

THE  
**MANAGER'S  
GUIDE**  
*to workplace*  
**HEALTH & SAFETY**



Keep your employees healthy,  
safe and on the job

by **RAVINDER TULSIANI**

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The Manager's Guide to Workplace Health & Safety

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## **Why Workplace Health & Safety are Important**

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You may know that health and safety in the workplace are important, but you may not have thought of the reasons for it. The fact is there are probably more reasons than you have considered.

First, health and safety in the workplace benefits each and every person who works there. When people are healthy and safe, they are better able to do their jobs. This in turn benefits the company. When employers and employees alike spend their work hours in a place where there is less risk of illness or injury, they will not need to take time off from the job to deal with these problems. Everyone will be more productive.

Second, a safe and healthy work environment aids in preventing unnecessary complications. As no company needs to deal with complaints or lawsuits from workers who are injured on the job, the better condition the workplace is in the less risk there will be of these problems.

Third, a healthy and safe work environment is great for company morale. This includes the company as a whole, as well as each individual person. The workplace that is consistently neat, clean, and organized, encourages everyone who works there to do their best and feel good about getting the job done.

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Increasing health and safety in the workplace is not difficult. It also does not require a large amount of time. When you start with a basic framework of what is necessary to accomplish this goal, and share it with everyone else who works there, you will soon see positive results. You will have fewer worries. Everyone will feel confident about the time they spend on the job. More will get done, with fewer problems.

The good news about implementing health and safety plans for the workplace is that after you have begun to develop these plans, they will soon come naturally. It will truly be a great place to work!

## **It Takes Team Effort!**

The best way to reach any goal is with teamwork. When each person knows that he has a stake in a project, it increases his willingness and motivation to contribute to it. He wants to give it his very best. These concepts are as true for health and safety in the workplace as they are for any other kind of project.

One reason for this is every person wants to feel as if he is contributing something worthwhile to the overall good of his company. When each person participates in increasing and maintaining the health and safety of the workplace, it is much more likely to be a long-term success.

A second reason is that it can be quite unfair to expect one or two people to cover everything. Even if they are fully qualified, it can cut into their time and give them much more work to do.

While you are reading these tips about health and safety in the workplace, the best way to begin is to apply team effort to each concept. If you know that specific people have special abilities or talents, those people can be assigned to tasks which make the most of those abilities and talents.

Making sure that no one is left out is the best way to gain cooperation. When each person sees rules and duties as factors which are not imposed upon him, but as factors which he is a part of,

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disagreements and noncompliance will be minimized. Many unnecessary hassles can be reduced and even eliminated by ensuring that every employee is a part of the plan.

Regardless of each person's role in the workplace, team effort should be all-inclusive. Not only will it be a healthier and safer environment in which to work, but each person will take pride in the results. As is the case with virtually every other aspect of a thriving company, applying the principle of teamwork to developing good health and safety practices is the most positive way to reach your goal.

## **Some Rules are Essential**

The overall safety and health in the workplace depends upon sensible rules. When each person knows that everyone who works there is expected to follow the same rules, it can reduce the risk of noncompliance.

One of the most important rules in any workplace should be for employees to stay home when they are sick. While this may seem to be nothing more than common sense, you may be surprised at how frequently it is dismissed. First, the person who is ill cannot do his job very well. Even if he puts in a full day at work, less will get done and the quality will suffer. If he works in a group setting, it can have a negative effect on the entire group's projects.

Second, when an employee insists upon going to work with a contagious illness, he is putting everyone he works with at risk of becoming ill. From strep throats to the flu, a contagious employee can sabotage everyone's health. "Stay home when you are sick" needs to be one of the top rules in any workplace setting.

Another important rule is to immediately notify one's supervisor or other person in charge of any and all on-the-job injuries. Even if it is relatively minor, having injuries assessed immediately can prevent unnecessary complications. Lawsuits over on-the-job injuries, worker's compensation, and

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prolonged absences from the job due to injury can be minimized when any injury is checked as soon as it occurs.

Depending upon the nature of the job, there are instances in which immunizations should be a part of the company's rules. For example, employees who routinely work with potentially-dangerous instruments and equipment can increase their health and safety by keeping their tetanus shots updated. Employees and employers who work in group settings, especially during the winter months, should make flu vaccinations a regular part of their personal health care routines. These factors are for the benefit of the individual, as well as for the company as a whole.

