Part H Step 5 - *How do we get the solutions we need?*

It's one thing to know the solution, but it's another to get it!

H.1 What's this part all about?

Naming the **problem** is the key first step in the problem-solving cycle. The problem is NOT a symptom; it is the reason for the symptom. It's one thing to know how to deal with a health or safety hazard. It's another to get the solution for the problem or issue. This is the last step in our five-step process. (With evaluation of implemented solutions, you may be starting the five steps all over again.)

It is important to name the right or "real" problem if it's to be fixed. If the wrong problem is identified, the solution will not work or it won't work well. That's a reason to go through the five steps in order.

> Example
> A worker is injured working on a machine. When the committee investigates, you find out that there wasn't a guard on the machine. The problem is not the injury, but the missing safety device.
>
> Besides doing a root cause analysis, your surveillance "detective work" turns up some other facts. Four workers were injured on the machine without a guard in the last 12 months. Amongst other things, this added up to 14 days of lost time, three workers' compensation claims and two injured workers who had to change jobs. It also took time and effort to find and train new workers, deal with the paper work and inspector, get the guard installed properly, etc.

This is the kind of information the committee needs when estimating how much the problem costs. These facts make it easier for the employer to see the value of installing and maintaining the machine guard. Other parts of the case include the duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace and complying with the law.

It's all part of making the case for your **solution** or fixes. To do this, you need to:

- have criteria for setting priorities and getting agreement about solutions
- review your goals for a healthy and safe workplace

Criteria - important benchmarks or priorities. In general, they represent people, effect, time involved and cost - in terms of money, people and materials and equipment.

Problem - the hazard(s) or situation(s) that need to be addressed; it's not the symptom such as an injury or illness.

Root cause - see Part E.

Solution - the answer or answers to a problem. The goals may be short-term, long-term or in between. They may involve several steps. Avoid confusing with strategy.

Strategies - how you get the solution(s); avoid confusing with solution.

- brainstorm ideas about possible solutions
- analyze solutions and related **strategies**
- reach agreement about short- and long-term solutions and strategies to go with them
- make the case for the solutions

Criteria

Sometimes the solutions aren't quite so obvious, or there may be several choices. **Criteria** allow committees and representatives to compare options, especially for solutions to health and safety problems.

You developed criteria in Part B. Also see the *Criteria for decision making form* (CP.6) in the Committee Process Toolbox.

What are our goals?

Once you've identified the problem and its root causes or the part of the problem that can be tackled, the committee or rep is expected to recommend a solution or "fixes" to the employer.

Your focus now is on prevention. What will prevent or reduce injuries, illnesses and diseases? What will get rid of the root cause of a hazard? What will solve the problem?

These questions may remind you about the goals you set in Part C for a healthy and safe workplace (and CP.20). Before you go any further, ground your discussion by reviewing those goals. (It might help to bring out your drawing or list.)

What are possible solutions?

To make sure you have all possible solutions - short-, medium- and long-term - spend a bit of time to brainstorm about this within the committee.

Brainstorming is a great way to generate new thinking about possible solutions, especially for long-standing problems. It allows you to separate

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Take the *Criteria for decision making* form you developed in the Committee Activity in Part B.

Name one problem on your agenda at the moment. Taking the problem as an example, practice using your criteria. When you're done, talk about:

How did the form help us to make decisions?

What would make it easier to answer the questions?

How can we follow up on these ideas?

solutions from strategies, to apply your prevention principles and "blue sky" innovative ideas. See the *Six Thinking Hats* tool for guidelines (CP.17).

Although prevention is the goal of health and safety, sometimes your fix is a long-term solution that will take time to implement or needs to be put in a budget for capital expenses.

Therefore, after you have at least two options for solutions, test them against your criteria. If one seems to be too expensive or another will take two years to implement, they might fail — as short-term solutions. However, either one may be realistic long-term fixes.

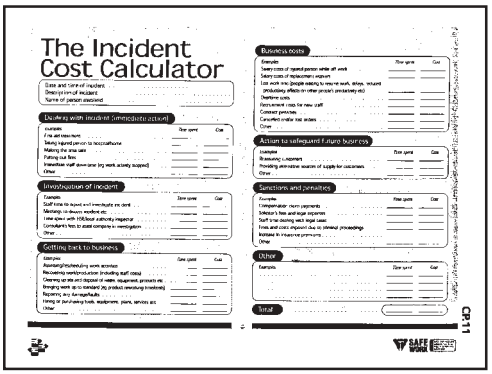
Depending on the urgency of the problem, an immediate, short-term solution may be necessary. You can recommend one, knowing that it is not dealing with the root cause. Then take the time needed to brainstorm and research a long-term fix that is closer to Level 1 on the prevention triangle.

To get agreement about possible solutions, use the relevant tools in Part B. Consider using force field analysis (CP.7) if it is difficult to reach consensus on the possible solutions.

Analyze the solutions, develop strategies

Your solutions may need some explanations, if you want to persuade your employer to accept them.

Avoid rejecting a solution just because someone says it will be too expensive. Instead, use the *Incident Cost Calculator* (CP.11).


The Incident Cost Calculator

Date and time of incident
Description of incident
Name of person involved

Dealing with incident (investigation, actual)
Example — Time spent — Cost
Other

Involvement of incident
Example — Time spent — Cost
Other

Getting back to business
Example — Time spent — Cost
Other

Business costs
Example — Time spent — Cost
Other

Action to safeguard future business
Example — Time spent — Cost
Other

Sanctions and penalties
Example — Time spent — Cost
Other

Other
Example — Time spent — Cost

Total

CP.11

It is a tool to help anyone involved with health and safety issues think through the cost of solutions and problems. The *Incident Cost Calculator* can help committee members and representatives think through possible solutions, and consider costs. It also focuses the committee on answering questions that decision-makers will likely ask before implementing a solution.

