

# SAFETY COMMITTEE

## Resource Handbook



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## Introduction

# SAFETY COMMITTEES: A TOP TOOL FOR WORKPLACE SAFETY

An active and engaged safety committee is one of the best tools employers have to reduce employee injuries. Made of up of representation from across an organization's departments and leadership, a safety committee can:

- Recommend solutions and take actions to address workplace hazards.
- Open lines of communication.
- Grow a positive safety culture within the organization.

Since 1992, Minnesota employers with more than 25 workers are required by law to have a joint labor and management safety committee.

The committee must meet regularly and review safety concerns within the organization. Those employers with 25 or fewer employees may find that a safety committee is worthwhile to reduce hazards and create a safe work environment.

This handbook:

- Outlines Minnesota regulations for safety committees.
- Provides recommendations for effective committee structure.
- Details activities committees can perform to enhance safety within their organizations.

The four sections of this handbook help employers start a committee or improve the performance of an existing safety committee.

1. **Safety Committee Compliance:** Details Minnesota statutes and rules regarding safety committees.
2. **Safety Committee Framework:** Outlines the fundamentals of developing and maintaining an effective safety committee.
3. **Safety Committee Activities:** Reviews tasks an effective safety committee undertakes to minimize losses.
4. **Safety Committee Evaluation:** Identifies hurdles a safety committee may face and offers solutions to overcome them. A self-evaluation helps determine the performance of the committee.

The more visible and active a safety committee is, the more positive an impact it can have on reducing workplace hazards and protecting fellow employees from injury. MCIT members are not alone in their attempt to create and support safety committees. This and other no-cost tools, such as “Safety Culture: Techniques for Building Positive Organizational Change,” from MCIT are at a committee’s fingertips at [MCIT.org](http://MCIT.org). MCIT loss control consultants are also available to work with members’ committees at no cost. Reach consultants toll-free at **1.866.547.6516**.

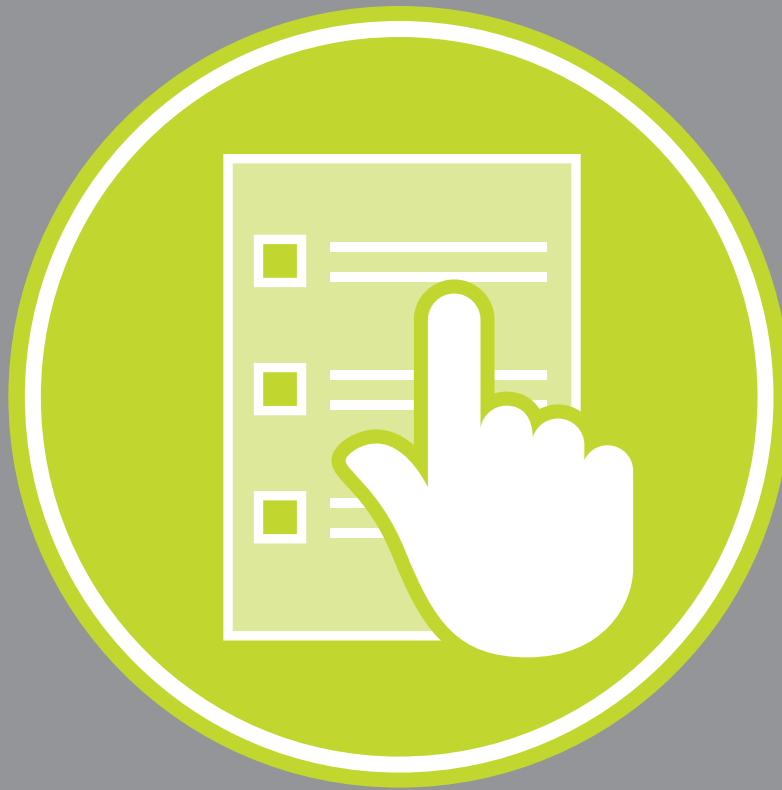


## Encourage Positive Safety Culture for More Impact

Although creating and maintaining an active and effective safety committee is important for an organization’s workplace safety efforts, fostering a positive safety culture throughout the organization can do even more.

The MCIT publication “Safety Culture: Techniques for Building Positive Organizational Change” complements the information provided in this safety committee handbook. The safety culture publication is particularly useful for safety committees and others in an organization to promote a positive safety culture.

Members can download a copy at [MCIT.org/work-wisely/](http://MCIT.org/work-wisely/) and view other items to help foster a positive safety culture. MCIT loss control consultants are also available to assist members at **1.866.547.6516**.



## Chapter 1

# SAFETY COMMITTEE COMPLIANCE

Safety committees are not just a good idea to promote workplace safety; they are the law for many employers. Several statutes and administrative rules apply to safety committees in Minnesota. It is important for employers and safety committee members to understand them and adhere to their provisions, but complying with the law is just the first step in establishing an effective safety committee.

# LAWS, RULES REGARDING SAFETY COMMITTEES\*

Employers and safety committee members should understand the laws and rules about safety committees so as to meet these minimum requirements for the committee. Employers and the committee should go beyond these requirements to create a stronger committee and safer workplace.

## Minnesota Statutes, Section 182.676 Safety Committees

Every public or private employer of more than 25 employees shall establish and administer a joint labor-management safety committee. Every public or private employer of 25 or fewer employees shall establish and administer a safety committee if:

- The employer has a lost-workday case incidence rate in the top 10 percent of all rates for employers in the same industry; or
- The workers' compensation premium classification assigned to the greatest portion of the payroll for the employer has a pure premium rate as reported by the workers' compensation rating association in the top 25 percent of premium rates for all classes.

A safety committee must hold regularly scheduled meetings unless otherwise provided in a collective bargaining agreement. Employee safety committee members must be selected by employees. An employer that fails to establish or administer a safety committee, as required by this section, may be cited by the commissioner. A citation is punishable as a serious violation under Section 182.666.

The commissioner may adopt rules necessary to implement this section.

## Chapter 5208 Department of Labor and Industry: Safety Committee Rules and AWAIR Classification List

### 5208.0010—APPLICABILITY

Every employer required by Minnesota Statutes, Section 182.676 to establish and administer a joint

labor-management safety and health committee, shall comply with the requirements of this part. If the size of the employer's workforce fluctuates, the employer is required to have a safety and health committee during the periods when more than 25 employees are employed.

### 5208.0020—LOCATION

If an employer that is required to establish a safety and health committee operates at more than one location, the employer shall establish a safety and health committee at each of its establishments at which 50 or more employees work. Multiple buildings in a reasonably close proximity engaged in a common enterprise, such as a college campus, may be considered to be a single establishment.

If work is performed at other locations, one or more centralized safety and health committee(s) representing the safety and health concerns of these other locations shall be established.

At a site where the employees of more than one employer work, a multi-employer committee may be used to satisfy the requirements for this part. If an industrywide safety committee has been established pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, it will satisfy the requirements of this part.

### 5208.0030—MEMBERSHIP

Employee representatives on safety and health committees shall be selected by the employee's collective bargaining agent if one exists. If more than one union has the right to select employee representatives for a safety and health committee, they shall collectively select the employee to enable each union to be represented on the committee.

If there is no collective bargaining agent, the employee representatives shall be selected by their peers. In the absence of volunteers, the employer may select the employee representatives.

The number of employee representatives on a safety and health committee shall equal or exceed the number of management representatives on the com-

\* The information in this section is excerpted from "An Employer's Guide to Developing a Labor/Management Safety Committee" from Minnesota OSHA, Workplace Safety Consultation, Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. Contact MNOSHA Workplace Safety Consultation at 1.800.657.3776 or osha.consultation@state.mn.us; or visit DLI.mn.gov.

mittee. Unless a collective bargaining agreement provides to the contrary, being a member of a safety and health committee is considered part of an employee's job, and time spent performing the duties of a safety and health committee member shall be considered as time worked.

### **5208.0040—SAFETY SURVEYS**

The safety and health committee for any employer that has a workers' compensation insurance experience modification factor of 1.4 or greater or has a workers' compensation premium rate of \$30 or more per \$100 of payroll assigned to the greatest portion of the payroll for the employer shall conduct workplace safety and health surveys at each of the employer's workplaces at least quarterly.

The safety and health committees of all other employers shall conduct workplace safety and health inspections as frequently as the committee considers necessary. On the request of a member of a safety and health committee, the commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry shall order the employer to have surveys conducted more frequently if the commissioner determines that to do so would result in a substantially safer workplace.

The employer shall keep a record of all hazards identified by and recommendations made by the safety and health committee.

### **5208.0050—OTHER DUTIES AND RECORDS**

The safety and health committee shall establish a system to obtain safety-related suggestions, reports of hazards and other information from all persons involved in the operations of their workplace. The safety and health committee shall review and make recommendations about the employer's occupational safety and health program and occupational safety and health records.

The safety and health committee shall review incidents resulting in work-related deaths, injuries and illnesses and make recommendations to prevent further occurrences. The committee's review of these incidents may be limited to a review of a report made by others who have investigated the incident.

The employer shall provide materials and facilities to the safety and health committee to enable it to perform its duties.

