

THE MCINTYRE GROUP

INSURANCE BROKERS & CONSULTANTS

For Your Safety

Understanding Workplace Injuries, Illnesses and Safety Hazards

Illness and injury prevention programs are useful for lowering the likelihood of occupational injuries, fatalities and illnesses. There are many workplaces that have already put safety measures in place. One common way they do this is by participating in OSHA's Voluntary Protection Programs. They may also enroll in Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Programs, which are designed for smaller employers. Research shows that workplaces participating in these programs experience fewer injuries, and they usually report transformed cultures in the workplace that lead to higher quality of work. They also report better overall productivity, less turnover, greater worker satisfaction and reduced overall costs.

In addition to several other nations around the world, there are 34 states that encourage or require workplaces to have such programs in place. Since these employers have reported positive experiences with their programs in the United States, OSHA believes that prevention programs can create a solid foundation that will promote positive changes in the ways employers and their employees control and identify hazards. They say this leads to a better, safer and healthier work environment for everyone.

Adopting a prevention program will help reduce the number of workplace injuries, illnesses or fatalities. In addition to this, employers will have the opportunity to better their compliance standards with existing ones, which will give them the benefit of experiencing better finances and a safer environment. Prevention programs should have evaluation, identification and control measures for the workplace. These should be aimed at any existing hazards, which is something that will vary from one workplace to another. Some specific tasks should also be assigned to various workers, managers or supervisors.

There are several elements that comprise an effective plan, and these include the following:

- Management should establish concise and clear health and safety goals for the program, and these should provide definitions for the actions that are needed to reach the goals.
- Management officials should choose one or more workers who are responsible to maintain and implement the program.
- Workers should communicate with other workers who are implementing and developing programs to ensure they are involved.
- Management should provide adequate resources to make sure programs are implemented effectively.
- Management should include designated workers in any workplace inspections or investigations following any incidents.
- All workers should be encouraged to report their concerns about injuries, hazards, near misses and illnesses.
- Management should document and assess hazards in the workplace by asking for workers' input and looking carefully at any available information about hazards.

continued on page 2



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continued from page 1 ... Understanding Workplace Injuries, Illnesses and Safety Hazards

- Employers must always inform their workers of known hazards in the workplace.
- Employers must protect their workers' rights if they participate in these programs.
- If injuries occur, employers should investigate such incidents to identify hazards and what caused them.
- Employers should establish a plan that prioritizes dealing with various hazards.
- Employers should verify that all measures for any controls are effective.
- Management should provide interim controls that are designed to protect workers from hazards that are not immediately controllable.
- Employers must provide training and education to workers in languages they understand to ensure they know what to do.
- Employers should talk about hazard control plans with any workers that will be affected by the specific hazards.
- Workers should understand all of the procedures for reporting illnesses, injuries and safety concerns.
- Workers should know how to identify, control, reduce and eliminate hazards.
- Workers should understand all of the elements of a program and how to participate in it.
- Employers should offer refresher courses for the program periodically.
- Employers should look for ways to improve their programs regularly, and they should evaluate program effectiveness each time.

Employers have many responsibilities when it comes to keeping their workers safe. Every workplace has its own types of hazards. Although precautions reduce injuries, it is important to be fully prepared for when accidents happen anyway. To learn more about this topic, discuss concerns with an agent.



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