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Self-Inspection Program

Loss Control Bulletin

A self-inspection program is a key part of an employee safety program. The goal of a self-inspection program is to identify and correct safety hazards before an accident or employee injury to occurs. An effective program extends from top management to front-line workers and daily, weekly, and monthly components.:

Daily:

Each employee has the daily responsibility of inspecting their own work area at the start of their shift. The front-line worker should inspect their tools and equipment and make sure their area is clean. They should report defective tools and unsafe conditions to their supervisor for correction. When passing through the production areas maintenance staff, supervisors, and middle management should look for unsafe conditions and actions. When unsafe conditions or actions are observed, corrective action should be taken and documented.

Weekly:

Plant managers, warehouse managers, shipping/receiving managers, and other department heads should tour their areas of responsibility. They should observe work areas for unsafe conditions and actions and make contact with their employees. This inspection shows middle management support for the self-inspection program.

Monthly:

The monthly inspection is more planned and thorough. It should be consistently conducted on the same day, such as the first Tuesday of the month. A consistent inspection schedule allows those involved to anticipate the inspection date and make sure they are available. Pick a time of day for the inspection that will permit thorough worker observation with minimal work interruption.

The formal, monthly inspection can be led by the Safety Director and involve the Safety Committee members as the inspection team. Seek representation from production, supervision and safety in the team. The inspection team should include representation form production, supervision, and safety. Upper management should also be involved by providing inspection authority to correct identified safety hazards. The inspection team should consist of four members or fewer, and each member should be assigned (spokesperson, note taker, point person to follow up hazard correction recommendations, etc.). The team members can separate and have each person inspect a separate area of the facility, or they can work together to complete the inspection. The key is to cover all areas, even those remote areas with little employee traffic.

Preparation for the Self-Inspection Process:

1. Train new Safety Committee members on the inspection process. Review the purpose of the inspection: to identify and correct unsafe conditions and unsafe acts to prevent accidents and injuries. New inspectors will commonly focus on the physical environment such as blocked exits, unguarded machinery, or housekeeping issues. These are unsafe conditions. It is important that inspectors also watch for unsafe employee actions, such as awkward lifting positions, not wearing required personal protective equipment, or using a defective tool. Consider having the Safety Committee members view a safety DVD on the inspection process. This can help them understand what to look for as the building is toured.
2. Plan the inspection by reviewing the building layout and determine the order of the areas to be covered. This helps ensure all areas are inspected and eliminates back tracking.
3. Review prior inspection reports to follow up on past recommendations. Accomplishing corrective action is a key point of the inspection process. Follow up on all outstanding recommendations to resolution.
4. Review recent accident reports for the different departments being inspected. Determine if the accident investigation process resulted in implementing corrective actions.

5. Dress accordingly. Wear the required personal protective equipment (PPE) for each department inspected. Understand the inspection team is being watched by the employees. Inspectors not wearing the right PPE can diminish the importance of department-required safety equipment.

Documentation:

The monthly inspection should be documented. A self-inspection checklist provides guidance on what to look for, as well as a place to document identified safety hazards. The inspection team should review past inspection checklists to assure recommended corrective actions were implemented. It is critical that identified safety hazards are corrected. Employees will value an inspection process that improves the safety of their work place. Conversely, failing to correct identified hazards degrades the value of the inspection.

Sample self-inspection checklists are available from several sources including OSHA, internet searches, and Umialik Insurance Company. Customizing the checklist to your facility is highly recommended. Some equipment requires detailed inspection beyond the capability of the self-inspection team. Items such as major machinery, cranes, hoists, and fire prevention equipment (including sprinkler systems, fire alarms, and fire extinguishers) require service at set intervals by qualified service personnel. The self-inspection team can look at the condition of this equipment and notify management if possible issues are found. However, management needs to schedule service with the qualified service personnel.

Implementing Corrective Action:

Prompt action should be taken to correct safety hazards identified during the self-inspection process.

Follow these steps to implement correction:

1. If possible, correct hazards immediately upon discovery. Discuss the hazard with the employee(s) working in the area, seeking input in corrective action. This open approach can result in some easy to implement solutions.
2. Involve management responsible for the area, and inform them of the hazard. This helps prevent recurrence of the same issue. If greater authority is needed, seek out top management that is supporting the self-inspection program.
3. Document safety hazards that cannot be corrected immediately for review with upper management. List these conditions in order of importance in the inspection report. This helps get the most important issues addressed first. Suggest a corrective action that will address each condition being identified. If possible, include a date when the hazard can be corrected if possible.
4. Management should advise the inspectors on the status of recommendations, and provide an action plan addressing the issues (or reasons no action will be taken).
5. Management should communicate with department employees when identified hazards cannot be addressed. Providing an explanation helps with the integrity of the self-inspection process. Other solutions may need to be sought (e.g., use of personal protective equipment, other administrative controls).

The self-inspection process is an integral part of an employee safety program. In time employees will become involved in identifying and correcting minor safety hazards right away. They will alert Safety Committee members to bigger hazards for assistance. This results in increased morale and a better safety culture.

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General Industry Safety and Health Checklist

Location: Date:

Department: Name:

Check the area when hazards are observed. Describe the hazard, identify the location, and recommend correction.

Building and Premises

- [ ] Walking-working surfaces
- [ ] Illumination
- [ ] Stairs, stairways
- [ ] Ladders, scaffolds
- [ ] Ventilation
- [ ] Life safety
- [ ] Fire suppression equipment
- [ ] Electrical wiring and equipment
- [ ] Boilers, heating, and cooling equipment
- [ ] Pressure vessels - piping
- [ ] Elevators - hoisting equipment
- [ ] Sanitation
- [ ] Medical facilities
- [ ] Other

Equipment and Operations

- [ ] Material handling
- [ ] Portable hand and power tools
- [ ] Machine guarding
- [ ] Material storage
- [ ] Surface preparation, finishing, and preservation
- [ ] Personal protective equipment
- [ ] Welding, cutting, heating, and brazing
- [ ] Other

Environmental Controls

- [ ] Noise
- [ ] Dusts, fumes
- [ ] Vapors, gases
- [ ] Liquids
- [ ] Exhaust ventilation
- [ ] Confined spaces
- [ ] Water pollution
- [ ] Atmospheric conditions
- [ ] Outside general conditions

Comments and recommendations: