



# Safety at Your Workplace is an Attitude

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OSHA requires that employers have a plan for providing a safe and healthful workplace for their employees. Individual employers call their plans by many names. Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP), Safety Policies and Procedures, the Safety Plan, the Safety Manual, the Code of Safe Practices, and the Safety and Health Plan are just a few of the names used. These plans will include many elements such as communications, inspections, training, and hazard correction. The point is there is suppose to be a plan at your workplace.

Communications is one of the most important parts of the plan. If no one knows about the plan or no one talks about safety, then it is hard to be safe. You have to be told about the plan and your role in it. This means it has to be communicated to you in a way you can understand. If it is in written form you need to have the chance to read and understand it.

There should be a person in charge of the plan. This person should be known to all employees, and they should be accessible.

Employees need to be told about hazards and dangers in the workplace, and how to eliminate or minimize those hazards. The communications needs to go two ways. Employees must have a way to tell their employers of new or previously unrecognized hazards or if they do not understand any part of the company's plan. There also must be a method of anonymously reporting hazards or accidents without fear of losing your job.

The plan should layout the policies and procedures for doing your job, dealing with hazards, and what to do in the case of an accident. These would include when and where an employee must use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like safety glasses, gloves, or protective clothing. It may include rules concerning the use of bicycles, speed limits on the company property, or which employees may operate which equipment. It will include what step to take for reporting problems. Tool box talks, manuals, training, safety bulletins, and a safety committee can all be part of a company's communications plan.

Training is also part of a plan. Depending on your employer, training can start from the very basics of how to safety perform a task to advanced skills for safety operating a piece of

equipment. The training can include traditional classroom sessions, hands-on practice, or computer training. If you are uncomfortable doing some task or are being asked to do something new, there should be a way to get training.

There should be protocols for the inspection of workplaces and the correction of any problems found. The protocols should include scheduled inspections as well as continuous practices. Procedures for taking equipment out of service, repairing the equipment, and/or replacing it should also be spelled out.

The plan is suppose to include methods to ensure compliance by employees. These include mandatory trainings, incentive programs, and disciplinary actions.

Accident investigation is another integral part of the plan. Many companies have seen the economic value of including "near miss" investigations as part of accidents. The reason to have this as part of the plan is to learn from incidents. An incident that causes an injury or, hopefully just misses causing an injury, can be used to keep that or a similar set of circumstances from happening again. Using the employer's protocols, safety professionals, and employee's professionalism, solutions can be found and implemented to prevent hazardous incidents in our workplaces.

Within a Safety Plan there will be sub-plans. An Emergency Fire Plan, a High Angle Rescue Plan, a Hazardous Communications Plan, a Chemical Spill Plan, or a Blood or Bodily Fluid Clean Up Plan are a just a few of the possible sub-plans. Sub-plan will be much more specific on how to deal with particular problems. The sub-plan may also be different for different employees. An Emergency Fire Plan for most employees may say: "Calmly exit the building. Go to nearest phone, and call and report the fire. Meet at East corner of parking lot for instructions." A small group of employees may have been given additional training in fighting fires. Their Emergency Fire Plan would instruct them on how to proceed.

While having a plan is suppose to happen, we all know that they do not always exist, or they are implemented to varying degrees of effectiveness. One company may be on top of their safety program and have a safety person specifically assigned to your show. Another company may never have heard of OSHA. You can have a plan for yourself and your sisters and brothers. Remember, safety at your workplace is an attitude.