

Maximizing the Benefits of Your Safety Committee

Are your insurance rates too high? At a time when insurance rates are skyrocketing, studies show that an effective Safety Committee can reduce dealership accidents by as much as 52%.

There is a very simple reason. Effective safety committees find solutions to problems that cause workplace accidents, illnesses, and injuries. Fewer of these mean fewer workers' compensation claims, less lost time, lower insurance rates and avoiding potential damage to the dealership's reputation.



Objectives of the Safety Committee

The Safety Committee is responsible for providing a safe and healthy environment at the dealership. Members of the committee are important contributors to the company. Their actions will:

- Improve the health and safety conditions of the dealership for the benefit of employees, customers and suppliers.
- Reduce the number, severity, and financial impact of injuries and illnesses.
- Support compliance with health, safety and environmental regulations.
- Create and promote a safety culture where employees think "safety" every day.

Summary of Recommendations for an Effective Safety Committee

- Senior management commitment is essential to an effective Safety Committee. The Committee should include senior management from each department, driving the commitment to workplace safety to every level of the organization. The GM or CFO should be present at every meeting or be copied on all meeting documentation.
- Members should be required to attend all Safety Committee meetings, and to send a representative in case of an unavoidable absence. Attendance should be taken and recorded for each meeting.
- The Committee should thoroughly review and investigate all accidents that have occurred since the last meeting.
- All safety inspection items identified in the facility inspection document should be reviewed and corrective action assigned.
- The Committee should develop programs that encourage employees to work safely at all times.
- A system for communicating with all employees on matters relating to the Committee's activities should exist.

The most effective meetings have complete management participation as these meetings frequently require decisions on business priorities and resource allocation and may have significant financial impact to the company.

Safety Committee Meeting Frequency

The Safety Committee should meet at least once a quarter, when possible immediately following a safety inspection. By adhering to this schedule, the Committee can facilitate follow-up on open items, and track new action items. The Committee should document and distribute proceedings from the Safety Committee meeting, providing visibility throughout the company and ensuring that action items are attended to.

One of the major causes of an ineffective Safety Committee is the failure to hold meetings at regularly scheduled intervals. When a dealership fails to conduct meetings at regularly scheduled times it often fails to realize the potential gains in accident reduction and cost savings.

Accident and Incident Reviews

No safety incident should occur at a dealership without the Committee being informed and subsequently doing a root cause analysis of the incident. All accident incidents and near misses with associated information should be prepared prior to the Committee meeting. The Committee should thoroughly review and investigate all accident investigation reports, claim summaries, and loss analysis during each meeting.

Acting on KPA Safety Inspection Findings



Safety inspections should be performed on a regular basis, with written reports reviewed at the Committee meeting. All items identified should be reviewed and assigned to an individual on the Committee for follow-up corrective action. Deadlines should be established. Depending on the severity of the inspection finding, the deadline could be as little as one day, but generally should be no later than the next Committee meeting.

Prior corrective actions should be reviewed at subsequent meetings to determine the status of assigned corrective actions and compliance within the committed deadlines.

Focus on Improvement

It is important for the Committee to developing programs that encourage employees to work safely at all times. These may include implementing safety incentive programs, developing new environmental health and safety policies, accident prevention training, and the incorporation of employee suggestions.

Communication is Critical Throughout the Organization

An active communication program is a responsibility of the Committee. Communication is essential for a successful health and safety program, and can be in the form of specific training, memos, signage and employee participation and representation at the

meetings. Employees should have opportunities to freely and openly communicate to the Committee any environmental, health and safety issues or concerns. Initiatives designed around environmental health and safety can keep employees safe from the hazards of the workplace, and be a viable morale booster.

KPA, with over 20 years of experience as the nation's leading provider of on-site environmental health and safety management consulting services to dealerships, has established and administered literally hundreds of Safety Committee Programs for its clients. KPA's engineers can show you how to maximize the benefits of your Safety Committee. Your KPA representative will work with you to ensure that the guidelines described above are in place starting with your next scheduled Committee meeting.

For reprints of this article, questions about this topic or any environmental or safety matters, contact the KPA Marketing Dept. at 866-356-1735, or visit us online at www.kpaonline.com.