

Laying the Foundation of a Back Safety Program

Establishing a back safety program must be done in a logical, step-by-step process. It can be compared to constructing a house. The foundation must be laid before the roof and walls can be erected. The foundation of a good back safety program must rest on the support elements of a good loss prevention program. If not, the program will eventually weaken and collapse.

The planning for construction of the program must be done by top management. This planning will determine the program's success or failure. The need to eliminate, or at least control, human suffering and the direct and indirect costs of accidents should be the incentive to establish an effective loss control program.

There are many critical components of the loss control program that help ensure the success of the Back Safety Program. These include:

Management Commitment

The reasons why the program is needed and what is to be accomplished must be developed. These objectives will determine the depth and scope of the program's development.

Management Policy Statement

A policy statement should be written and communicated to all employees. It should clearly outline the objectives and indicate top management's intentions and determination for achieving an effective program designed to provide a safe working environment.

Defined Safety Responsibilities

Responsibilities have to be assigned. An effective loss control program involves all staff functions, all levels of management and the labor force. Therefore, all employees will have some responsibilities and involvement in the program.

Communications

Provisions should be made for communications to top management about the effectiveness of the program. Their review of the results will enable them to give additional direction and emphasis as needed.

Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives based on potential loss problems should be established. Both long and short-term goals need to be addressed. Strategies should be developed to achieve the goals.

Allocation of Resources

An annual safety budget should be established which is based upon the loss prevention program goals and objectives.

Meetings

Regular meetings that involve safety activities and a review of serious accidents should be held by management and supervisors. Supervisors and employees should hold other meetings that include general safety topics. Active employee involvement in these meetings keeps employees interested in the company's loss control efforts.

Pre-Planning

Many accidents are caused due to inadequate evaluation of risk when new processes or tasks are performed. Before a new operation, process or job is initiated; safety considerations should be evaluated. The potential risks are identified and necessary controls are put in place to prevent accidents and injuries.

New Employee Orientation

Statistics have shown that newly hired employees are much more likely to be injured than other employees are. This is usually due to inexperience as well as inadequate training. A new employee orientation program ensures that employees understand work procedures, company policies, and have been given sufficient training in safety procedures before they are exposed to hazards.

Safety Rules

These are the guidelines that employees are expected to follow. There should be general company wide rules as well as department and job specific safety rules.

Inspections

Procedures should be established to regularly check for unsafe conditions and unsafe acts. Inspections should be specific to the various departments or operations. Inspection reports should be reviewed and corrective actions should be taken as necessary.

Training

A program designed to provide initial training when an operation or process is initiated as well as continuous training should be provided for all employees and supervisory employees. Results from accident investigations, inspections and program audits can help identify areas where deficiencies in the safety program require additional or follow-up training.

Accident Investigation

Provisions should be made to ensure that all accidents and injuries are reported immediately. Prompt investigation to uncover root causes of injuries will allow for analysis and corrective action.

Transitional Return-to-Work

Procedures and policies should be developed to ensure that employees are returned to their former jobs as soon as possible after an injury. These procedures need to be in place before an injury occurs. A transitional return-to-work program reduces workers' compensation costs, increases productivity, and enhances employee morale.

Audits of Loss Control Program

Regular audits of the safety program should be conducted to determine if performance standards, goals and objectives are being met.

Emergency Procedures

A good loss control program includes provisions for dealing with injuries, fires and other disasters. These programs reduce potential losses and increase recovery time.

Substance Abuse Policy

A substance abuse policy and strict rules regarding the use of drugs and alcohol reduce losses and create a safer work environment.

Recordkeeping

A good loss control program includes documentation of inspections, training, accident investigation, and other records relating to the loss control program. These records are useful in the event of regulatory or legal action.

Implementation

Completing these items will establish a firm foundation, which will support the Back Safety Program. The sequence of implementation will depend on the priority of the objectives established by top management. Each element will require the assignment of responsibilities for each phase of implementation.

It should be noted that all elements cannot be implemented at once. Building a successful program takes planning. The success of one phase of loss prevention will often lead to the next logical phase. Successful implementation will allow one element to interface and complement all the others.