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Safety Committees

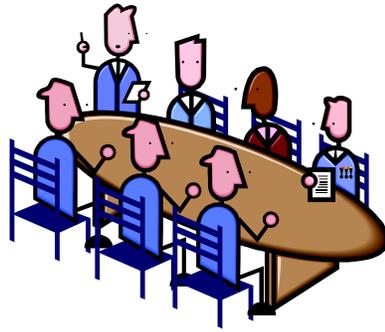
Dermatitis

Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)

Produced by:
 Erik Goplin, CIH, CSP
 QBE Regional Insurance
 608-825-5644
Erik.Goplin@us.qbe.com

If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter send a request to:
Erik.Goplin@us.qbe.com

departments and shifts provides the broadest range of perspectives.



The first step in developing a safety committee involves top management support. Management should set the tone for the committee by determining the structure, roles and responsibilities of members as well as objectives. The purposes of the committee should be outlined in a policy statement. These should include:

- Promote employee interest in safety
- Educate employees through safety awareness
- Prevention of workplace accidents
- Make safety an integral part of the company culture
- Provide opportunity for discussion of health and safety problems and solutions
- Ensure compliance with health and safety regulations

Safety committees should also have the full backing of management with allocation of the necessary resources for success. Safety committees require a time commitment and employees serving on the committee

need to be given time away from their regular job duties for the program to be successful. Management should monitor the committee to ensure that objectives are met.

Once the management policy statement has been formulated, the structure and size of the committee should be determined. Representatives from various departments from both management and the general work force should serve on the committee. The size of the committee general depends on the size of the workforce but a target of five to ten employees is usually a good sized group.

Members can be handpicked or an invitation be made to solicit members. Depending on the number of responses to the invitation, some members may need to be handpicked. There may also be more volunteers than spots on the committee. It is a good idea to periodically rotate members on and off the committee to provide fresh ideas and maintain enthusiasm in the committee and the company's safety efforts.

Once the committee has been established, the format of the meetings should be developed. For an effective committee, there needs to be a chairman. The chairman's responsibilities include:

- Develop meeting agendas
- Coordinate and conduct the meetings
- Establish deadlines

Safety Committees

Safety committees play an important part in a company's efforts in promoting a safe work environment. Safety committees encourage employee participation in workplace safety efforts and help support the company's safety goals. To be effective and successful, safety committees need to have clear goals, assigned responsibilities and receive support from upper management.

Safety committees can be organized in many different ways. Ideally, the committee should be represented by both labor and management. Having representatives from different

- Provide communication between the committee and upper management

It is also important to establish a secretary so records of the meeting minutes are maintained and distributed to committee members and management.

The meetings should be held on a routine basis such as monthly or quarterly. An agenda should be sent out to all members so they are prepared to discuss the issues. Members of the committee should also bring ideas and action items to each meeting. Typical meeting topics should include:

- Review of unfinished items from previous meetings.
- Status reports of ongoing projects
- Discussions of safety inspection reports
- Review of accidents and incidents since the previous meeting
- Review of outstanding safety and health recommendations
- Discussion of ongoing safety programs and training
- Discussion of new business

Safety committees are most successful when all members actively participate. Safety committees often degenerate into complaining sessions if they are poorly run and members are allowed to get off topic. The chairman must keep discussions on topic and courses of action must be developed for each action item. The worst safety committees spend large amounts of time discussing issues but fail to develop action plans and assignments. Each member of the committee should be expected to have assignments with due dates. It is imperative that these assignments be taken seriously and due dates are met.

It is also important to promote the safety efforts of the committee. Meeting minutes should be posted for all employees to see and special efforts should be made to promote the successful efforts of the committee.

For additional information please view QBE's WebEx on safety committees located on the QBE Loss Control webpage.

Dermatitis

The skin is the largest organ in the body and is the body's first defense against harmful agents and microorganisms. Because the skin has a large surface area and is directly exposed to the environment, it is vulnerable to attack by chemical, mechanical, physical and biological agents. According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), dermatitis accounts for 15-20% of all reported occupational diseases.



Dermatitis is common in certain industries where chemicals are used as well as in situations where friction caused by dusts, fiberglass or metal particles cause mechanical trauma to the skin. Itching and scratching compounds the problem and can lead to secondary infections. High humidity, wet conditions or sweating can also increase penetration of water soluble substances through the skin. Damaged skin also increases the permeability and absorption of chemicals leading to increased inflammation.

