



## Visions of a safe and healthy workplace - what would it look like?

After getting a basic list of your goals for a healthy and safe workplace, expand on some of the ingredients. Here are some items and activities you might add to your list.

The safety and health program has policies and procedures that cover:

- reporting all symptoms and hazards, including “near-misses”
- getting information about health and safety, hazards, rights, responsibilities, etc. to all workers
- how to identify symptoms hazards (e.g. surveys, inspections, investigations)
- maintenance schedules and reports
- fixing hazards
  - principles or guidelines for short- and long-term solutions
  - responsibilities (the employer, then supervisors)
  - making sure the solutions or “fixes” work
- training all employees about:
  - responsibilities for all the “players”
  - workers’ rights
  - how to do the job properly
  - the hazards of each task
  - symptoms that may occur, and the hazards behind them
  - what is available to prevent harm from the hazard (e.g. ventilation, protective equipment) and how it’s supposed to work
  - when and how to use protective equipment, as well as its limits
  - reporting procedures (e.g. for symptoms, hazards, protective equipment that doesn’t work)
- who’s responsible for what (e.g. all job descriptions include health and safety)
- harassment, discrimination, etc. is not acceptable if people bring up health and safety issues, ask questions or use their rights
- regular evaluation of all health and safety activities, policies and procedures, and requirements to make changes as needed

Supervisors are competent in health and safety because the employer provides:

- training about their health and safety responsibilities
- information about relevant health and safety issues
- practical guidance about dealing with health and safety issues with their staff
- support and time to do these things

The committee or representative:

- is recognized and respected by everyone in the workplace
- knows the health and safety law and what committees/representatives do
- asks about and deals competently with health and safety issues
- monitors what the employer’s doing about health and safety
- provide feedback and information to the employer and employees about what the committee/rep is doing (especially about questions, complaints or concerns)
- is effective (see 10 ingredients list on the next page)

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- inspects the workplace regularly
- make solid recommendations to the employer
- has time to do the job
- follows up on inspections, investigations, reports, recommendations, complaints and concerns

From management, committee members or representatives get:

- support (e.g. space for materials and working, help when needed, attention to their needs)
  - training for all members (including minimum expected)
  - orientation for new members
  - time for what committee members or representatives must do (e.g. inspections, prepare for meetings, attend meetings)
  - access to information about health and safety activities and statistics
  - quick and proper responses to recommendations
  - regular conversations with management about what's working and what needs improvement, in terms of the committee
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## The ingredients of effective joint health and safety committees

Effective joint health and safety committees don't fall from the sky. They need to be built, nurtured and supported. Based on our experience (supplemented by studies and experiences elsewhere), here are 10 necessary ingredients:

1. Commitment, support, participation and respect from all levels of management, especially at "the top".
2. Organizational acceptance that committee activities are real work, not a volunteer activity or add-on; adequate time for committee work, including preparation for activities and meetings, is essential.
3. Competent, trained supervisors with good "people skills".
4. Knowledgeable workers - they are trained, know their rights and participate in health and safety decisions and activities.
5. A comprehensive health and safety program, set in a preventive framework that requires everyone involved to deal with all six hazard categories and look for root causes.
6. All committee members trained and practicing the principles, content and processes required (e.g. they have with skills to run meetings, inspect the workplace, "chat people up", research hazards and solutions and make the case for changes).
7. "New eyes" come into workplaces (e.g. via trained facilitators/trainers, exchanges and discussions).
8. Participatory methods, including visual tools and materials.
9. Short and long-term planning and evaluation of committee activities, integrated into the organisation's activities.
10. Recognition that conflict is inherent in joint worker-management committees; processes set up to deal with it in a respectful and healthy way.

