Training

Many methods of instruction and many teaching aids are available for training supervisors in accident prevention. Using a variety of methods in a single course or even in a single session makes for interest and understanding. Participation by the learners is necessary in any form of instruction, but participation may take many forms.

Teaching methods include individual coaching, work projects, conventions, programmed learning, and reading, as well as courses outside the company, practice, research, and observation. All have value as educational methods.

Personal instruction and coaching

Often overlooked as a method of instruction is personal discussion with individual