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A Guide to Safety Committees

by Chandler Wright

Every employer in the state of California, including public entities, is required to have a written and effective Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) in place. One of the requirements of an IIPP is to effectively communicate with all the employees regarding all forms of occupational safety and health in a manner that is understandable to all employees. This requirement, found in California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 8 3203(a)(3), can be met through safety meetings, trainings, postings, written communications, a way for employees to anonymously report hazards, or other means. Another way that this communication requirement can be met is through the formation of a labor/management safety and health committee. In order for the safety committee to be considered compliant, they must meet the requirements found in 3203(c):

1. Meet regularly but at least every quarter.
2. Prepare and make available notes of what was discussed at the safety committee meetings. Records should be maintained for 1 year.
3. Review results of the periodic workplace inspections.
4. Review the accident investigations that have taken place for any injury or near-miss and when appropriate submit suggestions for prevention to management.
5. Review the investigations of hazardous conditions that have been reported. The committee may also conduct their own investigations if necessary to assist in remedial solutions.
6. Review and submit recommendations for assisting with evaluation of employee safety suggestion.
7. When requested of Cal/OSHA, the committee will show proof of action taken to abate a citation issued by Cal/OSHA to the entity.

While there are many requirements for a safety committee if it is used to comply with the communication section of 3203, it is important to remember that a safety committee is NOT required under Cal/OSHA regulations.

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Entities can choose to abide by the communication requirements in 3203 in whichever way is best suited for the organization and its safety culture. The most important aspect of communication is that it is open and flows both upwards to management and downward to the general employees. All employees should feel like they have a stake in the safety program and understand their responsibilities for safety in the workplace.

Any entity that chooses to establish a safety committee should consider the following:

- Include safety committee goals, meeting frequency, and responsibilities in the IIPP.
- The committee should create a meeting schedule (i.e. every last Thursday of the month at 1:00 PM) and it should be followed.
- Agendas should be created for meetings, published ahead of time, and followed.
- Include employees that represent both management and the general workforce. Having employees from different departments and/or shifts will help to provide a diversity of safety opinions.
- Determine the structure and the size of the committee. Aim to have as much representation as possible without making the committee so large that it doesn't function well. A recommendation is anywhere from 5-10 committee members.
- Determine how committee members will be selected. Will it be by assignment? Volunteering? What will be done if more people volunteer than are needed? How long will people serve on the committee? It is important to have a group of people who will work well together and can focus on safety.
- Invite upper management staff to be part of the committee to show their commitment for employee safety and for the safety committee.
- A committee chair and possibly vice-chair should be elected/selected to help lead the meetings. A secretary or should also be chosen to help record minutes for the meetings. Determine how often these positions will be rotated. Ensure the chair is a good leader who can keep the discussions focused and moving along.
- Minutes should be recorded of every meeting that detail what was discussed, any proposed action items, along with people responsible for upcoming tasks. These minutes should be distributed to all committee members, as well as made available to all employees.
- Determine what committee members should do if they are unable to attend a meeting due to an emergency. Consider requiring an alternate to be sent.
- Perform annual evaluations of the committee to ensure that they are meeting organizational goals and fulfilling the requirements found in 3203(c). If the committee is lacking in any area, improvements should be made.



Consider carefully if the organization can maintain the requirements of a safety committee or not. Remember that an organization will be held responsible for whatever is written in the IIPP, whether it be a safety committee or other forms of communication. Upon inspection, Cal/OSHA may want to evaluate how effective the safety committee is in meeting the communication requirements, so make sure to fulfill all of the requirements. If the safety committee is not being effective, it should be disbanded and another form of safety communication should take its place. Safety of the employees and effectively communicating safety information to them is the most important thing.

If you have any questions, please reach out to [PRISM's Risk Control Department](#).