Most dermatitis is caused by substances that irritate the skin. These cases are classified as contact dermatitis. Contact dermatitis occurs at the site of contact with the causative agent. This is usually the hands, wrists or forearms, although any area can be affected. Symptoms include redness, blisters, and swollen and oozing skin lasting days or weeks. Dusts, mists and vapors can affect any exposed areas such as forehead, eyelids, face, ears, and neck. Contaminants also tend to collect under the collar, at the top of shoes and under rings. Contact dermatitis can be localized between fingers, toes and other areas where skin rubs together. The palms are protected to some degree due to the thick epidermis. Often, irritants are transferred by hand to other parts of the body due to poor hygiene practices. Contact dermatitis can be caused by damage at the site of a single contact with strong irritants like acids and caustics but more often is caused by frequent contact with mild irritants like soap, detergents, solvents and other chemicals. Cumulative exposure such as frequent hand washing in food and health care industries is a major cause of irritant contact dermatitis.

The other type of dermatitis is caused by the body's immune reaction to a substance and is called allergic contact dermatitis. Individuals with hay fever, asthma or other allergies are predisposed to develop this type of dermatitis. Most of these substances do not produce a skin reaction on first contact. After repeated exposure, dermatitis develops as the employee becomes sensitized to the chemical. Employees who are sensitized to one chemical often react to closely related chemicals. Patch testing is used to differentiate between allergic contact dermatitis and irritant contact

dermatitis. It should be noted that employees could be exposed to several irritants, which have cumulative effects and that irritant and allergic contact dermatitis often coexist together.

Early intervention is the key to reducing the severity of dermatitis. Minor case of dermatitis can progress to a more widespread case or become infected without proper care. Diagnosis and treatment by a dermatologist or doctor familiar with occupational dermatitis is essential. Location on the body, periods of remission and eruption, work history, list of possible causative agents, response to therapy and evaluation of potential non-occupational exposures is essential for accurate diagnosis.

The key to dermatitis control is to prevent contact with causative agents in the first place. These include:

- Proper design of equipment so chemicals are handled safely
- Automate processes that require manual contact with chemicals
- Install exhaust ventilation systems so dusts, fumes and mists are controlled
- Replace chemicals with less hazardous substitutes
- Maintain good housekeeping so tools, parts and equipment are clean
- Label containers properly
- Properly dispose of wastes

Personal Hygiene is an important component of the control program. These controls include:

- Provide hand washing facilities
- Wash hands and exposed skin frequently
- Train employees in personal hygiene practices
- Do not use solvents to clean hands
- Provide gloves, arm gauntlets, boots, aprons, face shields and

other personal protective equipment as necessary to prevent dermal contact with chemicals

- Barrier creams should only be used where gloves cannot be used

Harsh soaps and frequent hand washing are major causes of contact dermatitis since soap removes oils and proteins from the skin. The soap itself can cause dermatitis but it can also make the skin more prone to other irritants. General recommendations for soaps include:

- Use the mildest soap that will “do the job”
- Do not use industrial cleaners for hand washing
- Use abrasive soaps sparingly and only when necessary.
- Don’t use abrasive soaps on inflamed skin.
- Use skin moisturizers after washing hands

Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)

A job hazard analysis (JHA) program provides a systematic approach for identifying and eliminating potential hazards in the workplace as well as enhancing a company’s safety program. JHAs should ultimately be done on each job but it is important to start the program with the jobs producing the highest number of accidents and injuries as well as new jobs where higher numbers of accidents and injuries often occur. Benefits of a JHA program include:

- Uncover hazards that are a natural part of the process
- Identify hazards that have been overlooked
- Identify hazards caused by changes in processes or equipment
- Identify hazards associated with employee work practices



The first step in conducting a JHA involves defining a job. This should include a name as well as a brief description of the job. Next the job should be broken down into the sequence of steps used to perform the job. The job may be observed as it is being done or it can be videotaped and analyzed in more detail. Care should be taken not to be too detailed or the JHA can become bogged down. Everything relating to one logical set of movements should be part of a single job step. Example- “Pick up box from conveyor and place on a pallet.”

The next step to completing the JHA involves identifying the potential hazards associated with each job step. Examine each step for actions or conditions that may lead to an accident. Some hazards may be obvious such as being hit by or struck by or getting caught in moving parts while other hazards may not so obvious. Look for health hazards associated with temperature, noise, chemicals or dust exposure. Ergonomic related hazards associated with a job are often a leading cause of injuries. Look for factors such as repetition, force, duration and awkward posture to address ergonomic hazards.

After documenting the potential hazards associated with the job, identify recommended actions to control the hazards. Methods of preventing potential accidents include”

- Find a new way to do the job
- Change the physical condition that creates the hazard
- Provide personal protective equipment
- Reduce the frequency of the job
- Provide additional training

When conducting the JHAs, make sure that the employees who perform the jobs are involved in the process. They can help identify the job steps as well as deviations that occur. They also can help identify solutions and will accept the changes more readily when they help develop them.

JHAs should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Changes in the job, equipment or processes change the hazards. The JHA should be updated to reflect these changes. JHA’s should also be analyzed after an accident to make sure that hazards associated with the accident have been identified and controls have been established to prevent future reoccurrence.

For additional information, look for QBE’s WebEx on Job Hazard Analysis coming in June 2012.