Written Employee Safety Program—Part II

In the April 2008 HR Answers we covered two of the eight elements of an effective Safety Program or Illness & Injury Prevention Program (IIPP):

1. Management commitment/assignment of responsibilities.
2. System of safety communications with employees.

This issue will cover:

3. System for assuring employee compliance with safe work practices.
4. Scheduled inspections/evaluation system.

Future issues will cover:

5. Accident investigation.
6. Procedures for correcting unsafe/unhealthy conditions.
7. Safety and health training and instruction.
8. Record-keeping and documentation.

Your IIPP should be a “living” document; adjustments and changes should be made as your policies and procedures change.

3. System For Assuring Employee Compliance With Safe Work Practices

HR and department managers need to work together on these issues. Be sure your company and department safety rules are clearly communicated. Address:

- Training and retraining programs.
- Rewarding desired behavior with recognition of employees who follow safe and healthful work practices.
- Establishing disciplinary actions, or any other such means that ensures employee compliance.
- How to consistently enforce rules.

Consider that 88% of accidents are due to unsafe work practices: 10% are due to unsafe conditions; 2% are unavoidable (lightning strikes). Given those stats, it is imperative to focus on giving employees the tools to make good decisions.

4. Scheduled Inspections/Evaluation System

According to OSHA, this means “inspections of the workplace at sufficient intervals to ensure that established safe work practices are being followed and that unsafe conditions or procedures are identified and corrected promptly.” Hazard control is the heart of an effective IIPP.

- Establish a routine scheduled and documented inspection of your premises. This should include inspection of the physical property as well as observing employee work practices. Identify unsafe conditions or procedures; also document the corrective action taken.
- Use a checklist. This will also facilitate training several employees to conduct inspections. The more involvement the better.
- Review the completed inspection report (management and/or the safety committee). The review should assist in prioritizing actions and verify completion of previous corrective actions.
- Know which OSHA safety orders apply to your industry and use them to identify potential hazards. Examples: fall protection, confined space training, lock-out/tag-out procedures. Be aware that the Construction Safety Orders will apply if your employees are working construction projects.
- Encourage employees to report possible hazardous situations. They should be assured their reports will be given prompt and serious attention without fear of reprisal. Let them know that the situation was corrected (or why it wasn’t hazardous). Having forms conveniently located throughout your facility for employees to jot down a concern or suggestion is just one way to encourage employees to report hazards.
- Monitor the conditions of workplace equipment and personal protective equipment. Your program should monitor and verify that routine preventive maintenance is conducted and personal protective equipment is reliable.
- Correct the hazard as soon as it is identified. If it can not be corrected immediately, interim protection should be provided.

Safety Tip: Rubber-Tired Heavy Machinery

Rubber-tired heavy machinery will be used this spring to transport winter equipment and supplies such as signs, fencing, and snowguns to off-season storage. Generally, rubber-tired equipment moves slowly, which gives a false sense of safety. When working around rubber-tired heavy equipment always maintain a safe distance from the wheels and always have an escape route away from the vehicle. If you can’t see the operator, the operator probably can’t see you and any unexpected change in direction could be catastrophic. Schedule a safety meeting now to review your procedures for all who are working on or near this type of equipment.