



SMALL BUSINESS AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION



**STEPS TO A
SAFER
WORKPLACE**

MEMIC
Partners for Workplace SafetySM

STEPS TO A
SAFER WORKPLACE **7**



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Introduction

The seven steps outlined on these pages will help you to meet your moral, legal and financial reasons for giving safety a prominent place in your workplace. These steps will give you the fundamentals for starting an effective and sustainable safety program.

As you will see, these steps need not be overwhelming or complicated. On the contrary, the best safety programs are straightforward and easy-to-follow. By communicating your philosophy toward safety, involving your employees and setting clear boundaries, you will find that not only is your workplace safer, it is also more productive.

If you already have a safety program in place, you can also benefit from the following pages. Benchmark your program against these steps.

Finally, this publication does not include the answers to all of your questions. In fact, it is simply a framework. If you have more safety questions, we are always willing to help you find the answer. Or if you have a program element that you think could help your fellow employers, please let us know. Call 1•888•887•8867.

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1.

Write a Company Policy Statement.

Develop a written statement
of safety policy.

If you are committed to a safe workplace, you must say so. By writing and disseminating a statement, you let your employees know that safety is a priority. This statement need not be long or involved, but it must clearly state your company's stance for safety.

EXAMPLE: It is the policy of XYZ Company to provide all employees with a safe, healthy and injury-free workplace. To ensure that a safe workplace is maintained, employees will observe all safety practices, rules, and standards throughout the workday. All accidents and injuries can be prevented by the monitoring and maintaining of a quality safety program.

For a more comprehensive example, contact MEMIC through our website at www.memic.com

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Make safety the first item on your agenda at all meetings.

When you put safety on the top of the agenda at meetings, it reinforces its prominence to your entire organization. The discussion does not need to be a long one. Simply the mention of it will assure that employees and managers remember it.

Hold all employees accountable by making safety a part of all performance evaluations.

Companies with good safety records make it clear to their employees that working safely is a requirement for employment. In other words, simply getting the job done is not enough: It must be done safely. These companies make safety a standard part of all employee evaluations. In fact, some companies begin this process before an employee is hired by making “the ability to perform tasks safely” a condition of hiring. Some companies even mention the safety requirement prominently in their “Help Wanted” ads.

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2.

Involve Your Employees.

Involve your employees in identifying and resolving safety problems.

Employees can begin to get involved from the very beginning of a safety program. They can perform inspections, train new employees in safety issues, and help to investigate accidents. This involvement will help to foster ownership of safety throughout your organization, not just from top management. If safety is owned by the entire group, it is far more likely to be sustainable.

Establish a safety committee.

If you think your business would benefit, establish a committee for safety. As an owner or manager, you should meet regularly with the committee or all employees, listen to suggestions, and act promptly. You don't necessarily need to be the chair of this committee, but you must be part of it. By sharing leadership, you may find that the committee will work harder to head off safety issues rather than waiting for management to act.

3.

Establish a Hazard Prevention Plan.

Identify safety hazards.

First, you must decide what your potential safety hazards are. A good place to start is with any injuries that have occurred. What kind of injuries? Where did they happen? Were there any common factors?

Establish a prevention plan.

Once you have documented the risks, it's time to make a plan to control each and every one. A prevention plan is simply a basic action plan. It should:

- Name the hazard
- Describe a change or alteration to be implemented
- Determine who is responsible for correcting or abating the risk
- Set a deadline for completion
- Provide funds (if necessary)
- Follow up to check

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Develop safety rules and a disciplinary system to deal with rule-breaking.

Once you have controlled potential risks, you must then work with employees to ensure that they understand and will do their part in creating a safe workplace. Written rules are important to set forth broad, easily understood guidelines. While some general rules are common sense to some, they must still be explicit to avoid any misunderstanding. Rules may include:

- A requirement that any unsafe condition or accident is reported immediately to a supervisor;
- The prohibition of illegal drugs, alcohol, firearms and horseplay in the workplace;
- A requirement that employees always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment such as hard-toe boots, hard hats, or safety goggles.

A progressive disciplinary system (Warning, Final Warning, Dismissal) should be established to deal fairly and effectively with those who endanger themselves or co-workers by breaking safety rules.

Develop safe work procedures for each type of job.

Once you have set out general safety rules, consider individual jobs to identify safe work practices that

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should be associated with each one. You might seek input from those who currently perform that job. Once procedures are established, make all employees who perform that function aware of them.

Develop an equipment maintenance program to prevent breakdowns.

Many breaches in safety can be attributed to mechanical breakdowns. While no equipment works perfectly all the time, planned maintenance can avoid frequent problems.

