

# Get the Most Out of Your Safety Committee

It's time for the regular Tuesday morning safety committee meeting. Only half the members have shown up—and most of them wandered in late. When it seems like no one else is coming, you begin pulling the crumpled slips of paper from the safety suggestion box and start reading them. Another dull, unproductive safety meeting.

A safety committee is generally not a requirement in California. However, if you do have a safety committee, isn't it better that the time spent by that committee is productive and contributes to the success of your safety program?

Here are some ideas for using your safety committee to complement and strengthen your workplace safety efforts:

- **Safety planning:** If you don't already have a safety program, or you have one but need to update it, you can use your safety committee to help identify goals for the safety program and put together a plan to accomplish those goals. Since the goals have been developed with the participation of the safety committee, the members are more likely to feel they have a stake in the success of the safety program and assist with working toward those goals.
- **Policies and procedures:** Use your safety committee to develop safety-related policies and procedures. Since the safety committee is drawn from your workforce, these folks have hands-on knowledge of the jobs covered by these policies and procedures. This will help ensure that your safety policies and procedures make sense for the workers covered by them.
- **Safety management, evaluation, and review:** Your safety committee members can periodically review your safety program to keep it up-to-date and relevant with what's going on in your workplace. They can also evaluate whether and how well the safety program is functioning from an employee perspective.
- **Communication:** The safety committee can act as a conduit for safety communication from employees to management and vice versa. Also, if you establish your safety committee as a central clearinghouse for concerns and complaints, employees know where to take their concerns to have them addressed.
- **Safety training:** Above and beyond required training, safety committees can provide insight into additional training that would help workers perform their jobs more safely and effectively. Committee members can also help with determining how best to effectively deliver training (live, computer, hands-on, classroom, etc.).
- **Safety meetings:** Safety committee members can be invaluable in general employee safety meetings by encouraging participation, developing materials, suggesting meeting topics, and presenting at the meetings.

- **Hazard identification and control:** Safety committees, either in whole or in part, can perform regular safety inspections, investigate reports of hazardous conditions, review or assist in accident investigations, and audit inspections done by others or audit corrective actions for reported hazards to ensure that they have been done properly. Using the safety committee, especially if personnel are rotated through, not only provides a fresh set of eyes for identifying hazards, but also gives employees an added sense of ownership.
- **Motivation and incentive programs:** In order for an incentive program to work, the incentive has to be of value to the person receiving it. Employees on your safety committee can provide insight into what motivates your workers and what incentives they might find valuable—and, often, those incentives cost far less than anything you would have thought of on your own!

*Source: Cal/OSHA Compliance Advisor 12/10/08*