

# Engaged, energized, and effective safety committees.

## A playbook of ideas, interventions, and ingenuity!

The purpose of safety committees and safety meetings is to bring workers and management together in a non-adversarial, cooperative effort to promote safety and health. Safety committees and safety meetings will help you continually improve your safety and health program.

## Key requirements for safety committees and safety meetings

- Agree on a chairperson.
  - Provide training in accident-incident investigations and hazard identification.
  - Meet monthly and do quarterly inspections.
  - Establish procedures for inspections and for reviewing reports.
  - Establish procedures for evaluating accidents and incidents.
  - Establish a system for reporting hazards and for suggesting ways to improve the system.
  - Ensure that accountability and incentive systems include safety and health objectives.
- Ensure that centralized safety committees meet the requirements in 437-001-0765(9).
  - Keep a record of each meeting for three years that includes:
    - Safety and health issues discussed
    - Corrective actions and dates management will respond to the actions
    - The person responsible for following up on corrective actions
    - All reports, evaluations, and recommendations made by the committee

Oregon OSHA's rule for safety committees and safety meetings is 437-001-0765.

## Safety committee meetings

- Make recently discovered safety or health issues the focus of your next meeting.
- Do something different; meet in another room, at another facility, or at a different time of day, for example.
- Try to meet on quarterly inspection months so fresh items can be resolved.

- Assign “new business” agenda items to members that include action dates and follow-up or completion dates.
- Be flexible with meeting times and periodically poll the team to determine the best time for most members.
- Use outside resources – such as the Oregon Institute of Occupational Health Sciences, CPWR, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, product manufacturers, workers’ compensation providers, professional associations, unions, consultants, and vendors to help engage members.

## Safety meeting ideas for small employers and construction firms

- Have employees share pictures from recently completed jobs that show hazards, corrections, and people credited for corrections.
- Invite on-site contractors to meetings and inspections.
- Establish daily huddles with a safety emphasis, such as “flex n stretch.”
- Have employees come to a safety meeting or toolbox talk wearing personal protective equipment, such as fall protection gear and hardhats or tools, and allow co-workers to inspect it.
- Search “toolbox topics” and “tailgate talks” for other ideas.
- Have a different person lead meetings.
- Use safety meetings or toolbox talks to let employees know what will happen that week so they can plan their work accordingly.

## Safety committee inspections

Quarterly safety committee inspections can be separated into different areas in the facility so that more areas are covered. Those doing inspections should change areas occasionally to review other parts of the facility. Forms should be identical for all inspectors and make sure all inspectors know what is happening in other areas.

Evaluate how the safety committee does inspections and consider:

- Changing inspection routines and bringing in nonmembers for fresh perspectives and expertise.
- Changing the focus from violation-finding to hazard-finding.
- Doing an inspection without a checklist, which might help identify previously undetected hazards.
- Conducting unannounced inspections when appropriate.

## Best practices recommended by Oregon OSHA

- Have a written safety committee policy and safety committee bylaws endorsed by management (a written safety and health policy is required for centralized safety committees).
- Create an agenda for each meeting and post it a few days in advance so that nonmembers can review it, provide input, or attend.
- Conduct an annual comprehensive safety committee review to evaluate the committee's effectiveness (required for centralized committees) [Resources<sup>i</sup>].
- Provide safety committee members with regular training from available sources.
- Connect with the Oregon SHARP Alliance and visit Oregon OSHA VPP or SHARP sites [Resources<sup>ii</sup>].
- Enter deserving employees for awards at Oregon OSHA co-sponsored conferences such as the Frank J. Bertak Award for Safety Committee Recognition at the Southern Oregon Conference and the Governor's Occupational Safety and Health Conference [Resources<sup>iii</sup>].

## Best practices shared by our contributors

- Be patient! Remember: You are improving physical conditions *and* behaviors; that means you are changing culture. It takes time!
- Know your audience: Engage and recognize them in ways that are meaningful to them. But not everyone likes public recognition or a company shirt, which may drive some people away.
  - Make it easy and engaging for employees and offer a variety of incentives, such as training, goals, recognition, prizes, and food (most people like food).
  - Offer flexibility with team roles that have short-term commitments when feasible; examples include "scribe for a quarter," sharing roles on projects, and a rotating "topic of the month."
  - Offer training to those who might not volunteer for team roles because they are unfamiliar with equipment or procedures.
  - Look for other ways to engage employees who are willing to participate, but cannot attend regular meetings (such as helping them to follow up on actions, investigating solutions, and talking to their teams or crews about specific topics).
- Remind members that they are advocates and safety ambassadors; let members know that when someone comes to them and isn't comfortable reporting an issue, they can do so anonymously on the member's behalf.
- Get to know your constituents personally with regular with meeting-and-greeting sessions and formal walk-throughs.
- Get ideas from your constituents for developing user-friendly hazard reporting systems
- Remind the safety committee chairperson that they are never alone because there is a team of people to support them.
- Post each member's photo, name, and contact information in a conspicuous place
- Periodically spotlight a committee member.

