

What you need to know about - Workplace Health And Safety

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Beach defines an accident is an undesired event that causes physical harm to people, damages property and equipment and causes business interruptions or has the potential to cause the same. Traditionally, people have associated accidents with injuries and if a person was not seriously injured not much notice was taken of the event causing the injury. A minor injury was usually shrugged off as an acceptable part of life. Many people today still believe that an accident(s) just ‘happens’. It is only recently that strong focus has been placed a property damage accidents and business interruptions caused by accidents. These accidents mostly originate from the same causes as injury-accidents.

ACCIDENTS ARE CAUSED — THEY DO NOT ‘HAPPEN’

One of the first things every manager, supervisor, and workers must clearly understand and believe is that accidents are caused and that if this is so the cause can be identified and eliminated to prevent recurrences of these events. To understand the complexity of accident-causing factors we should take note of the chain of events which lead up to the unpleasant and sometimes costly effects of accidents.

Research has indicated that unsafe acts of people cause the most accidents, namely 88%, while unsafe conditions cause 10%. The other 2% is attributable to providence. The two main causes have something in common, both are described as “errors”.

In the case of the unsafe act, the person would possibly commit an “error” because he lacked knowledge and/or skill, he is physically/mentally defective, his attitude was incorrect, and the work environment, equipment, machines, and tools were inadequate and could have contributed towards the committing of “errors”. Unsafe acts/conditions (direct causes) are a direct outflow of personal inadequacies and Environmental/equipment/plant inadequacies, some of which are listed below;

Personal Factors

- Lack of knowledge and/or skills
- Physical and mental defects
- Improper, attitude and motivation

Job Factors

- Inadequate work environment/equipment/plant
- Inadequate work standards

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY

It is generally accepted that management must take the lead in the institution of safety programs. In the past, it was generally stated and accepted that ‘management support’ was an essential requirement for a good safety program. This so-called support sometimes amounted to very little more than ‘lip service’ to safety. With the sophistication of programs to include loss control, ‘management support’ is inadequate - full management involvement and active participation in the program is necessary. The reasons why management must participate actively in the program can be described under three thematic areas described below.

Financial Responsibilities

Profit is the main objective of most organizations because profit spells survival. Because the detrimental effects of accidents on the profit performance of an organization are not generally known to everybody the attainment of safety objectives is sometimes not emphasized sufficiently. Very often as a result of this, safety standards and objectives are rather vague and very little is done to enforce them. It is therefore imperative that safety work associated with the implementation of program standards be clearly defined, specifically assigned and properly controlled.

Management’s Legal Responsibilities

Not all managers realize that they have to comply with certain statutory requirements which place a heavy burden of responsibility on their shoulders. The main safety responsibilities are described in the Factories and Works Act and Regulations. The Factories and Works Act describes the circumstances whereby a manager is held responsible for the actions (and omissions) of his employee. To ensure the safety of everyone, a manager must;

1. *Provide* all necessary means to comply with the regulations of the Act.
2. *Instruct* everyone to comply with the requirements of the Act and also tell them how to do so.
3. *Educate* and train workers on an ongoing basis — this aspect should never be relaxed.

MANAGEMENT’S MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Moral Responsibility towards Shareholders

Accidents cost money and reduce the profit performance of the undertaking and should, therefore, be eliminated if the manager in question takes his task seriously of running the operation successfully to give maximum profits.

Moral Responsibility towards Workers

1. Every worker has a right to want to be able to work for as long as possible to provide for his family and himself. He has a further right to want to work in a pleasant, safe healthy workplace as possible. No worker wants to suffer the effects of a serious injury — pain and suffering and a loss of income and all the consequent hardships.

1. Management is therefore under a heavy obligation to ensure that workers' safety, health, and welfare are looked after properly.

Moral Responsibility towards the National Economy

Every manager should make his contribution to the economy by endeavoring to increase productivity. All the elements of a safety/loss control program are conducive to greater productivity and effectiveness in operations. These render a valuable contribution to the economy.

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