

TOOLBOX TALK #5

WORKPLACE SAFETY COMMITTEES

Many companies want to start up a workplace safety committee but do not know where to start. The following 8 tips from the National Safety Council can help guide you in creating a successful workplace safety committee:

1. Behave in a way you would like other workers to emulate.
2. Be respectful of others and acknowledge and accept their differences.
3. Involve others in creating the committee.
4. Get more employees on board by being open to opposing viewpoints.
5. Enlist help when it comes to problem solving and making decisions related to safety and health.
6. Generate an atmosphere of respect and trust. Workers need to know they can come to you about any issue.
7. Be prepared to provide resources, coaching, support and other help that workers may need.
8. Give recognition and rewards “often and consistently” (i.e., for cases in which workers go above and beyond to either identify a safety problem on their own or make a suggestion to help work processes be safer). This shows employees that they are valued and encourages them to participate further. Consider creating an annual ceremony that hands out plaques for employee involvement, or publishing workers’ names and pictures with their safety suggestion in a company newsletter.

Once you have employees involved in your safety committee, it’s important to understand the steps you’ll need to take to keep them interested. “In occupational safety and health, motivation increases employees’ awareness, interest, and willingness to act in ways that improve their own safety and that of co-workers,” NSC states.

So what can your company do? NSC notes that the odds of creating a successful safety committee increase when the following factors are present:

- Management participates and regularly shows its commitment to the safety committee.
- The committee stays relevant by using slogans, posters, and performance recognition, among other things.
- Continuous efforts are made to keep workplace conditions safe.
- Tools and other equipment, as well as the general layout of the jobsite, are well-designed.
- Maintenance is effective.
- A variety of effective training and supervision is available.

