

Safety Rules

Every company, regardless of size or structure, has a moral, financial and legal obligation to assure both a safe workplace and safe work practices. In order to let your employees know what is expected of them, the safety program should include three basic elements:

A STATEMENT OF COMPANY SAFETY POLICY

This affirms your company's commitment to accident prevention.

SAFETY RULES-BOTH GENERAL AND SPECIFIC

These rules identify precautionary measures that management requires the work force to follow based on recognized hazards.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Must be clearly defined and provided in writing to each employee.

The larger and more complex an operation, the more comprehensive a program should be. However, any size company can benefit by implementing these elements.

As we discuss these three elements in more detail, remember that simplicity is often an attribute. As operations become more complex, so will the specific safety rules.

STATEMENT OF COMPANY SAFETY POLICY

The following is an example of the type of message that should be relayed by such a statement:

"To all employees:

Safety and health in our business is a part of every operation. Safety is an individual responsibility.

The objective of an effective safety and health program is to reduce the number of workers' compensation incidents and maintain the best operation.

Our safety and health program will include all necessary mechanical and physical safeguards, inspections to find and eliminate unsafe working conditions or practices, training for all employees in proper safety and health practices, use of personal protective equipment, investigation of every accident to prevent recurrence, and recognition for outstanding safety performance.

To be successful, our safety and health program needs the cooperation and involvement of every one of us. Safety is your responsibility."

The safety policy statement should be signed by the company president.

SAFETY RULES

Safety rules include what some might consider as common sense. But remember, common sense is not so common. It is important that safety rules be both realistic and practical. Consider the following:

- They must be understood by those for whom they are intended.
- They should be logical and enforceable. A rule that cannot, or will not, be enforced can seriously impair the effectiveness of other rules.

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- Consider legal requirements as well. OSHA regulations, for instance, may dictate certain safety rules which should be included.
- Safety rules should be developed in a cooperative effort between supervisors and employees. Employees are much more likely to respect rules which they take part in developing.
- Consider language barriers. You may need to have rules translated to assist non-English speaking and/or reading employees.

GENERAL SAFETY RULES

Typically, safety rules are broken into two segments, General and Specific. General safety rules apply to all employees from top management on down. No one should be exempt. As an example, if a machine shop has a general rule that anyone entering the shop must wear eye protection, it is just as important, and probably more so, that management follow that policy as well as shop employees. This would, obviously, show management's support and respect for the company's rules.

SPECIFIC SAFETY RULES

Specific rules are developed for specific jobs or departments, or both. It is not unusual to see specific department safety rules and specific job safety rules as ingredients in a comprehensive safety program. An objective study of your operations should make it easy to identify how specific these rules need to be. As with general rules, it vitally important that everyone respect specific safety rules.

Examples of specific safety rules might be: *"Safety glasses and a face shield must be worn when operating the lathe."* or *"Cut resistant gloves must be worn when cleaning the meat slicer."*

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Recognizing safe and productive work is often accomplished by wage increases, incentive awards or even a "pat on the back". But even with the use of positive reinforcement, or when retraining fails to

produce safe behavior, disciplinary action may be necessary to change that behavior. The following are important considerations when developing and implementing disciplinary procedures:

If managers or supervisors disregard the rules, employees will feel they can do likewise.

All employees should be treated fairly and equally. It would be a legal nightmare to take action against an offender when his peers have been consciously ignored while committing similar offenses.

All disciplinary actions, from verbal warnings to terminations, should be thoroughly documented. This is a method of proving management's good faith and fair treatment of employees.

Prompt action is necessary when a manager feels that a worker is deliberately disobeying safety rules. The employee should not be allowed to endanger himself/herself or co-workers.

The following is an example of a typical disciplinary procedure:

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|-------------------|---|
| First occurrence | Verbal warning (documented) |
| Second occurrence | Written notice and/or report submitted to employer |
| Third occurrence | Disciplinary action, including possible termination |

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is recommended that company safety policy, safety rules and disciplinary procedures be typed and distributed to each employee. To document this, an acknowledgment should be developed and provided to employees for their signature verifying that they have read and understand what they have received. That acknowledgment is then kept in their personnel file.

The following is an example of a typical statement of acknowledgment:

"I have read and acknowledge the statement of company policy, safety rules and disciplinary procedures. I agree to follow these safety rules and help maintain the safety of our operations. I also understand that failure to adhere to the safety rules could be grounds for dismissal.

Name (Print)_____

Signature_____

Date_____

If you have any questions, or need professional assistance with your safety rules, call your Zenith Safety and Health Consultant.