



MCHRMA RESOURCE

Minnesota Counties Human Resource Management Association

Accountability for Workplace Safety

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The old saying “what gets measured gets done” is especially true when it comes to employee safety performance. Without a formal system for accountability a safety program will not be effective in regulatory compliance or in reducing loss frequency or severity.

Holding employees accountable for their action or inaction in regards to safety can be problematic, especially with variations in labor agreements and contract structures. The best way to help gain employee compliance with safety performance expectations is to incorporate safety into job descriptions and performance reviews.

Performance measures should be clear, measurable and attainable. In addition, measures should not be purely activity based. For example a requirement such as ‘Attend all safety committee meetings’ is a clear, measurable and attainable activity. However, it does not address actual safety issues. An employee that attends all safety committee meetings and does nothing but drink coffee would meet the requirement. A better measure would be one that includes a performance standard. For example: ‘Participate in all safety committee activities, including offering specific suggestions for and/or implementing solutions to safety issues.

Whenever possible, employees should be involved in or be given the opportunity to provide input into the development of their safety performance measures. This not only helps make the goals and expectations clear but also helps employees buy into and take ownership of their safety expectations.

Safety Accountability and OSHA

The need for accountability is recognized in the Minnesota OSHA Statute (Minnesota Statutes, section 5208.1500) that requires employers to develop and use a formal workplace safety program, specifically “A workplace accident and injury reduction program” (AWAIR.) A written AWAIR program must include:

1. The responsibilities of managers, supervisors and employees for implementing the program and how management participation will be established, measured and maintained;
2. The methods used to identify, analyze and control new or existing hazards, conditions and operations;
3. The method for communicating the plan to all affected employees so they are informed of work-related hazards and controls;
4. The process for investigating workplace accidents and implementing corrective action;
5. How safe work practices and rules will be enforced.

For more information about the requirements of the OSHA AWAIR program (M.S. §182.653, subd. 8), visit the Minnesota Department of Labor's Web site at <http://www.doli.state.mn.us/oshainfo.html>.

The following is sample language for job descriptions and performance evaluations:

Safety regulations require that employees be provided a safe work environment. Safe behavior is one aspect of the responsibility in keeping the work environment safe. As safety is everyone's responsibility, all employees will be evaluated on safety as a part of their annual performance evaluation, including:

Adhering to safe work procedures, policies, guidelines and rules;

Operating assigned vehicles/equipment in a safe and efficient manner in accordance with established procedures and traffic laws.

Using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), seat belts and provided safety equipment appropriately;

Recognizing and reporting unsafe conditions;

Offering suggestions for solutions to safety problems when applicable;

Planning of work to include checking safety equipment and procedures before starting;

Reinforcing safety practices among coworkers or supporting safety efforts;

Reporting in a timely manner an illness or injury that arises from employment;

Those who supervise others will have additional considerations to include:

Keeping current safety records for area under supervision (increase/decrease in injuries)

Knowing job hazards and training time allotted to employees;

Instructing those they supervise in safe practices to address the hazards in the workplace;

Providing instruction on the use of Material Safety Data Sheets and other safety hazard information;

Taking necessary corrective action when employees do not adhere to safe practices;

Arranging early return to work opportunities that comply with medical limitations;

Following through on correcting identified safety hazards by adopting interim solutions and planning permanent corrections.

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