All safety and health committee recommendations or reports made to the employer shall be kept by

the employer for two years and shall be provided to the commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry on the commissioner's request.

### **5208.0060—DISCRIMINATION**

An employee who is discharged or otherwise discriminated against because the employee has reported a safety hazard to the safety and health committee is subject to the protection afforded under Minnesota Statutes, Section 182.699.

### **5208.0070—ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF COMMITTEE**

An employer may comply with this part by establishing a safety and health committee that is innovative or different in form or function if the committee satisfies the intent of Minnesota Statutes, Section 182.676.

A safety and health committee that is established under a collective bargaining agreement is considered to be in compliance with the requirements of this part and is exempt from the specific requirements of this part. A safety and health committee that is established as a part of a workplace accident and injury reduction program under Minnesota Statutes, Section 182.653 that has substantial employee involvement is considered to be in compliance with the requirements of this part and is exempt from the specific requirements of this part.

### **5208.0080—INSURER'S DUTIES**

An insurer that writes workers' compensation insurance in Minnesota shall have the capability to provide information on the operation of safety and health committees and hazard recognition for the employers it insures. This information must be provided within a reasonable time in a reasonable manner when requested by the insured.

For purposes of this part, an administrator under Minnesota Statutes, Section 79.251, Subdivision 4 who provides administrative services for policies or contracts of coverage under the assigned risk plan is considered an insurance company.

### **5208.0090—APPLICATION TO INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS**

For the purposes of this part, an employee includes an independent contractor engaged in construction activities and a person who has contracted with an independent contractor to supply construction services.

# STEPS FOR DEVELOPING A SAFETY COMMITTEE

The following four phases and basic steps are designed to provide employers with a systematic approach to plan, develop and implement a safety and health committee. A firm's organizational

structure, method of operation, management system and specific needs govern its approach and the number of steps in each phase.

**Management commitment, employee participation, planning, training, documentation, communication and follow up are all key elements in a safety committee's success.**

## PHASE 1: Lay the Groundwork

1. Become familiar with the rules (Rule 5208).
2. Determine whether your organization needs a safety committee (Rule 5208.0010).
3. Are multiple locations required (Rule 5208.0020)?
4. Identify location(s) needing safety committees (Rule 5208.0020).
5. Develop or modify the existing safety and health policy (Rule 5208.0070). *Note: This could be a project for the safety committee.*  
Topics or items to address:
  - ◆ Reasons for establishing a safety committee.
  - ◆ Need for employee cooperation and support at all levels of the organization, including management, supervisory and worker.
  - ◆ Brief general statement regarding roles, responsibilities and expectations of management, supervisors and workers.
  - ◆ Signature of board chair or administrator/executive director.
6. Communicate the organization's policy to all managers, supervisors and workers by means of memos, meetings, newsletters, bulletin boards, etc.
7. Identify, and communicate with managers, who will be involved with or affected by the safety committee. Let those people know the safety committee's purpose, when the safety committee will start and what will be expected of them to support the committee.
8. Begin educating employees through meetings, newsletters, memos, postings, etc. Let them know the safety committee's purpose, when the safety committee is active and what is expected of employees to support the committee. This education process will be ongoing.





## PHASE 2: Determine Safety Committee Membership

1. Upper management determines committee size.
2. Management identifies and talks to potential employer representatives regarding safety committee participation. Labor organizations conduct a similar process.  
  
Recommended safety committee participant characteristics are:
  - ◆ Dedication to preventing injury/illness incidents
  - ◆ Interest in serving
  - ◆ Good communication skills
  - ◆ Ability to see other viewpoints
  - ◆ Credibility
  - ◆ Ability to get things done
3. Appoint and notify employer representatives. Stagger terms (*see Chapter 2 for more details*).
4. Have employees elect their employee representatives or solicit volunteers. Consider education and promotion via newsletters, posters, memos, group meetings and personal encouragement.
5. Ensure all major work activities are represented.
6. Notify volunteers or elected employee representatives of acceptance as committee members.
7. Inform all employees, including management, of names of committee members. Ensure that supervisors are aware of time and compensation requirements (Rule 5208.0030).
8. Send rules and support information to safety committee members. Have them become familiar with content (Rule 5208).
9. Conduct introductory safety committee training for members and provide support materials. Training topics should include organization, operation, meeting methods and other topics to improve the committee's efficiency and effectiveness. MNOSHA Workplace Safety Consultation can recommend resources and provide other assistance.

## PHASE 3: Form Safety Committee and Hold Organizing Meetings

1. Organizers should become familiar with the characteristics of a successful safety committee.  
A good committee:
  - ◆ Is well organized.
  - ◆ Has clearly defined purposes.
  - ◆ Has realistic and measurable objectives and completion dates.
  - ◆ Knows the extent of its authority.
  - ◆ Follows established procedures.
  - ◆ Is supported by employer, the board, administration and management in terms of time, effort and money.
  - ◆ Clearly defines members' roles and responsibilities.
  - ◆ Seeks employee input.
  - ◆ Keeps well-documented minutes and notes.
2. Determine what is needed to develop and set up a safety committee:
  - ◆ Safety committee purposes and authority
  - ◆ Division of tasks into phases
  - ◆ Projected completion dates for each task and phase
  - ◆ Management's commitment, support and involvement
  - ◆ Communication methods
  - ◆ Position within the organizational structure
  - ◆ Training needs and schedules
  - ◆ Tracking system to determine and evaluate progress
  - ◆ Safety committee organization
  - ◆ Reporting systems
  - ◆ Need for several meetings when organizing
  - ◆ Safety committee record keeping system
  - ◆ Follow-up activities
3. Hold safety committee organizing meetings:
  - ◆ Develop an agenda and send it to committee members three to five days before each meeting so that members can prepare.
    - Put a copy of the agenda in the committee file.
    - Post the agenda where employees will see it.
    - Have representatives review rules and agenda information prior to attending each meeting.
  - ◆ Discuss roles and responsibilities. (*See Chapter 2 for details.*)
  - ◆ Elect committee chair, vice chair and recorder.
  - ◆ Discuss the committee's purpose and operation (Rule 5208).
  - ◆ Write the safety committee policy and bylaws (*see Chapter 2 for details*). *Note: Accomplishing this may take several meetings.:*
    - It is important that the statement be signed by top management to indicate support.

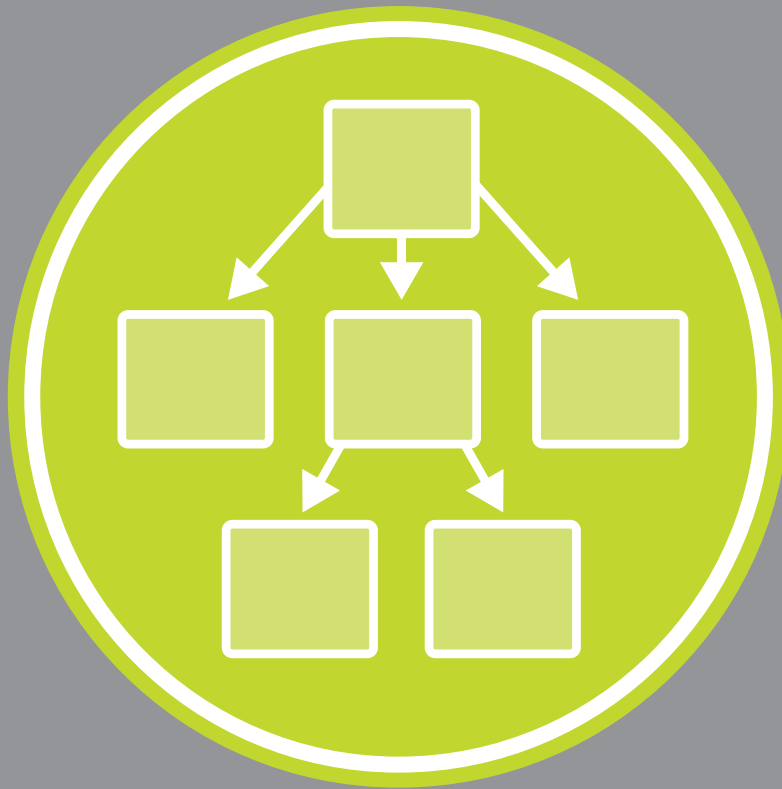
## PHASE 3: Form Safety Committee and Hold Organizing Meetings (continued)

- Be sure to communicate the policy to all levels in the organization.
- ◆ Set up safety committee meetings:
  - Monthly or quarterly schedule
  - Day of the week (Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday is recommended)
- Time of day (midmorning or mid-afternoon is recommended)
- Location (quiet atmosphere)

## PHASE 4: Conduct Regular Safety Committee Meetings

1. Committee chair sends agenda to members a few days before the meeting.
2. Conduct safety committee meeting:
  - ◆ Start on time.
  - ◆ Follow the agenda.
  - ◆ Take written minutes.
  - ◆ Set meeting management ground rules.
  - ◆ Discuss duties as required by law and as assigned by management.
  - ◆ Determine logistics:
    1. Schedule inspections.
    2. Determine inspection team members.
    3. Set reporting procedures.
  - ◆ Explain the committee's record keeping system.
  - ◆ Resolve issues and make written recommendations.
  - ◆ Assign individuals or teams to tasks and set completion dates.
- ◆ Confirm next committee meeting and topics.
- ◆ Post minutes to inform employees.
- ◆ Send minutes to each committee member.
- ◆ Remind member about:
  - Member roles and responsibilities.
  - The committee's authority.
  - The need for cooperation and contribution by management and employees.
  - Communication methods.
3. Train safety committee members about:
  - ◆ Workplace hazard identification associated with the organization's operations.
  - ◆ Accident and incident investigation principles.
4. Record all training given to safety committee members.





