

# Establishing a Safety Committee

A great way to encourage employee participation in your workplace safety program is to create a Workplace Safety Committee or Safety Team. The committee/team can help share responsibilities of implementing and monitoring the Workplace Safety Program. Typical duties might include:

- Program audits and premises/equipment inspections from the vantage point of both worker and participant safety
- Incident/Injury reviews for employees and volunteers
- Identifying safety hazards and suggesting corrective measures
- Developing safe work practices for employees and the volunteers that assist in the organization
- Identifying the need for and facilitating safety training
- Identifying and promoting activities that encourage employees to support the organization's safety efforts

Below are suggested steps to forming your organization's safety committee or safety team:

## Step One: Determine the Objectives of the Committee

The team/committee will focus on workplace safety. Examples of duties would include:

- Conduct periodic self inspections/surveys
- Review incident/accident reports
- Conduct safety talks
- Relate data to the employees concerning the safety program(s)

## Step Two: Determine the Size of the Committee

The group should be neither so small that there is no diversity nor so large that the meetings are unwieldy. The volunteers will bring an understanding of outside safety related issues. Generally, five to ten members is a good group size.

## Step Three: Determine Who the Specific Members Will Be

Members of the committee should be from:

1. Management—preferably CEO, COO or RM, depending on association size
2. Each basic programming area—Childcare, School-AgedCare, Fitness, Aquatics, Camp, Youth Sports, etc.
3. Each major property-related department—Maintenance, Housekeeping, Facility, Grounds, etc.
4. Transportation—if the department is present
5. One or more board volunteers, if possible, who are interested in safety or risk management

## Step Four: Senior Management Involvement

Senior management must support the committee so that all employees understand and embrace the corporate commitment to safety. Also, it must ensure that all levels of management are supportive and engaged, and should encourage all members' involvement in the discussions of safety issues and concerns. If senior management opts not to serve regularly on the committee, it should attend the first meeting, provide guidance, review committee meeting minutes and reports, and be available and responsive to questions and concerns the committee raises. Remember, top down awareness and support of all workplace safety initiatives is essential.

### **Step Five: Conduct the Initial Safety Committee/Team Meeting**

- Welcome and thank the committee members.
- Set a schedule for committee meetings. Will they meet monthly, quarterly? Establish a firm start and stop time. Select a day, time and place that is as convenient as possible for all committee members.
- Determine who will serve as committee officers—Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Recorder/Secretary. Perhaps it's best to have temporary officers until the committee has met a few times. Either way, engage the members in the election process. Discuss the duties of the committee and determine which of those should initially receive the highest priority. Examples would include facility self-inspections, conducting incident/accident reviews and determining safety training topics for supervisors.
- Determine the needs for sub-committees to take responsibility for some of the priority items. Examples would be the audit/inspection group, incident/injury review group, etc. If sub-committees are formed, they can work on projects independently and meet in between full committee meetings. They can then report to the next meeting of the larger group. Working via sub-committee should also facilitate keeping the length of the full committee meetings to an hour or less.

### **Step Six: Review the Progress of the Committee**

At least annually, evaluate the committee's success in helping the organization meet its safety goals and objectives. The items should be quantifiable and deliberate. This will allow you and the committee to identify progress and deficiencies and further refine its efforts.