

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.