## Chapter 2

# SAFETY COMMITTEE FRAMEWORK

One of the first steps to ensuring an effective safety committee is to establish its framework. This includes codifying its purpose, organization, authority and procedures in a policy statement; writing the committee's bylaws; setting committee roles and responsibilities; and utilizing meeting agendas and an activity calendar. These tools work together to give structure and parameters to the committee and its activities so that members understand what they can and need to do.

# SAFETY COMMITTEE POLICY STATEMENT\*

**A policy statement for a safety committee is important because it sets up the general purpose, authority and functions of the committee.**

The policy statement serves as an operational guide for management, labor and safety committee members. Its length and complexity varies

depending on an organization's structure, operations, activities and needs. As the committee operates, it can return to this policy statement to ensure that it is operating as it should.

Below is a sample policy statement, and an organization should customize it and add details based on its operations and needs.

## Sample Policy Statement

### Introduction

[Organization name] is committed to preventing workplace injuries and illnesses among all employees. To prevent these losses, a joint management-labor safety committee will be established. Employee involvement in accident prevention and support of safety committee members and activities is necessary to ensure a safe and healthful workplace.

### Purpose

The purpose of our safety committee is to involve labor and management in a nonadversarial, cooperative effort to promote safety and health in the workplace. The safety committee will assist management and make recommendations for change.

### Organization

There shall be [number] employee and [number] management representatives. Employee representatives shall be volunteers or elected by their peers. If no employees volunteer or are elected, they may be appointed by management. Management representatives will be appointed.

Safety committee members will serve terms of at least [number] years. Committee membership terms will be staggered, so at least one experienced member is always serving on the committee.

### Extent of Authority

The safety committee advises management about safety and health issues in the workplace. All written recommendations from the safety committee will be submitted to management. Management will consider the recommendations and respond in writing to the safety committee within a reasonable time.

\* The information in this section is excerpted from "An Employer's Guide to Developing a Labor/Management Safety Committee" from Minnesota OSHA, Workplace Safety Consultation, Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. Contact MNOSHA Workplace Safety Consultation at **1.800.657.3776** or [osha.consultation@state.mn.us](mailto:osha.consultation@state.mn.us); or visit [DLI.mn.gov](http://DLI.mn.gov).

## Sample Policy Statement (continued)

### Functions

- ◆ Objectives and duties [add details]
- ◆ Management commitment to workplace safety/health [add details]
- ◆ Committee meetings and employee involvement [add details]
- ◆ Hazard assessment and control [add details]
- ◆ Safety and health planning [add duties]
- ◆ Accountability [add details]
- ◆ Accident and incident investigations [add details]
- ◆ Safety and health training [add details]
- ◆ Others as determined by the organization

### Recommendations

All written recommendations submitted to management shall:

- ◆ Be clear and concise.
- ◆ Provide reasons for implementation.
- ◆ List benefits.
- ◆ Include implementation costs and recommended completion dates.

### Procedures

The safety committee's procedures for fulfilling its role should include:

- ◆ Setting the meeting date, time and location.
- ◆ Electing the leadership positions (*see the section "Safety Committees Roles and Responsibilities"*).
- ◆ Setting the agenda.
- ◆ Record keeping.

Duties of each safety committee member must include:

- ◆ Reporting unsafe conditions and practices.
- ◆ Attending all safety and health meetings.
- ◆ Reviewing all accidents and near misses.
- ◆ Recommending ideas for improving safety and health.
- ◆ Working in a safe and healthful manner.
- ◆ Observing how safety and health is enforced in the workplace.
- ◆ Completing assignments given to them by the chairperson.
- ◆ Acting as a work-area representative in matters pertaining to health and safety.

### Summary

Only the planning and effective leadership of management and the safety committee can build a lasting safety and health program. The safety committee shall be a constructive entity, providing guidance and leadership in matters pertaining to the overall health and safety of the organization.

**Sincerely,**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature(s) of committee chair(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of administrator/board chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# SAFETY COMMITTEE BYLAWS\*

Bylaws state the safety committee's purpose, define its essential activities and describes how it conducts its regular business.

An organization's safety committee is not required to have bylaws, but they can give the committee stability as new representatives come on board and others leave.

Bylaws can be as simple or as complex as an organization wants to make them. They are usually organized in sections; each section defines a specific committee function, as in the example provided.

## What to Include in Safety Committee Bylaws

Function	Information to Include
<b>Name, purpose, goal, objectives</b>	Clearly and briefly state the committee's purpose, its goals and its objectives
<b>Membership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ State the number of representatives who serve on the committee</li> <li>◆ Describe how committee members are selected</li> <li>◆ State how long members serve</li> </ul>
<b>Officer and representative duties and responsibilities</b>	Describe duties and responsibilities of each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Chair</li> <li>◆ Vice chair</li> <li>◆ Recorder</li> <li>◆ Other representatives</li> </ul>
<b>Training</b>	State what representatives need to know to fulfill their responsibilities and describe how they will receive their training
<b>Meetings</b>	Define the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The schedule for regular committee meetings</li> <li>◆ Who must attend the meetings</li> <li>◆ The requirements for preparing and distributing the agenda and the minutes</li> <li>◆ The procedures for voting on committee decisions</li> </ul>
<b>Employee involvement</b>	State how the committee will involve employees in achieving a safe, healthful workplace: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Describe how employees should report hazards and unsafe work practices to the committee</li> <li>◆ Describe how employees can submit ideas for controlling or eliminating hazards</li> </ul>
<b>Incident investigation</b>	State the committee's role in investigating near misses and incidents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Describe how representatives will review incidents and near misses</li> <li>◆ Describe how the committee will report recommendations for controlling hazards to management</li> </ul>
<b>Workplace inspections/audits</b>	State how the committee will conduct regular workplace inspections/audits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Include the schedule for regular workplace inspections</li> <li>◆ Identify who will conduct the inspections</li> <li>◆ Describe how the committee will report hazard-control recommendations to management</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>	State how the committee will evaluate the organization's safety and health program and assess its activities

\* Excerpted from "Safety Committees for the Real World" by Oregon OSHA

# Sample Safety Committee Bylaws

## Name

The name of the committee is the ABC Safety Committee.

## Purpose

The purpose of the ABC Safety Committee is to bring all ABC employees together to achieve and maintain a safe, healthful workplace.

## Goal

The goal of the ABC Safety Committee is to eliminate workplace injuries and illnesses by involving employees and managers in identifying hazards and suggesting how to prevent them.

## Objectives

The ABC Safety Committee has four objectives:

1. Involve employees in achieving a safe, healthful workplace.
2. Promptly review all safety-related incidents, injuries, accidents, illnesses and deaths
3. Conduct regular workplace inspections, identify hazards and recommend methods for eliminating or controlling hazards.
4. Annually evaluate ABC's workplace safety and health program and recommend improvements to management.

## Representatives

The ABC Safety Committee will have 10 voting representatives. Five of the representatives will represent employees, and five will represent management. Employee representatives can volunteer, or their peers can elect them. Management representatives will be selected by management.

Each representative will serve a continuous term of at least one year. Terms will be staggered so that at least one experienced representative always serves on the committee.

The ABC Safety Committee will have two officers: chair and vice chair. One officer will represent labor, and one officer will represent management.

## TERMS OF SERVICE

Chair and vice chair will each serve a one-year term.

### DUTIES OF THE CHAIR

- ◆ Schedule regular committee meetings.
- ◆ Develop written agendas for conducting meeting.
- ◆ Conduct the committee meeting.
- ◆ Approve committee correspondence and reports.
- ◆ Supervise the preparation of meeting minutes.

### DUTIES OF THE VICE CHAIR

- ◆ In the absence of the chair, assume the duties of the chair.
- ◆ Perform other duties as directed by the chair.

## ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

The election of a new chair or vice chair will be held during the monthly committee meeting before the month in which the incumbent's term expires.

If the chair or vice chair leaves office before the term expires, an election will be held during the next scheduled safety committee meeting; the elected officer will serve for the remainder of the term.

## Sample Safety Committee Bylaws Continued

### Training

New representatives will receive training in safety committee functions, hazard identification and accident investigation procedures.

### Meetings

#### MONTHLY SCHEDULE

The ABC Safety Committee will meet the third Tuesday of each month, except when the committee conducts quarterly workplace safety audits.

