



# Forming Safety Committees and Teams

Each year, employees are seriously injured or killed from accidents in the workplace. Forming a safety committee or team can be a critical resource that can have a big impact on preventing injuries. A safety committee can focus on implementing programs to address key exposures such as severe weather awareness, slips and falls, safe patient handling, ergonomics, safety training programs, building inspections and more.

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## How to Organize

Management support is important when forming a safety committee. Employees selected should be able to participate well in a team environment. Some initial training might be required to help provide members direction on how to run timely, effective meetings.

Organizations with a limited number of employees, resources and time can still have an impact through the use of a task force that is created for the purpose of sponsoring safety campaigns throughout the year.

## Best Practices

The following information defines key safety committee best practices. If there is an existing team in place at your company, this information can be shared with them to see where improvements can be made.

**Objectives** — Written objectives provide teams a sense of their mission and purpose, as well as a long-term view for injury prevention. They also offer the team a focus to ensure their meetings and activities are effective. Create objectives based on the needs of your organization using the list below as a starting point:

- Conduct an analysis of accident trends and create loss reduction goals.
- Review and update existing safety programs.
- Develop a safety training calendar for the year.
- Perform periodic safety inspections, discuss findings and assign responsibility for follow-up on action items.
- Discuss the facts of accident investigation reports, root causes and changes needed to prevent future occurrences.

**Chairperson selection** — The chairperson is the individual that leads the members and acts as the primary facilitator.

- They ensure the committee has adequate membership, is focused on their core objectives and goals, establishes the policies and procedures on how the committee functions, establishes and sets meeting dates and times, and facilitates discussion during meetings.
- They may train new members and review their individual responsibilities, as well as prepare the agenda for each meeting and lead the group through its contents.
- Some responsibilities may be delegated to other committee members, such as taking meeting notes, leading the team during inspections, follow up on action items and communicating their accomplishments to other employees via email or bulletin board postings.

**Committee membership** — The number of members on a team is often determined by the goals established, size of the organization, activities being performed and needs of the company. Companies often choose to have a multi-disciplinary or cross-functional membership to ensure various departments and shifts are represented to take advantage of the expertise that exists throughout the organization.

Looking for more ways to engage your team and create a safer, more healthy workplace? Visit our resource library at [UnitedHeartland.com](http://UnitedHeartland.com)

**Subcommittees and task forces** — Management may wish to create a subcommittee or task force to focus on specific projects or initiatives. This may be a useful option when the general committee is already busy or the company has limited resources. The chairperson can choose a few current committee members to lead and facilitate the task force and then supplement with additional volunteers from the company. Subcommittees are generally disbanded after their project has been completed.

**Meeting date and time** — Establish a time and place to meet regularly. Establishing a specific day and time allows members to plan ahead and build the meeting into their schedule. It also becomes a target date for members to follow up on action items and report the status of issues back to the team.

**Rules and procedures** — As soon as the committee has been formed, determine the following:

- Define and clarify team's mission, goals and objectives.
- Outline member roles and responsibilities.
- Create an agenda format.
- Develop a safety and housekeeping inspection checklist.

**Safety committee activities** — Based on the objectives and goals established for the team, a specific set of activities can be outlined to keep the group focused. The following list provides activities that are commonly used by safety committees. These examples are a good starting point, but management will need to consider the specific needs of their organization.

- Create a safety training calendar for the year, selecting monthly topics.
- Review current safety training programs and make updates.
- Create checklists and conduct inspections to detect hazards and unsafe physical conditions and follow up on the status of previous findings.
- Discuss emergency procedures and post information about them.
- Review supervisory accident investigation reports to identify potential trends, review the root cause analysis and verify the status of outstanding action items that were recommended to prevent future occurrences.
- Create and revise safety procedures on jobs and verify the use of procedures during safety tours.
- Conduct job hazard evaluations for new or existing jobs or to comply with outside standards, such as OSHA's PPE standard.

**Meeting agenda and minutes** — An agenda should be developed before each meeting to keep the team focused on specific items.

- A record keeper should take notes of the items reviewed and status of open action items.
- Notes should be communicated to all employees to keep them informed of the progress being made on safety initiatives.

