

Safety Committee Benefits and Pitfalls

The safety committee is the group which designs and implements programs, solves problems, and acts as a monitoring body for safety. The committee acts as a consultant to elected officials by identifying problems and recommending solutions.

In many counties, the safety committee is the energetic group that acts as the spark to activate interest and participation in the safety program from all levels of management and frontline employees. Through the safety committee activities, the message is communicated that the employees are the most valuable resource that the county has. As such, management is interested in protecting that most valuable asset.

The benefits of a safety committee are numerous. Some of the most **common benefits** include the fact that a safety committee can:

- Provide a forum for problem solving that can withstand changes in management and personnel assignments without losing overall focus and direction.
- Provide supervisors and managers with a resource to turn to when they are faced with safety problems that they might not have the time or technical expertise to deal with effectively.
- Involve more people in the overall safety and health management of the company.
- Mobilize and get people working together who may not have had previous business reasons to work together, thereby helping to open up lines of communication that may not have existed before.

Although safety committees are usually positive forces for safety in a county, they are still subject to setbacks

and obstacles that can hamper their work. With the responsibilities of the committee come the same types of problems that plague many organizational efforts. Some of the **common pitfalls** that affect safety committees include:

- Unclear or poorly defined safety committee goals.
- Lack of a clearly stated mission for the safety committee.
- Failure to communicate the mission of the safety committee to managers, supervisors and employees.
- Inattentiveness to employee feedback.
- Becoming overwhelmed by the number of problems uncovered by the committee.
- Failure to provide adequate training and guidance to the safety committee to allow them to complete their work.

There are a wide range of potential trouble spots for committees but, with attention to its safety objectives and periodic reassessments of activities and results, a safety committee can avoid these pitfalls.

What This Means For Counties

Safety committees can play a key role in the safety structure of a county. An active and effective safety committee whose membership and functions reflect the county's size, complexity, and operating exposures can significantly improve safety by instituting programs and providing support that helps to reduce accidents, injuries, and illnesses.

For more information, contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.