#### ATTENDANCE AND ALTERNATES

Each representative will attend regularly scheduled safety committee meetings and participate in quarterly workplace safety audits and other committee activities. Any representative unable to attend a meeting will appoint an alternate and inform the chair before the meeting. An alternate attending a meeting on behalf of a regular representative will be a voting representative for that meeting.

#### AGENDA

The agenda will prescribe the order in which the ABC Safety Committee conducts its business.

The agenda will also include the following when applicable:

- ◆ A review of new safety and health concerns
- ◆ A review of all workplace near misses, accidents, illnesses or deaths occurring since the last committee meeting.
- ◆ A status report of safety and health concerns under review

#### MINUTES

Minutes will be recorded at each committee meeting and distributed by e-mail to all ABC employees.

The committee will submit a copy of the minutes to the ABC human resources office; the office will retain the copy for three years. All reports, evaluations and recommendations of the committee will be included in the minutes. The minutes will also identify representatives who attended the monthly meeting and representatives who were absent.

#### VOTING QUORUM

Six voting representatives constitute a quorum. A majority vote of attending representatives is required to approve all safety committee decisions. Issues not resolved by majority vote will be forwarded to management for resolution.

### Employee Involvement

The ABC Safety Committee will encourage employees to identify workplace health and safety hazards. Concerns raised by employees will be presented to the committee in writing; the committee will review new concerns at the next regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

#### SAFETY LOG

The committee will maintain a log of all employee concerns, including the date received, recommendations to management and the date the concern was resolved.



## Sample Safety Committee Bylaws Continued

### **RESPONSE**

The committee will respond to employee concerns in writing and work with management to resolve them. The committee will present written recommendations for resolving concerns to management. Within 60 days of receipt of the written recommendations, management will respond in writing to the committee indicating acceptance, rejection or modification of the recommendations.

### **Incident Investigation**

The ABC Safety Committee will review new safety- or health-related incidents at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Safety-related incidents include work-related near misses, injuries, illnesses and deaths. When necessary, the committee will provide written recommendations to management for eliminating or controlling hazards.

### **Workplace Safety Audits**

The ABC Safety Committee will conduct quarterly workplace safety audits of all organization facilities in March, June, September and December.

### **WRITTEN REPORT**

The committee will prepare a written report for management that documents the location of all health or safety hazards found during inspection. The report will recommend options for eliminating or controlling the hazards.

Within 60 days of receipt of the written report, management will respond in writing to the committee, indicating acceptance, rejection or proposed modification of the recommendations.

### **Evaluation**

The ABC Safety Committee will evaluate the organization's workplace safety and health program annually, and provide a written evaluation of the program to management.

The committee will also evaluate its own activities each December and use the evaluation to develop an action plan for the next calendar year.

# SAFETY COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Each member of the safety committee plays an important part in ensuring that the duties of the committee are fulfilled. To facilitate committee activities, the group should identify a chair person, vice chair and recorder. These roles are key to the committee with special responsibilities; however, each committee member should be committed to follow through on his or her assignments.

Noted below are the responsibilities of the safety committee chairperson, vice chair, recorder and members at large.

## Chairperson

- Prepare meeting agendas.
- Notify members of meeting.
- Conduct meeting.
- Review previous minutes and materials for meeting.
- Provide appropriate and timely follow up for recommendations developed by the committee.
- Serve as a communication liaison between the board and committee.

## Vice Chair

- Preside over meetings in the absence of the chairperson.
- Assist with development of the agenda.
- Assist with coordinating and directing committee and subcommittee activities.

## Recorder

- Record minutes of meeting.
- Distribute agenda and minutes to committee members.
- Post minutes for other employees.
- Assume chairperson's duties if required.

## All Committee Members

- Attend all safety committee meetings.
- Represent their departments in matters pertaining to health and safety.
- Listen to employee suggestions about safety and take action as appropriate.
- Report unsafe conditions and practices.
- Contribute ideas and suggestions for improvement of safety.
- Report all accidents or near misses.
- Work safely.
- Influence others to work safely.
- Assist with safety audits and contribute to other activities of the committee.



# MEETING AGENDAS AND ACTIVITY CALENDAR

A key to an effective safety committee is its agenda and calendar of events or activities. Without an agenda, meetings can become unfocused and important items could be forgotten. The events calendar is a way for the committee to determine and set its priorities for the year and to ensure that its required duties are carried out.

## Meeting Agendas

The agenda is a road map for each safety committee meeting. The chair should distribute it to members a few days before each meeting so members can prepare themselves with ideas, questions and information to share.

The committee may want to have standing items that are covered at each meeting. And the committee's calendar of events should inform discussion items.

## Calendar of Events

Annually the safety committee should determine its activities and initiatives for the year. Then set timelines for each item, creating a calendar of events or activities that also includes committee meetings (which are typically required at least quarterly). Based on these timelines, the committee should discuss and plan events and activities at the appropriate meetings.

Committees may want to consider national health and safety events to help determine some of their activities. For example, the committee may want to run a distracted driving awareness campaign to coincide with the national distracted driving awareness month in April or schedule a fire drill and distribute other fire safety information during fire safety month in October.

## Sample Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome by chairperson
2. Introduction of guests and self-introductions
3. Record attendance
4. Approval of minutes from previous meeting
5. Review old business issues and status of action items
6. New business
  - ◆ Review loss information (incidents/near misses)
  - ◆ Department updates and safety concerns
  - ◆ Review safety inspections since last committee meeting
  - ◆ Schedule next safety inspection
  - ◆ Plan coming safety training sessions/safety campaigns/OSHA compliance activities
  - ◆ Other
7. Set date, time and agenda for next safety committee meeting
8. Adjourn meeting



# Sample Safety Committee Activity Calendar

FIRST QUARTER								
JAN	FEB	MAR						
<i>Focus on Training</i>								
<b>Member vs. Member Walking Challenge</b>  <b>Radon Action</b>	<b>Committee Meeting</b> Feb. 11  <b>Employee Recognition</b>  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><i>CPR/ AED Training</i></div>	<b>Dept. Head Safety Meeting</b> March 8  <b>Begin Low Risk Dept. Inspections</b>						
<b>NEWSLETTER TOPICS:</b> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">1. Radon testing/safety</td> <td style="width: 50%;">4. Nutrition/cooking</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. How to save electricity</td> <td>5. Slip, trip and fall</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Health care consumer tips</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			1. Radon testing/safety	4. Nutrition/cooking	2. How to save electricity	5. Slip, trip and fall	3. Health care consumer tips	
1. Radon testing/safety	4. Nutrition/cooking							
2. How to save electricity	5. Slip, trip and fall							
3. Health care consumer tips								

SECOND QUARTER								
APR	MAY	JUN						
<i>Focus on Training</i>								
<b>Committee Meeting</b> April 8  <b>Annual Safety Training:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety Policy</li> <li>• Right to Know</li> </ul> <b>Tornado Safety</b>	<b>Household Hazardous Waste</b>	<b>Committee Meeting</b> June 10  <b>Annual Safety Training:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ergonomics and Back Safety</li> <li>• Emergency Action</li> </ul>						
<b>NEWSLETTER TOPICS:</b> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">1. Severe Weather Week</td> <td style="width: 50%;">4. Chainsaw safety</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Employee Assistance Program</td> <td>5. Household hazardous waste</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Click It or Ticket</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			1. Severe Weather Week	4. Chainsaw safety	2. Employee Assistance Program	5. Household hazardous waste	3. Click It or Ticket	
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2. Employee Assistance Program	5. Household hazardous waste							
3. Click It or Ticket								

THIRD QUARTER								
JUL	AUG	SEP						
<i>Safety Program Survey</i>								
	<b>Committee Meeting</b> Aug. 12	<b>Fire Safety</b>  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><i>Flu Shots</i></div>						
<b>NEWSLETTER TOPICS:</b> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">1. Defensive driving</td> <td style="width: 50%;">4. Safety program survey summary</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Flood safety</td> <td>5. Harassment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Distraction Free Driving Day</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			1. Defensive driving	4. Safety program survey summary	2. Flood safety	5. Harassment	3. Distraction Free Driving Day	
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2. Flood safety	5. Harassment							
3. Distraction Free Driving Day								

FOURTH QUARTER								
OCT	NOV	DEC						
<i>Collect Safety Award Nominations</i>								
<b>Committee Meeting</b> Oct. 14  <b>Committee Member Review</b>	<b>Annual Department Inspection Reminder</b>  <b>MCIT Loss Control Survey</b>  <b>Household Hazardous Waste</b>	<b>Committee Meeting</b> Dec. 9  <b>Safety Goals Review</b>						
<b>NEWSLETTER TOPICS:</b> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">1. Drive Safely to Work campaign</td> <td style="width: 50%;">3. Severe Weather Week</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Fire Safety Week</td> <td>4. Household hazardous waste</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>5. Safety forms</td> </tr> </table>			1. Drive Safely to Work campaign	3. Severe Weather Week	2. Fire Safety Week	4. Household hazardous waste		5. Safety forms
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2. Fire Safety Week	4. Household hazardous waste							
	5. Safety forms							

Source: Fillmore County



## Chapter 3

# SAFETY COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

An active and effective safety committee can be the hub that delivers an organization's safety program. A committee can undertake many activities that go a long way toward reducing employee injuries. These may include regular incident reviews, hazard inspection audits and safety program review. In addition, the safety committee can play a vital role in promoting workplace safety education and communication, which can make a positive impact on the organization's overall safety culture.

