

Department Safety Committees

To comply with state injury and illness prevention statutes, the campus requires every department to have a safety committee. This Fact Sheet will tell you what department safety committees do and how to start them.

What is a department safety committee?

A safety committee is a key piece of your department's safety program and an important part of the campus's overall safety structure. Here are some of the actions a safety committee can take in a department:

- Serve as a forum for department employees to report and discuss unsafe working conditions.
- Identify employee needs for safety training and schedule training sessions accordingly.
- Assist department management in prioritizing actions to address safety concerns.
- Keep current information available and accessible on any potentially hazardous materials the department may be storing and using. Be sure to have the latest Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs).
- Disseminate information about requirements concerning workplace health, safety, and environmental protection.
- Help maintain the chemical inventory.
- Ensure the department's written Injury & Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) is kept current and that all employees receive documented training on its contents.

Safety committee meetings

The law requires that safety committees meet at least quarterly and have minutes recorded and kept on file for at least one year. Meetings should include the following activities:

- Setting schedules for regular inspections of work spaces and reviewing inspection findings.
- Reviewing recent accidents; establishing or reviewing preventive measures and any correction deadlines.
- Addressing safety suggestions or complaints.
- Reviewing and investigating reports of hazardous conditions and coordinating corrections.
- Submitting suggestions to department management for safety program improvements.
- Developing and maintaining a system to communicate with others in the department regarding safety issues, such as with posters, fliers, or suggestion boxes.

Safety committee membership

Usually, a committee of four to ten members is a good working size. Members should represent all major work groups within the department, including:

- Faculty/principal investigators
- Management and other administrative staff
- Technical personnel
- Student employees (where appropriate)

Individuals with some previous health and safety knowledge, experience, or interest are good candidates for committee membership. Every person in a department should be familiar with his or her safety committee representative.



The campus safety structure

Besides the safety committee, there are several other vital links in the campus safety structure:

- **Building Committee:** This body addresses common safety and emergency response concerns in multi-department buildings.
- **Building Coordinator:** A resource for facility-related safety concerns and a building's liaison to the campus emergency response network.
- **Department Safety Coordinator:** Helps coordinate health and safety measures and is the liaison for receiving and disseminating safety information for the department.

These resources, plus the department safety committee, interact to create and maintain a healthy and safe workplace on campus.

Safety committee checklist

Please use the following checklist to measure the effectiveness of your safety committee. Please call EH&S with any questions.

- Meets regularly, but not less than quarterly.
- Prepares meeting minutes, including the safety and health issues discussed at the committee meetings, and makes them available to the affected employees.
- Maintains minutes for at least one (1) year.
- Reviews the results of all departmental work site inspections.
- Reviews investigations of occupational accidents and of the causes of incidents resulting in occupational injury, occupational illness, or exposure to hazardous substances. When appropriate, the committee submits suggestions to management for the prevention of future incidents.
- Reviews investigations of alleged hazardous conditions brought to the attention of any committee member.
- Conducts its own inspection or investigation, when appropriate, to assist in remedial solutions.
- Submits recommendations to management assisting in the evaluation of employee safety suggestions.
- The workable size for a safety committee is 4 to 10 members. Large departments may choose to have multiple committees to represent specific divisions or work units.
- All major work groups should be represented and by at least as many non-supervisory personnel as supervisors.

NOTE: the committee may be asked by Cal/OSHA to verify that corrective measures for cited violations have been implemented.

How EH&S can help

Call the Office of Environment, Health & Safety at 642-3073 for more information and assistance in establishing or reinvigorating a department safety committee. Existing and new committees are also welcome to call for advice or reference materials or to enlist the help of EH&S staff to address a specific concern. EH&S staff are also available to attend safety committee meetings.