The less risk each person is of contracting an illness or sustaining an on-the-job injury, the more it will benefit the individual, the company, and everyone else who works there. Every person should be encouraged to apply the highest standards to his or her own personal health care.

## **Rewarding Compliance**

You may be familiar with businesses which operate on the principle that it is essential and even honorable to never miss a day of work. While this is a good theory, it is not necessarily as good in practice. When employees feel that they will be rewarded for attendance, it encourages them to go to work when they are ill and to not report injuries.

Acknowledging compliance with your company's health and safety rules is a much better approach. While an employee should not expect to be rewarded for doing what he is supposed to do anyway, creating an overall work atmosphere of acknowledging compliance as being positive is a very useful approach.

The popular practice of rewarding one hundred percent attendance can lead to health and safety risks. This is as true in the business world as it is in the many school systems which also operate under this practice. One hundred percent attendance should not be the goal for a thriving company which has its employees' interests in mind. A one hundred percent record of the workplace being without on-the-job injuries or health concerns is much better.

When going to work each day does not include unnecessary worries over health and safety issues, the entire workplace will be more productive.

One good approach is to appoint a committee to oversee your company's health and safety issues. They can keep track of whether the rules are being followed, and address any problems which may occur. Your safety committee can post relevant signs in the office or at the jobsite, circulate memos, and other easy tasks to keep everyone up to date. A company newsletter is also a good idea for keeping everyone informed.

While accidents, other injuries, and illness do occur, there will be less risk of these problems when everyone is involved in keeping the workplace free from accidents and illness. Acknowledging when everyone is doing his or her part to keep the workplace healthy and safe is a much better approach than rewarding people for going to work.

## **You Need a Backup Plan**

Whether you work alone, in an office, or on a jobsite, you need a backup plan to keep everything running smoothly. A good way to start is to think about these topics, and adjust them accordingly to suit your particular place of business.

When a job needs to be done, it needs to be done. Whether you are dealing with deadlines or basic productivity, an illness or injury preventing you from working can cause everything to come to a standstill. As illnesses and injuries do occur from time to time, it is best to have a backup plan in mind. Depending upon the job situation, this may include another competent employee covering for the person who is absent, or another appropriate course of action. Whatever type of plan you believe is best for your company, all employees should be aware of it.

Other situations can occur in the workplace which can make getting a job done difficult or impossible. For example, a maintenance problem can occur on the spur of the moment. From a sudden ceiling leak to an important piece of equipment failing, these kinds of issues can cause the workday to come to a standstill. If you have a backup plan for how to deal with them immediately, employees will be able to get back to work that much sooner. Equally significant, the risks of associated injuries, such as slips, falls, and electrical shock, will be reduced.

In many regions, the possibility of weather-related hazards must be considered in advance. For example, winter conditions such as icy roads and slick parking lots can lead to injuries. In these instances, your company may agree to change its work hours or even close if your employees cannot safely get to work, and ensure that all outdoor walkways and parking areas are properly maintained for these weather conditions. Your employees should be instructed to practice safe driving, parking, and walking habits at all times, but especially during inclement weather.

When you think ahead to potential safety hazards, and implement an appropriate backup plan for those which may occur, everyone in your company will be more confident about going to and being at work. In addition, suitable backup plans are the best and easiest way to ensure that minor problems do not escalate into disasters. The workplace will be a safer place for everyone.

## **Dealing with Issues and Concerns**

The best and most productive way to deal with issues and concerns in the workplace is to deal with them as soon as possible. When these issues and concerns involve job-related health and safety, it can also mean the difference between someone noticing a problem and getting it taken care of before it leads to more serious problems.

Although it will differ according to the particular workplace, some of the issues and concerns which your staff and employees may wish to address can include maintenance problems, cigarette smoking, the use of radios or other sound devices, and virtually anything else which has the potential to undermine safe, healthy work conditions.

If it is possible, having meetings on a regular basis can give everyone the chance to bring up these and other issues. If a problem is acknowledged, it can be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Companies which are too large, or whose employees work erratic hours, may find this method too difficult. In these instances, a memo box where anyone can leave a message about his or her concerns can be a good method. When the messages are read on a regular basis, proper action can be taken to deal with the problems.

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