Keep in mind that as a committee adds or expands to its activities, the committee should assess the time and resources needed to carry them out and still achieve positive outcomes. For example, if an organization experiences a large number of incidents and near misses, the agenda could be filled solely with injury and near-miss review if the committee only meets quarterly. It may be difficult to do justice to that activity in addition to other tasks.

# REVIEWING INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

One of the main objectives of a safety committee is to prevent injuries and keep employees safe and healthy. An essential element of this is reviewing incident investigations. As noted in Minnesota Rule 5208.0050—Other Duties and Records: “The safety and health committee shall review incidents resulting in work-related deaths, injuries and illnesses and make recommendations to prevent further occurrences. The committee’s review of these incidents may be limited to a review of a report made by others who have investigated the incident.” Although not elaborated, it does show the importance of making incident review a standing part of each safety committee meeting.

## Analyze Incidents Regularly

A review of each employee incident that occurred in the period since the last committee meeting should include details about the circumstances of the injury and any pertinent details derived from an incident investigation. This should also include the cause(s) of the incident and recommendations to prevent future similar incidents.

Often the investigation may not dig deep enough to uncover the true root cause(s) of the injury nor offer recommended solutions. These should be the focus of discussions within the safety committee. Although the facts of the incident should be discussed, personal information must be redacted to ensure the committee is not violating Minnesota data privacy laws. (See the section “Individual Privacy and Workplace Incident Investigations” for more about this.)

The committee chair should come to each meeting prepared with redacted summaries of employee injuries and the related investigation

to date. This may require establishing a process to retrieve this information from the organization’s workers’ compensation representative on a timely basis before each meeting.

If discussions within the meeting lead to a potential solution, the committee should write a formal recommendation and forward it to the proper authority. The committee should also establish a method of tracking the recommendations to ensure proper follow through.

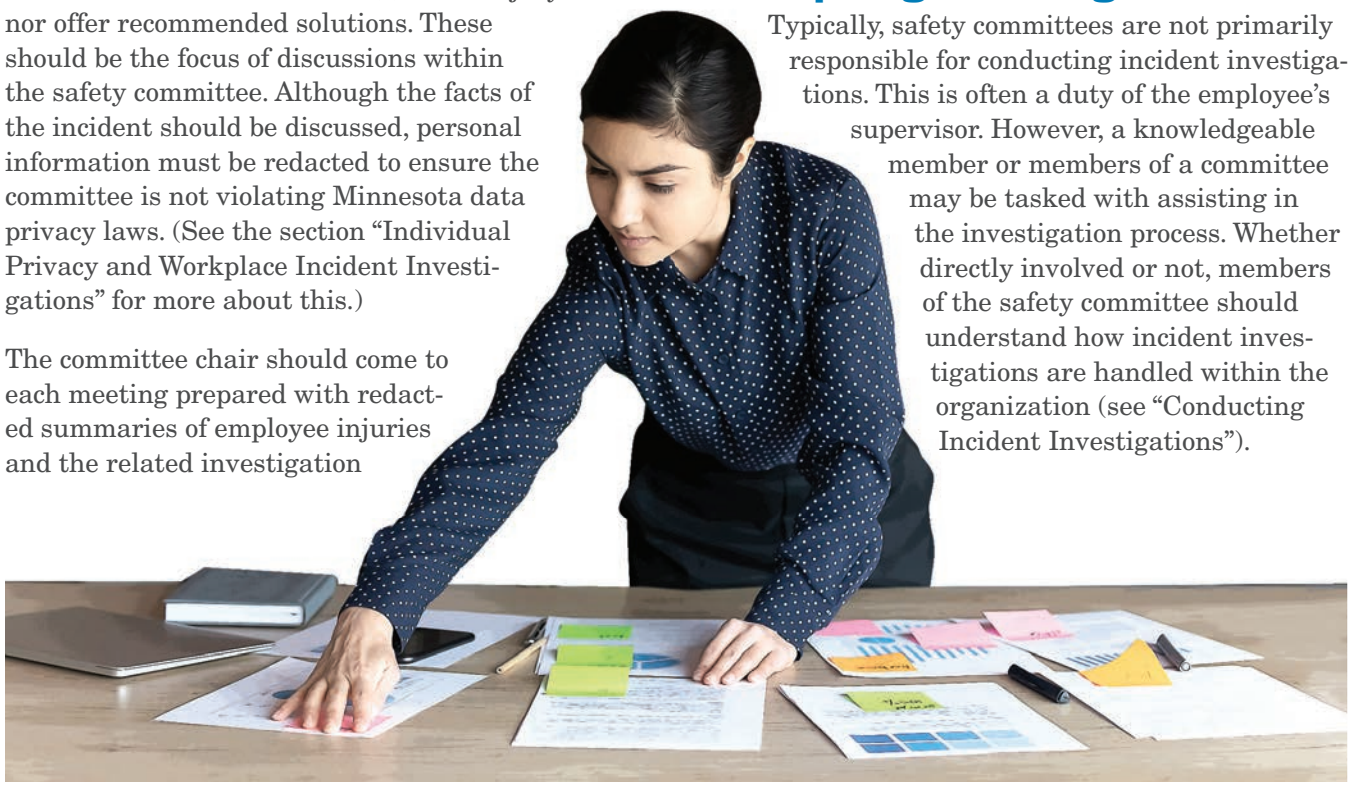
## Review Near Misses, Too

Employee injuries should always be reviewed at each safety committee meeting, but the committee should also consider examining near misses and nonemployee injuries. These incidents could just as easily have become an injury or an injury to an employee. Often the difference between a near miss or an injury is one of chance.

The process for investigating near misses and non-employee injuries involves much of the same process as investigating employee incidents.

## Participating in Investigations

Typically, safety committees are not primarily responsible for conducting incident investigations. This is often a duty of the employee’s supervisor. However, a knowledgeable member or members of a committee may be tasked with assisting in the investigation process. Whether directly involved or not, members of the safety committee should understand how incident investigations are handled within the organization (see “Conducting Incident Investigations”).



# Conducting Incident Investigations

Minnesota OSHA requires employers to develop a workplace accident and injury reduction (AWAIR) program. One component of AWAIR is a plan for how workplace incidents will be investigated and how corrective action is determined. Investigation should take place promptly after affected employees are given necessary medical treatment and the work area is safe.

## INVESTIGATORS

Often the investigation is handled by the injured employee's supervisor. Supervisors understand the relevant work, equipment and procedures that may come into play.

Those responsible for investigations should be properly trained in the following areas:

- ◆ The incident investigation policy and its purpose
- ◆ Standards and guidelines for investigations and reports
- ◆ Causes and controls of incidents
- ◆ Responses to incidents—who, when and what functions are to be performed
- ◆ Witness interviewing techniques and evaluations

- ◆ Evidence collection and examination
- ◆ Root cause analysis and determination of contributing causes
- ◆ Preparation and review of reports
- ◆ When, where and how to seek additional assistance if needed

## THE INVESTIGATION

Incident investigations should be fact finding, not fault finding. They should go beyond the immediate incident observations and delve deeper to find factors that contributed to the loss. Root cause analysis can be used to discover the existence of hazardous conditions or unsafe work practices that may have contributed to the incident.

An example is an investigation into a hand burned by a chemical because the employee was not wearing protective gloves. The contributing cause is due to the employee not wearing gloves. A deeper investigation could unveil that the gloves did not fit, were uncomfortable or not required for working with the product. If these root causes are not corrected, the chance of another employee not wearing gloves and becoming injured is likely.

## INCIDENT INVESTIGATION FORM AND REPORT

An incident investigation form (sample at [MCIT.org/reporting-mcit](http://MCIT.org/reporting-mcit)) can facilitate the gathering of appropriate information. This form should:

- ◆ Identify when, where, who and what was involved in the incident.

- ◆ Explain the damage.
- ◆ Describe in detail what happened, before, during and after the incident.
- ◆ Outline unsafe actions and conditions that occurred (such as inadequacies in the safety program, safety standards or compliance with the standards).
- ◆ Evaluate the possibility of a similar incident occurring again and the potential severity.
- ◆ Identify specific actions that can be implemented to control the factors that caused the incident.
- ◆ Detail steps that will be taken to monitor the remedial action.

Once the incident has been investigated and a remedial action plan determined, the completed report should be forwarded to the appropriate manager and to the safety committee as identified in the organization's AWAIR policy. The report should be reviewed by the safety committee and a manager should be assigned responsibility to implement the remedial action plan.

Senior management should follow up to ensure that the remedial action plan has been implemented to prevent the incident from occurring again. The safety committee and management should periodically review all incident data to determine if the same types of incidents continue to occur or if more incidents are occurring at a particular location. If so, corrective action should be taken immediately. The safety committee can also play an important role in incident review and remedial action planning.