Provide personal protective equipment.

Determine what equipment is appropriate, whether it is hard-toe boots, hard hats, safety goggles, hearing protection or an ergonomic wrist rest. Then, make these available to your employees. Don't forget to make certain that the employee knows how to use this equipment correctly and how to maintain it.

Plan for emergencies such as fire or natural disasters.

You should have a plan for dealing with a fire, a flood, a medical emergency, or the potential for violence in your workplace. You hope that you'll never have to use these plans, but if something happens, you'll be better off having planned for it.

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4.

Provide Safety Training.

Make certain to train your employees about potential hazards associated with their job.

Training is a simple concept but it is too often ignored. An employee might think he or she can learn a job simply by watching another do it. Or they might think they could “figure it out” on their own. But if you want an employee to work safely, you must teach them how. Each job’s hazards as well as how to avoid them should be part of the training.

Provide safety training for all new employees and for any employee who switches jobs or takes on new tasks.

Even if they are experienced in the particular job, new employees should receive training in safe work practices to assure that they are aware of all potential hazards. (This training will often be a source of information for you, too. Experienced workers can relay information about safe work practices deployed with their past employers.) Don’t forget to train workers who are taking on new tasks.

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Encourage employee attendance at training workshops, or develop in-house programs.

Employees who attend training workshops can learn new skills to avoid injury. What's more is that a workshop reminds employees that safety is an important priority. MEMIC offers more than 20 different safety training programs. Contact your agent to find out about attending one. (See the list in the back of this publication for details.)

MEMIC, your local fire department, or state and federal organizations can help you to design your own programs. MEMIC also has a free library of videotapes that can be borrowed for your use. See the list in the back of this publication for details.

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5.

Review Your Workplace.

Conduct safety audits for continuous review and improvement. Your safety plan is in place. Your employees have been trained and they understand that a fair disciplinary system is in place. This is no time to rest. As with any plan, you must continuously review it to make certain that your plan is being carried out and that it is working. Safety audits are a good way to check. You may perform them yourself or have a member of your safety committee perform them. Any problems should be reported and corrected immediately. MEMIC can help by providing a sample of items to be inspected.

Carefully investigate any worksite accident to determine cause and corrective action.

Accidents occur for a reason. They are often an indication of a weakness in a safety program. Examine closely each incident or near-miss to make certain that the hazard is being addressed as completely as possible.

6.

Keep Records.

In order to help you maintain your safety program, it is important to keep records of your actions. You should:

- Take minutes at safety committee meetings.
- Keep notes of weekly safety talks.
- Make records of all inspections and audits.
- Document regular maintenance.
- Maintain OSHA form No. 200, which will also help track any accident trends.
- Make note of all safety training activities.
- Document all aspects of on-the-job accidents.

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7.

Manage Injuries to Get Workers Well and Back to Work.

Predetermine a medical provider from MEMIC's preferred provider list.

Before you ever have an injury at your workplace, you can do something that will serve you and your employees well should an injury occur: Choose a MEMIC preferred provider. MEMIC has developed a network of hundreds of medical providers who focus on occupational injuries. These professionals help get your worker well again and back to work promptly. That helps you to get your worker back on the job while reducing the ultimate cost of the injury.

Establish a procedure for quickly filing the first report of injury and wage statements: **Call 1-800 MEMIC WC.**

Should an injury occur, it is important to report it to MEMIC as soon as possible. We will get our dedi-

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cated case manager to work, assuring that your worker gets prompt and appropriate treatment. Prompt reporting of injuries will also assure that your injured employees get the benefits they deserve on time.

After 1998, prompt reporting of injuries will not only be a good idea, it will be the law in Maine. New regulations require that reports be made within ____ of the injury.

Stay involved with your employee and his or her medical treatment.

It is important for you to stay involved with your employee in the event of an injury. Not only is it important for you to show your concern for your injured workers, but you will also make them understand that you are interested in having them back at work as soon as they are able. Often when an employee is out of work due to an injury, he or she feels forgotten and is demonized for being absent. By staying involved, you will keep the lines of communication open and may avoid a future dispute.

Develop a return-to-work and light duty program as necessary.

Before an injury happens, it is important to have a strategy in place to get a worker back on the job. Part of this strategy is a light duty (or alternative duty) program. An employee may need to make incremental steps back to work. It is important that there are jobs and processes already in place to help these workers.

For more information, including how you can attend one of MEMIC's
detailed "Seven Steps to a Safer Workplace"
workshops, call your agent or MEMIC at 1 • 888 • 887 • 8867

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