

Organizing the Safety Program

Safety program organization may be defined as a method employed by management to share and to assign responsibility for accident prevention and to ensure performance under that responsibility.

A safety program is not something that is imposed on company organization. Safety must be built into every process or product design and into every operation. It must be an integral part of company operations.

The prevention of accidents and injuries is basically achieved through control of the working environment and control of people's actions. Only management can implement such control.

A company that has an effective safety program will have a working environment in which operations can be conducted economically, efficiently, and safely.

Safety beyond OSHA

The OSHAct, discussed in the previous chapter, has stimulated many organizations to get into activities intended to bring the organization into compliance with the Act. This new awareness of safety is beneficial if it results in a sincere effort by top management to take effective action to eliminate work injuries. Such organized activity goes beyond mere compliance with OSHA standards which largely involve equipment and physical conditions.

The stated objective of the OSHAct is to reduce occupational injuries and illnesses. Therefore, evidence of organized safety activities and proof of injury reduction should be brought to the attention of the OSHA Compliance Officer at the time of the inspection. This will demonstrate management's parallel objective to eliminate accidents. Such evidence may also be the basis for a reduction in the number of OSHA citations or in the amount of the proposed penalties, if any.

Conversely, superficial activities and minimal compliance cannot be considered as a viable safety program. Not only will such activities be ineffective in controlling accidents and occupational health hazards, but they will give a false sense of security and expose management's lack of control over more basic accident causes.

Basic elements of a safety organization

Analysis of safety programs in plants or concerns with outstanding safety records shows that invariably the programs are built around the seven basic elements shown in the illustration (Fig 3-1). These elements or principles of accident prevention are the same in any industry and in any organization, large or small. Thus, although there is wide variation in the methods used in individual organizations, each incorporates most if not all of the seven basic elements shown in Fig 3-1.

Assumption of responsibility

Top management's attitude and approach toward accident prevention is almost invariably reflected in the attitude of the supervisory force. Similarly, the worker's attitude is usually the same as his supervisor's. Thus, if top management is not genuinely interested in preventing accidents, *no one else is likely to be*. Since this basic fact applies to every level of management and supervision, an accident control program must result from top management's announced and demonstrated interest if employee co-operation and participation are to be obtained.

The details for carrying out an accident prevention program may be assigned, but the responsibility for the basic policy cannot be delegated. Delegation of responsibility for safety cannot be made merely by appointing a safety director or some safety committees and expecting them to function in an effective manner. The top executive officer of a company is responsible for overall safe performance. He must constantly review such performance, this is best done through regular lines of supervision.

In the beginning, the safety program requires close executive attention because it is generally a new activity. Consequently, the overall policy should be prepared so it will state clearly the objectives to be achieved.

Declaration of company policy

A company—large or small—that attempts to stop accidents without a definite guiding policy—one which is planned, publicized, and promoted—will find itself continuously “fighting fires.”

Management, if it wants acceptable safety performance, must first write a safety policy.