# PRIVACY AND WORKPLACE INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

An individual's right to privacy and an organization's incident investigation could conflict with each other if the organization does not take appropriate steps.

Details about a work-related injury or illness that are provided to the safety committee for review must not violate an individual's privacy under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA), Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13.

## Safety Committee Does Not Need Private Data

Information shared with the safety committee cannot include personal information or private data about the injured/ill employee. To do so may violate the MGDPA, which specifically precludes the release of certain data on individuals.

The MGDPA defines data on an individual as "all government data in which any individual is or can be identified as the subject of that data, unless the appearance of the name or other identifying data can be clearly demonstrated to be only incidental to the data and the data are not accessed by the name or other identifying data of any individual" (Minn. Stat. §13.02).

The statutory provisions along with other data privacy requirements limit access to private data on individuals to those persons within the entity who have a need to know. It is also against the law for members of the safety committee to discuss or disseminate protected information to which they may have access.

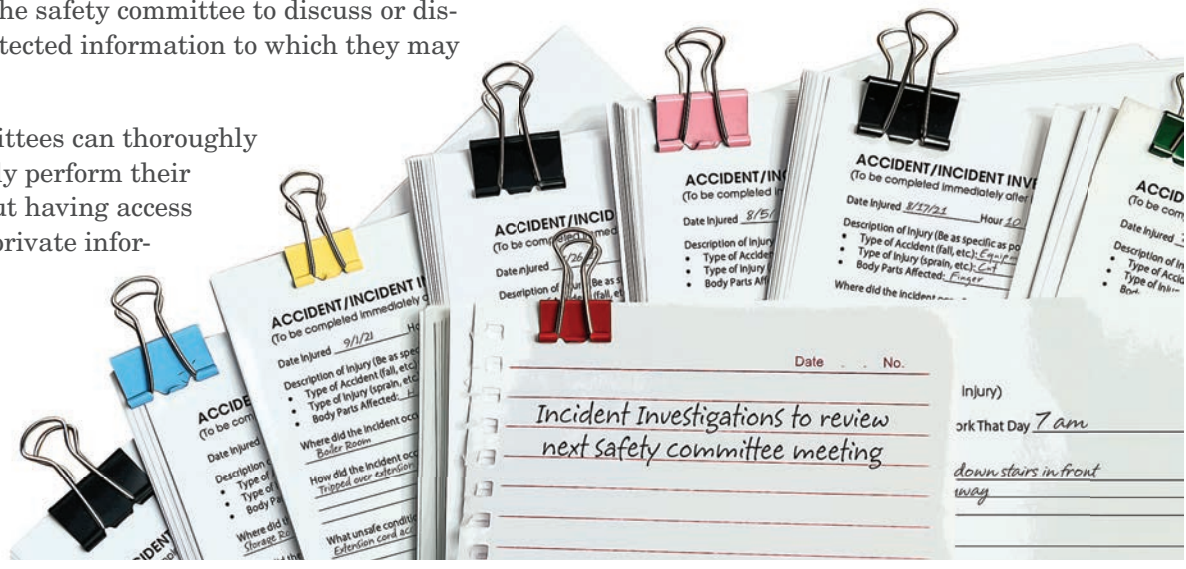
Safety committees can thoroughly and effectively perform their duties without having access to personal, private infor-

mation about the injured/ill employee. Distribution or discussion of private information by the committee can subject them to civil litigation where the injured employee alleges the group inappropriately discussed or released private data.

## Best Practices to Ensure Privacy

Organizations are encouraged to follow the below general best practices to help supervisors and safety committees effectively perform their work while safeguarding individuals' privacy:

- Incident investigation reports must include the circumstances of the injury/illness, cause of the incident and recommended corrective actions.
- Supervisors may also choose to include the nature of the injury and any other general information that may be helpful in analyzing the incident in the investigation report.
- Information shared with the safety committee from the supervisor's incident investigation report must not include names, Social Security numbers, employee numbers, physicians, treating facilities nor any personal information that may identify the employee.
- Safety committee discussion and work products must not include information protected by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, even when it is provided in the supervisor's incident report.





The purpose of the safety committee is to evaluate work-related incidents and make recommendations to prevent further occurrences. Personal information is not necessary to determine the actual cause of an

incident and whether proposed corrective actions are appropriate. The safety committee may choose to use a summary report of the incident rather than review the complete incident investigation form.

## SAFETY AUDITS

A key component to reducing employee injuries is to identify and address hazards before they cause harm. Regular safety audits (inspections) of the workplace can help uncover those hazards.

Members of the safety committee are ideal for performing these audits. As departmental representatives on the committee, each member is familiar with his or her work area and the different procedures related to the department.

In addition to identifying and reducing workplace hazards, performing safety audits increases the visibility of the safety committee member(s). Co-workers see this commitment to safety, and it often provides the opportunity to engage the committee member in a discussion about safety and the role of the safety committee within the organization. MCIT members that have made regular safety audits a part of the safety committee's function have noted increased employee communication about safety-related topics.

### Steps for Successful Safety Audits

Safety committees can incorporate safety audits as a part of their duties with relative ease. The following steps can help facilitate the process.

- 1. Develop a schedule for audits.** Frequently, safety walkthroughs are done quarterly but may be performed more or less frequently depending on the hazard potential of the work area.
- 2. Determine who will be responsible for each work area.** Although the representative departmental committee member will often be responsible for his or her work area alone, sometimes members partner to provide another set of eyes to identify hazards. Consider working with a member of the facilities staff to access areas such as storage spaces, electrical closets, boiler rooms, etc. *Note: Those responsible for conducting safety audits should never put themselves in harm's way, and they*

*should be mindful of areas requiring personal protective equipment.*

- 3. Establish procedures for reporting identified hazards.** Often hazards can be remedied promptly by the committee member or department head, but if that is not possible, hazards should be reported to building maintenance or another relevant authority. A plan should be established to track the progress of the remedy plan to ensure sufficient follow through. A sample tracking sheet is provided at the end of this chapter.
- 4. Train committee members to recognize hazards within their work areas.** New committee members should be trained about basic hazard identification. Resources are available online at sites such as the Minnesota Safety Council or Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). At no charge as part of membership, MCIT loss control consultants can be called upon to offer identification training for safety committee members or assist with an initial audit to point out hazards for which to look.
- 5. Use a checklist.** A checklist can be an invaluable tool to remind committee members of the potential hazards that might be found within a workspace. It is important that checklists be modified to reflect those hazards that might be encountered. A checklist for general office spaces is provided at the end this chapter.
- 6. Add safety audits to committee agenda.** By adding audits to the ongoing business section of the committee agenda, it is a subtle reminder to members to complete their assigned walkthroughs. The results of each audit should be reviewed and discussed. Often these discussions can help focus further activities the committee can undertake to draw attention to potential hazard trends or unsafe conditions.

# ENHANCING SAFETY COMMUNICATION

Beyond the positive impact the safety committee can achieve from the work it completes during its meetings, the committee's positive influence can spread more widely throughout the organization when it works to enhance safety communication.

Whether it's sharing success stories or running a targeted safety campaign, the committee should strive to make its actions and commitment to workplace safety known. It is also important that employees recognize the individual members of the safety committee as their representatives regarding matters of safety, as well as feel empowered to come to committee members with related concerns.

## Tools to Improve Communication

To enhance communication, a safety committee can:

- **Publish meeting minutes.** Posting minutes on a break room board or publishing them on the organization's intranet gives all employees a chance to read about the committee's various activities.
- **E-mail safety awareness reminders.** Sending regular messages highlighting relevant safety topics raises awareness about issues and identifies the committee as champions of workplace safety. (See "MCIT Materials for Raising Safety Awareness" for more information.)
- **Create a presence within a newsletter or the organization's intranet.** Consider claiming space for a regular "safety corner" to discuss relevant topics and provide practical safety tips.
- **Launch safety campaigns.** Develop awareness through posters, arranging a display case or bulletin board, holding contests, etc. The idea is to create awareness of a safety topic through the use of a variety of media. Many MCIT member safety committees creatively use the Step Wisely materials for yearly slip, trip and fall campaigns to raise awareness about these prevalent hazards (see "MCIT Materials for Raising Safety Awareness" for more).

## Advocates for Safety

The power of the safety committee shines when each member embraces the role of safety advocate for his or her department. Committee members should model safe behaviors and promote sound work habits within the department. It is also vital that he or she acts as a visible liaison between the committee and the department.

In this role, committee members can:

- Deliver updates about committee activities at department meetings. Consider adding "take aways" at the end of each safety committee meeting's agenda to discuss items that members should take back to their departments.
- Encourage injury and near-miss reporting among department co-workers.
- Inspire supervisors/department heads to include at least one safety topic at every staff meeting. The MCIT-provided Quick Takes on Safety, which are pre-written safety training scripts, can be used to engage employees about a number of topics. (See "MCIT Materials for Raising Safety Awareness" for more details).
- Convey safety questions and concerns from the department to the safety committee for discussion.

