



Workplace health and safety

How to implement an effective safety policy
from an evidence-based management point of
view?

CQ Dossier | Evidence-based safety Mgmnt

The Author:

Dr. Annette Towler

Annette Towler was born in England and now lives in the United States. She has a PhD in Industrial and Organizational Psychology and has taught at several institutions. Annette has published in several journals, including Journal of Applied Psychology, Personnel Psychology, Human Resource Development Quarterly, and Organizational Research Methods. She worked in the public and private sector for many years, primarily as a management trainer.



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Executive summary

This CQ Dossier focuses on how to implement an effective safety policy. The dossier draws on safety research to propose a series of recommendations on how to implement such a policy. The dossier describes the key elements of an effective safety policy and then describes how best to implement these characteristics to create an effective [safety climate](#) for the organization. An effective safety policy is one that is valued by senior executives, middle management, and lower level employees. Without the commitment of everyone to an effective safety policy, the policy lacks meaning. However, there are several key actions that organizations can take to construct and implement an effective safety policy.

Demonstrate the organization's commitment to workplace safety

First, to construct a meaningful safety policy, it is important to make safety a company-wide value. One way to accomplish this is through prioritizing safety in the organization's mission statement. This first step shows that top management are committed to workplace safety. However, they must show commitment through both words and actions (Wallace, Popp & Mondore, 2006). While it is important to encourage employees to follow proper safety procedures, top management must also conduct a thorough investigation of workplace accidents to show commitment to the safety [mission](#).

Assess workplace risks and hazards

When conducting a job analysis, most human resource professionals create a job description along with a job specification that shows the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position (Robbins & Judge, 2016). Similarly, an organization needs to conduct a safety audit and analysis to assess hazards that are specific to the workplace ([OSHA](#)). This exercise is an organizational-level effort whereby top management give employees the opportunity to voice concerns regarding hazards. Because employees

are working in these conditions each day, they can provide insights on hazardous risks in the workplace. There are several types of workplace hazards that need to be assessed and distinguished from each other. They are: workplace hazards (building design/layout), activity hazards (machinery-related) and environmental hazards (air quality/health risks).

Create written guidelines for management and employees

Once the organization has conducted an analysis of workplace hazards, the organization can create guidelines for an effective safety policy. To create a climate that makes everyone accountable, job description and specifications must state specifically the issues and requirement regarding safety and health responsibilities. When guidelines are in writing, this ensures that everyone is accountable because safety is integral to HRM and the mission of the firm. Having written guidelines also reduces ambivalence and misinterpretation (Quick & Tetrick, 2003).

Develop and implement employee training on safety guidelines

Employee training and development is necessary for incumbents as well as new hires. It is important to train employees on any new changes in procedures and to provide refreshers to enable employees to stay up to date on safety procedures. Research shows that safety knowledge and safety motivation are related to safety performance behaviors (Christian, Bradley, Wallace & Burke, 2009). It is also important to develop trainees through providing feedback on their safety performance so they can improve on these issues. In addition, new safety risks may become present so it is important to have ongoing conversations with employees so they can inform management of any potential hazards. These types of ongoing conversations are part of an [effective communication](#) program that encourages open communication between management and employees regarding safety.

Gain management and employee commitment to safety

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the United States (OSHA) states that an [effective occupational safety program](#) should include Management commitment and employee involvement. Management can show commitment through motivating and encourage employees to adhere to safety practices. In addition, they can provide resources to employees to show their commitment to safety. Employee involvement allows workers to develop and express commitment to safety and health. This ensures that employees feel that they are part of the organization and the safety is part of the organization's mission.

Ensure worker participation

[OSHA](#) also discuss the importance of worker participation in implementing an effective safety policy. Worker participation means that workers are involved in establishing, operating, evaluating, and improving the safety policy. According to OSHA, workers should include all those at the worksite, including contractors, subcontractors, and temporary staff. Moreover, employees should be encouraged to participate in the safety program and feel comfortable providing suggestions or reporting safety concerns. To participate in the safety program, employees should have access to information to be effective.

Implement an effective safety policy through employee input

OSHA provide several suggestions on how to include employees at each stage of safety policy design and implementation. OSHA acknowledge that employee input is vital to improve the firm's ability to identify the presence and causes of workplace hazards. First, employees should be involved in developing the safety policy and in [setting goals](#), that are realistic, difficult yet attainable. Employees should report hazards and develop solutions for health and safety. Employees can analyze hazards in each step of routine and non-routine jobs, tasks, and processes, and define and document safe work practices. There are several tasks that appear to be management-focused but OSHA recommend that all employees be encouraged to participate in these activities,

including developing and revising safety procedures, conducting site inspections, and participating in incident and close/call investigations. Employees can also be involved in organizational training initiatives such as training new hires and implementing training programs.

Reward safety performance

It is also important that incentive programs are designed to encourage the reporting of injury and illness (OSHA). If they discourage reporting then hazards may remain undetected. Across rewards systems, employers should be cognizant that they reward employees based on effective safety [performance](#) so that there is a consistency between words and actions.

Conclusion

An effective safety policy should be implemented throughout the organization, involving both management and employees. An effective safety policy involves the participation of all who are involved in safety in the workplace. In addition, safety should be a priority in implementing training initiatives and reward packages.

Key take-aways

- An effective safety policy is valued by all
- Management must show commitment through both words and actions
- Organizations must Assess Workplace Risks and Hazards
- Communication must be open, clear and transparent
- Employees should be involved in all aspects of the safety policy
- Employee training is vital for a safety policy to succeed
- Incentives must be linked to safety practices

References

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