- Don't limit participation to meetings and inspections; engage the team in events such as Safety Break and let the team brainstorm ideas and even host a safety-related event.
- Be sure to follow up with employees' suggestions; morale is improved when people know they are heard and are part of the process, even if their concerns cannot be addressed to their liking.
- Remind people they have something to contribute regardless of their position or job title.
- Ask people what hazards they are exposed to at home and what they have done to protect themselves; encourage them to share their home-safety ideas at the workplace, such as tool safety tips, safety data sheets for household chemicals, personal protective equipment, and automobile safety kits.
- Establish a monthly theme for activities, promotions, and events:
  - Base themes on the appropriate time of year (heat and smoke themes during the summer, early darkness themes, for example)
  - Suggest theme choices rather than leaving it open
  - Let employees lead their passion projects and initiatives
- Establish a traveling "safety fair" or designate a "safety day."
- Create newsletters, safety tip sheets, or an intra-agency safety webpage; include a safety message with employees' paychecks that highlights important safety and topics and reminds them how to report hazards.
- Give employees opportunities to attend conferences or regional safety meetings as a reward.
- Provide quarterly equipment-specific or task-specific training.
- Post the meeting agenda to solicit safety concerns and ideas for an upcoming meeting; this helps "advertise" things such as special events, guest speakers, and monthly themes and offers an opportunity for nonmembers to contribute or attend.
- Try to have alternates for members and the chairperson; consider moving alternates into the primary role after a year:
  - After each meeting, the department safety committee representative would report what was discussed at the next department safety committee meeting
  - Let committee members "adopt" a future member
- Invite on-site contractors to meetings and inspections.
- Ask vendors to provide demonstrations about the products or services (such as fall protection, electrical, and wellness).
- Create a contest to spark interest in safety; having employees' kids and grandkids draw safety posters, calendars, or to think of slogans, for example.
- Consider appropriate incentives such as recognition, rewards, training and job opportunities; incentives and success stories can rub off on others and may eventually gain safety committee volunteers.
- Consider company-wide incentives to engage all employees; remember that incentives can reward unsafe behavior (such as nonreporting) if workplace culture doesn't support it.
  - Remember: The safety committee is required to evaluate management's accountability system for safety and health.
- Schedule training dates for committee members; expand the training to cover new topics overtime.

- Establish a lending library of that includes safety training videos and other materials.
- Establish a wellness committee to help encourage employees to do activities such as walking, exercising, and stretching .
- Remember: Being a member of a safety committee directly involves the individual in making positive changes – that’s a wonderful feeling of achievement!
- Consider developing safety-related programs that can benefit all employees, including:
  - Motor vehicle safety
  - Workplace violence
  - Ergonomics
- Include a cost-benefit analysis that demonstrates how disabling injury claims affect profits the with every safety committee recommendation; information is available from your workers’ compensation insurer and Oregon OSHA.

## More best practices shared by our contributors

- Bud Harris – TYCO Corporation, Wilsonville. “We had both an employee safety committee (with management representation) with a management safety committee meeting of which I attended and the employee safety committee chair. It was held directly after the employee meeting. Resources were approved quickly that way.”
- Wayne Dalton Garage Doors – Portland. “Members wear florescent shirts while on the floor so they’re noticeable. Also, red shirts for new employees including a pledge on the front and back (pledges to ask to be stopped if they are doing something wrong and a pledge to stop anyone else from doing something wrong).”
- Duro-Last Roofing – Grants Pass
  - “Ensure any recordable injury is shared with the CEO.”
  - “Conduct regular walk throughs (GEMBA Walk).”
  - “Distributed workplace Safety Analysis for employees to fill out anonymously. This determined safety strengths and weaknesses.”
  - “Created ‘Safety Champion of the Month’ (awarded to employee turning in most near misses).”
  - “To determine our chairperson, we ask for a volunteer first (if none, he/she is elected by the committee).”
  - “Go around the room during a safety meeting and each person reads a near miss from the report.”
  - “Ensure the committee has one member from each department – especially our maintenance dept. as they’re the ones who fix things!”
  - “Update best practices daily with a one person assigned as the point person.”
  - “Update safety meeting minutes directly after the meeting.”
- Thermo Fisher Scientific – Eugene
  - “We reward our participants annually with an appreciation. Pre-COVID, this was a team lunch and some kind of tactile gift item. It also involves a reward in our company rewards system, where employees can ‘cash in’ for a physical prize or gift card of their choice.”

- “Safety Committee participation is recognized as an annual employee goal and is given credit on employee Professional Development plans.”
- We also encourage our Safety Committee members to nominate other employees for recognitions when they go above and beyond to fix hazards.”
- Angie Wisner, Saif Corp.
  - To encourage employees to read the meeting minutes, embed a safety message and the first handful of employees to share it with a committee member receives a prize (i.e. \$5 coffee card).

## Thanks to our contributors

Thanks to those who attended Oregon OSHA’s Public Education workshops and conferences over the years. Special thanks to those who helped create this guidance:

- Angie Wisner
- Brian Fredrickson
- Darren Morris
- Duro-Last Roofing
- George “Bud” Harris
- Mark Hurliman
- Paul Utterback
- Ron Haverkost
- Thermo Fisher Scientific
- TYCO Corporation
- Wayne Dalton Garage Doors

## Where to get more information about safety committees and safety meetings

For more information, visit Oregon OSHA’s safety committees and safety meetings topic page at [osha.oregon.gov/Pages/topics/safety-committees-and-meetings.aspx](https://osha.oregon.gov/Pages/topics/safety-committees-and-meetings.aspx).

## Resources

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<sup>i</sup> See sample annual comprehensive safety committee review on Oregon OSHA’s website [osha.oregon.gov/OSHPubs/pubform/safety-committee-annual-review.pdf](https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHPubs/pubform/safety-committee-annual-review.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> See SHARP evaluation tools on Oregon OSHA’s website [osha.oregon.gov/consult/sharp-vpp/Pages/SHARP-documents.aspx](https://osha.oregon.gov/consult/sharp-vpp/Pages/SHARP-documents.aspx)

<sup>iii</sup> See Oregon OSHA conferences at [osha.oregon.gov/conferences/Pages/index.aspx](https://osha.oregon.gov/conferences/Pages/index.aspx)