Employees are only able to ask questions and report concerns to safety committee members if they know who those members are. Effective committees make an effort to promote the names of committee members frequently, such as in the signature for safety e-mails, an easy-to-find list on the intranet and reminders at the end of safety discussions or team meetings.

# MCIT Materials for Raising Safety Awareness

MCIT has developed a number of materials that members can use for their safety awareness activities. All items are provided to MCIT members at no cost and are available under the Safety tab at [MCIT.org](http://MCIT.org).

## STEP WISELY TO PREVENT SLIPS AND FALLS

The Step Wisely program, in particular, has proven easy for safety committees to implement and effective in preventing slip, trip and fall injuries, which are unfortunately common among employees and facility visitors.

Step Wisely focuses on slip, trip and fall hazards and provides employees with simple behaviors to help prevent injuries. The program includes both weather-related hazards, such as snow and ice, and nonseasonal hazards, such as using chairs in place of step stools.

Step Wisely includes wall posters, mini fliers, ready-to-send e-mails, short videos, table tents, Quick Takes on Safety training scripts, a checklist for identifying hazards and more. All materials can be downloaded at no cost from [MCIT.org/step-wisely/](http://MCIT.org/step-wisely/).



## READY-TO-SEND E-MAILS MAKE COMMUNICATION EASY

Safety committees can get a great deal of mileage out of MCIT's ready-to-send safety e-mails. Committees can send a new e-mail to employees regularly to help create safety awareness and a positive safety culture among employees.

The e-mails are provided as jpeg images that should be viewable in most HTML-enabled e-mail systems. Members can download files at [MCIT.org](http://MCIT.org) under the Safety tab. Sending instructions are also provided.

## QUICK TAKES: MINI TRAINING SCRIPTS FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Quick Takes on Safety:

- ◆ Are scripts for short safety talks to remind staff about safe work practices.
- ◆ Help keep safety in the forefront of employees' minds.
- ◆ Demonstrate a commitment to safety on the part of the organization by improving safety culture.
- ◆ Offer an opportunity for employees to ask questions, discuss safety topics and develop solutions to specific hazards while encouraging communication.

Supervisors typically give the Quick Takes on Safety during regularly scheduled or informal meetings. Supervisors are encouraged to modify the script to match the particular needs and situations of their specific workplace. These scripts are not designed to take the place of regular formal training. All Quick Takes have a corresponding employee handout.

MCIT offers several Quick Take scripts covering issues related to safety culture, data security/cyber-security, fleet/vehicle, general safety, office settings and off-site settings.

Quick Takes and handouts are provided at no cost and can be accessed at [MCIT.org/quick-takes-on-safety/](http://MCIT.org/quick-takes-on-safety/).



# ASSISTING WITH SAFETY EFFORTS

Because safety committees bring together people from different perspectives and skills, committee members can be a great resource to assist with and complete other safety-related tasks. The safety coordinator does not need to do everything alone.

## Leveraging Committee Members' Skills

Committee members can be involved in a number of safety efforts throughout an organization, but the following areas are commonly where members provide valuable input. This is not an exhaustive list, and other opportunities to leverage a committee's skills or interests should be explored.

### SAFETY PROGRAM REVIEW

It is important continually to review and revise safety programs to be sure they are effective. Input from different departments and individuals can go a long way to making programs more successful and reflective of an organization. Often the more of a say people have in creating the programs they have to follow, the more likely those programs are to be followed.

### JOB HAZARD ANALYSIS

This is a commonly used method to identify potential hazards within a certain task. The task is

broken down into steps. Those steps are then analyzed for potential hazards, and the safety measures needed to reduce hazards and protect individuals from injury are explored and implemented.

This process should not be done by a safety coordinator alone and needs to include those familiar with and actively working on the tasks in question. Safety committee members can take an active role in this risk management tool.

### OSHA SAFETY GRANT PROGRAM

Often members of the safety committee have experience in writing grants. This skill can be transferable to OSHA safety grants should the need arise. Whenever a grant may be necessary, committee members should reach out to department heads to offer their assistance.

### PROMOTING SAFETY TRAINING

Safety committees often promote and organize training opportunities for staff. These can take the form of simply inviting others to certain department trainings or suggesting and locating trainers on topics of interest. Whenever trainings are offered on any topic, committee members should inform their departments and attend or encourage others to attend.

## Safety Committees Help Deliver AWAIR

Through its activities, a safety committee can help fulfill many of the requirements of a workplace accident and injury reduction (AWAIR) program. Minnesota Statutes, Section 182.653, requires employers to establish a written workplace accident and injury reduction program that promotes safe and healthful working conditions and is based on clearly stated goals and objectives for meeting those goals. The program must:

1. Describe how managers, supervisors and employees are responsible for implementing the program and how continued participation of management will be established, measured and maintained.
2. Outline methods used to identify, analyze and control new or existing hazards, conditions and operations.
3. Illustrate how the plan will be communicated to affected employees so that they are informed of work-related hazards and controls.
4. Explain how workplace incidents will be investigated and corrective action implemented.
5. Express how safe working practices and rules will be enforced.
  - ♦ An employer is to conduct and document a review of the workplace accident and injury reduction program at least annually and document how procedures set forth in the program are met.

One common training safety committee members can undertake and encourage is defensive driving training. This training session, presented by the Minnesota Safety Council is available at no charge to MCIT members on site or online. More details about the defensive driving training available to MCIT members is available at [MCIT.org/defensive-driving/](http://MCIT.org/defensive-driving/).



## Sample Safety Audit Findings

The below table is an example of how an organization can effectively track safety audit findings.

Date	Safety Committee Member(s)	Building	Department	Description of Finding	Responsible Party	Date, Method of Notification	Date Concern Resolved

# GENERAL WORKPLACE SAFETY CHECKLISTS (1 OF 5)

Department \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Exits	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Are all exit lights and emergency lights checked periodically to assure they are working?				
Are exit paths clear and unobstructed?				
Are fire doors unobstructed and closed, not propped open by doorstops or wedges?				
Are floors at entries kept dry or have adequate mats to absorb moisture?				
Are floor mats free of curls and bumps that could cause someone to trip?				
Is ice melt, chicken grit, sand/dirt or other abrasive provided near entrances during the winter?				
Other concerns				

Walkways and Stairs	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Are carpets secured to floor and free of worn seams or other tripping hazards?				
Are walkways clear of protruding equipment and supplies?				
Are stairs and general office areas properly illuminated?				
Are stairways in good repair and handrails secured?				
Are stairways free of storage items?				
Other concerns				

# GENERAL WORKPLACE SAFETY CHECKLISTS (2 OF 5)

Department \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Storage and Shelves	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Is there at least an 18-inch clearance between stored items and the ceiling or sprinklers?				
Are shelves free of unstable loads or overloaded supplies?				
Are heavy items located on lower shelves within easy reach?				
Are items neatly stored?				
Is there a ladder available for reaching higher items?				
Are containers with chemicals properly labeled?				
Are safety data sheets for every chemical in use readily available?				
Are flammable materials stored in an appropriate flammable storage cabinet?				
Are the aisles between shelves clear of slip, trip and fall hazards?				
Other concerns				

Electrical Panels	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Is there a 36-inch clearance in front of each electrical panel?				
Is each breaker in service labeled and identified?				
Is the panel fully enclosed with no openings, knockouts or wires exposed, or blanks missing for unused breaker spaces?				
Are electrical closets free of storage?				
Other concerns				

# GENERAL WORKPLACE SAFETY CHECKLISTS (3 OF 5)

Department \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Eye Wash Stations	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Are eye wash stations tested weekly (running water to clear lines of potential contaminants ) and to assure they are in good working order?				
Are weekly eye wash checks recorded on a nearby tag that is protected from water damage?				
Is the flushing fluid temperature of the eye wash tempered to between 60 and 100 degrees?				
Is the path to the eye wash station unobstructed?				
Other concerns				

First-aid Kits and Automated External Defibrillator (AED)	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Are first-aid kits periodically checked for restocking and are expired products disposed?				
Are first-aid kits free of over-the-counter medications?				
On AEDs, is the ready light on and battery charged?				
Is someone responsible for routinely checking AEDs for missing or expired items, such as pads, gloves and CPR pocket masks?				
Other concerns				

Fire Extinguishers	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Are fire extinguishers checked monthly to confirm they have not been removed, activated, tampered with or damaged? Are these checks recorded on the attached tag?				
Are fire extinguishers properly mounted and have identification signs above them?				
Are fire extinguishers accessible and free from obstruction?				
Other concerns				



# GENERAL WORKPLACE SAFETY CHECKLISTS (4 OF 5)

Department \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Electrical Cords and Power Strips	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Are equipment cords kept tidy under desks and positioned away from possible foot entanglement?				
Are power strips being used for computer-related equipment only?				
Are power strips plugged directly into the electrical outlet and not into another power strip?				
Are power cords that lay across floors covered by a cord guard?				
Are extension cords used only for temporary power, no longer than 90 days?				
Other concerns				

Lunchroom, Break Room and Appliances	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Are all appliances plugged directly into electrical outlets?				
Are appliances clean and maintained, such as old food removed from refrigerators?				
Are break room appliances, such as coffee makers, toasters and microwaves, rated for commercial use?				
Are heat-generating appliances powered down or unplugged at the end of each workday?				
Is space heater usage regulated?				
Are the following best practices observed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Is there an automated shut off feature that activates if heaters tip over or overheat?</li> <li>◆ Are heaters located at least 3 feet from combustible materials?</li> <li>◆ Are heaters U/L listed?</li> </ul>				
Other concerns				

# GENERAL WORKPLACE SAFETY CHECKLISTS (5 OF 5)

Department \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Other Inside Items	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Are paper cutter guards in place with the cutting edge stored in the down and locked position?				
Are file cabinet drawers closed when not in use to prevent trips and falls?				
Are file cabinets secured to prevent tipping over when top drawers are open?				
Are cones and other devices available to warn others of wet floors?				
Is garbage and other debris removed and disposed of properly?				
Are ceiling tiles intact and in place?				
Other concerns				

Grounds and Sidewalks	N/A	Yes	No	Action Recommended
Are parking lots and outside walkways free of potholes or uneven surfaces that could cause trips and falls?				
Is landscaping controlled and not encroaching on walkways?				
Are rain spouts directed away from entrances and walkways?				
Is snow removed promptly from parking areas and walkways?				
Are parking areas illuminated sufficiently and are lights working?				
Other concerns				



## Chapter 4

# SAFETY COMMITTEE EVALUATION

Just because a safety committee has been established and is operating well does not mean that it will remain so. As committee membership changes and safety improves, committee members may not think that safety is much of a concern or that they do not have time to focus on workplace hazards. To ensure that the committee continues to meet its objectives, committee members should pause periodically to evaluate how well they are carrying out their activities and leading safety efforts for the organization.

# PITFALLS AND SOLUTIONS

Every safety committee could fall victim to common pitfalls. Being aware of them and taking appropriate steps to avoid these problems can help ensure that a safety committee remains effective.

## PITFALL 1: Committee's Purpose Is Not Clearly Defined

Without a direction or purpose, safety committees rarely are effective or stay active.

**SOLUTIONS:** Committee members need to understand their roles and responsibilities and feel like they can make a positive contribution.

A successful safety committee has a purpose. A mission statement can help identify the goals and direction for the committee. Bylaws can further define the structure and functions of the committee.

## PITFALL 2: No Set Agenda

With no agenda, the committee may not know what to discuss and become ineffective.

**SOLUTIONS:** A prepared, formal agenda makes committee members cognizant of objectives and more likely to stay on task. Distributing the agenda well in advance of the meeting gives members time to prepare and participate in discussions. An agenda also helps keep meetings within the planned time frame.

## PITFALL 3: Canceled Meetings

In addition to hampering the activities of the safety committee, frequent meeting cancellations undermine the committee's importance and perceived value to members, management and employees. The safety committee holds an important position and should strive to stay active.

**SOLUTIONS:** Meetings should be scheduled well in advance, preferably at the same time and day of the month. Posting preplanned training, property survey reviews, safety campaign coordination and recent loss reviews in a calendar can add value to the committee and make it unfavorable to cancel meetings.

In addition, committee members should be expected to attend each meeting. An alternate should be found if a committee member cannot attend a meeting.

## PITFALL 4: Lack of Follow Through

A committee's reputation depends on members doing what they promise and following through with responsibilities.

**SOLUTIONS:** Assignments should be reviewed at every meeting, and committee members should provide status reports.

Expectations should be reasonable, and sufficient time should be given for committee members to complete projects and tasks

## PITFALL 5: Committee Is Unable to Effect Change

A safety committee can only be effective if it is empowered to make changes for the health and safety of employees.

**SOLUTIONS:** Recommendations made by the safety committee should have timely response from the entity's board or leadership.

An effective safety committee should have top management and board representation at its meetings. In addition to the authority this gives and the show of commitment to safety, these individuals can better facilitate implementation of recommendations generated from the committee.

Finally, committee members should always be looking for new ways to enhance the safety program and be able to adapt to change.

## PITFALL 6: Untrained Committee Members

The better trained its members are, the more effective the safety committee can be.

**SOLUTIONS:** The committee should allot time during scheduled meetings for training in loss prevention;

hazard awareness; regulatory requirements, such as OSHA standards; job safety analysis; and accident investigation.

In addition to understanding health and safety issues better, the committee should consider training for the administration of the committee, such as running an effective meeting or problem solving.

New member training is also important. The committee should bring new members up to speed by explaining the committee's functions and duties, and providing new members with copies of past minutes. It is often helpful to have a departing committee member train his or her replacement.

An MCIT loss control consultant can provide resources and help train committee members on a number of safety topics.

## PITFALL 7: Lack of Communication

A safety committee that lacks open communication will have difficulty gaining a true sense of safety and wellness within the organization.

**SOLUTIONS:** The activities of the committee should be announced. This helps encourage a dialog for safety and facilitates communication from all levels within the entity.

A safety committee should publicize its actions, minutes and successes. Committee members should be acknowledged when joining and leaving the committee. A committee that is recognized goes a long way in encouraging employee communication about safety and helps foster a culture of safety in the organization.

## PITFALL 8: Size of the Committee Is Too Large or Too Small

A committee that is too large may produce more debate than action or stifle participation. A committee that is too small may not be able to carry out the activities required of it.

**SOLUTIONS:** Committee membership will vary with the size of the organization. Ideally, committee membership is representative of all departments or work groups within the entity. The committee should be small enough to function smoothly but large enough to foster communication among members and handle tasks presented.



## Pitfall 9: Veering Off Topic

Discussing issues other than safety is not only irrelevant but takes time away from getting work done in the time allotted for a safety committee meeting.

**SOLUTIONS:** Committees should start meetings on time; end on time; and keep nonsafety-related discussion, griping and negativity to a minimum. An agenda can help keep members focused on the tasks at hand.

## Pitfall 10: Members Are Unwilling to Listen Sincerely to Feedback, Suggestions

It is important for committee members to listen respectfully to others' suggestions and feedback regarding investigations and other safety-related topics. Defensiveness or heated arguments can stifle communication and make others less likely to offer their thoughts.

**SOLUTIONS:** Committee members should be trained about and reminded that it is one of the essential goals of the safety committee to offer suggestions and feedback to make the workplace safer for all employees and visitors. Suggestions regarding these issues should never be about finding fault or blame. Rather, they should be geared toward improving safety within the organization. Anyone who feels defensive about questions and feedback should be encouraged to take a mental step back, take a deep breath and remember the intent of the suggestions and comments.

# SAFETY COMMITTEE SELF-EVALUATION

Safety committees can use the below self-evaluation to identify strengths of the committee and areas that need improvement.

	No/Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Yes/Always
Support for the committee is given by all levels of management.				
Committee includes both employees and managers				
Members are selected by their peers.				
Goals and objectives are established, written and clearly understood by all.				
Training is provided to committee members when necessary.				
Committee meets on an established schedule.				
Members of the committee or alternates are present at all meetings.				
An agenda for the meeting is distributed beforehand.				
The agenda is followed at the meetings.				
The committee chair provides direction and leadership for the meeting.				
Minutes are made available to all employees.				
Objectives are geared toward reducing incidents.				
Committee activities include workplace safety audits.				
Subcommittees are established to address specific issues as needed.				
Methods exist to collect and review employee safety concerns.				
All members are given an opportunity to voice their opinions.				
Members are involved in committee activities outside of the meetings.				
Discussions deal with specific items, not generalities.				
Data privacy rules are followed.				
Committee members have a positive attitude about their responsibilities and sincerely listen to suggestions and comments.				
Management responds to the committee's suggestions.				



## Chapter 5

# MCIT LOSS CONTROL ASSISTANCE

MCIT provides loss control and safety consultation services. Every member has an assigned loss control consultant who provides customized assistance with safety efforts, including safety committees. One of the most helpful means of this assistance comes from having consultants regularly attend safety committee meetings either in person or virtually.

## Committee Meeting Attendance

Although MCIT loss control consultants are not formal participants of member safety committees, when they attend a committee meeting, they can observe and offer recommendations for immediate safety concerns. When MCIT loss control consultants attend meetings, they learn what is of concern to the membership, which helps MCIT create resources that are most in need.

Inviting the loss control consultant to attend the committee meeting also demonstrates a commitment to safety that can improve safety culture.

## Other Areas of Assistance

MCIT loss control consultants are also available to assist safety committees with:

- Training committee members on a variety of topics, such as hazard recognition, safety committee responsibilities, ergonomics and more.

- Conducting safety audits of departments or properties, looking for hazards and providing remedy recommendations.
- Reviewing corrective actions after an incident occurs to help ensure their effectiveness in preventing another similar incident.
- Interpreting standards and safety requirements.
- Generating past loss reports to help identify injury trends and focus preventive actions.
- Reviewing written safety programs and offering recommendations.
- Developing or reinvigorating a safety committee.
- Offer suggestions and input gained from other members experiencing similar concerns.

Consultants also offer other services beyond safety committees. MCIT members can contact their loss control consultant toll free at **1.866.547.6516**.