Looking at <u>all</u> the costs makes it more likely that the employer will accept a recommendation and implement the solutions. One tip: practice with past situations. The retrospective look may provide other alternatives but it also will be good practice for the committee/rep before using it for a current problem.

You may need to get some answers about costs from the employer. An accounting person or someone else who deals with expenses in the workplace may be quite helpful. (And they'll learn more about health and safety in the process.)

Solutions don't fall from the sky. They often require strategies if they are to be implemented. Some of the tools in Part B will help you develop strategies. For each solution:

- use *Force field analysis* (CP.7) to determine the forces that will drive or restrain its implementation
- based on the analysis, brainstorm strategies for each one (CP.18)
- compare the solution to your goals
- decide which strategies are best to use in the circumstances
- assign responsibilities accordingly
- set follow-up deadlines, etc.
- evaluate its effectiveness at several points after it's implemented

Like the solutions, you'll need agreement about the strategies. Use the Part B tools that help you do this.

Making the case

"Making the case" is a summary of all the committee's work involving a recommendation - the solutions, the rationale for them and the strategies that will help get them.

Two forms will help you do this. The *Recommendation form* (CP.15) is what you submit to the employer. The information of the form is based on your input on the *Healthy solutions for workplace hazards* (CP.10).

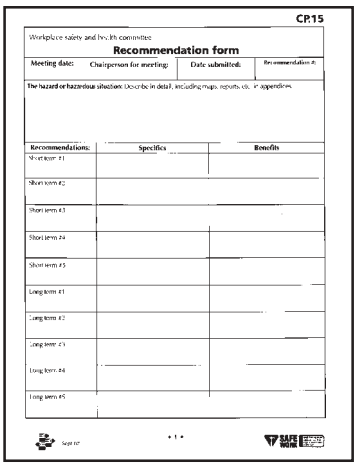
COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Take one example of a problem, for which you have short- and long-term solutions. Use it to practice the steps listed in the discussion about analysing solutions and setting strategies. When you're done, discuss:

How well did these steps work for us?

What do we need to add?

How will we do that?


CP.15

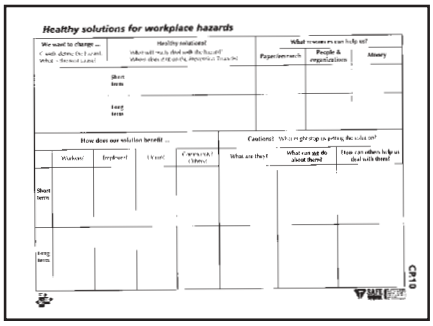
Workplace safety and health committee

Recommendation form

Meeting date:	Chairperson for meeting:	Date submitted:	Recommendation #:

The hazard or hazardous situation: Describe in detail, including maps, reports, etc. in appendices.

Recommendations:	Specifics	Benefits
Short term #1		
Short term #2		
Short term #3		
Short term #4		
Short term #5		
Long term #1		
Long term #2		
Long term #3		
Long term #4		
Long term #5		


Healthy solutions for workplace hazards

CP.10

The healthy solutions chart (CP.10) is a tool to record your short-term and long-term solutions and strategies for a particular problem. It lets you track the analysis you have done for solutions to a health and safety problem. Fill it in as you make decisions about each heading.

Making a case often requires other materials to explain the facts, figures and reasons. For example, to emphasize the benefits of a long-term solution that seems expensive, you might use an *Incident Cost Calculator* sheet (CP.11) as an appendix.

With simple or short-term problems, the committee or rep will not take a lot of time to make the case for change. For more complicated situations, it will help to get through what may seem to be a confusing and time-consuming process.

H. 2 Why is this step important?

Committees and representatives accomplish many of their goals by making recommendations to their employer about changes that are needed in the workplace. Follow up afterwards also is essential.

That's why getting the "fixes" you need is the last part of the five-step problem-solving cycle. While it's useful to know what **solution** is best for a hazard, getting it, or a shorter term "fix", may be a different story. That takes a **strategy** or several tactics.

The problem-solving cycle occurs over and over again in a committee's or representative's work. At first, it may seem slow to go through each step in the process, but this is how a committee or representative gets better at problem-solving.

One of the "next steps" in this part of the manual is also important. Once a year, committees and reps should evaluate their work using the detailed *Workplace safety and health committee self-evaluation checklist* (CP.21B). This lets you pinpoint where you're doing well and what needs improvement. Comparing one year's results to the next year's will show trends.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

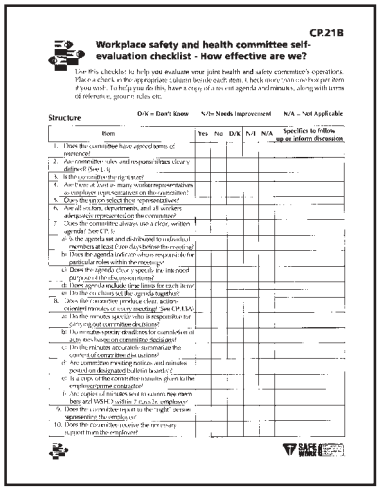
1. Before a meeting, use the *Healthy solutions for workplace hazards* chart (CP.10) to list your ideas about solutions for a particular problem and strategies to implement them. Do this individually or in caucuses that meet to prepare for meetings.

   At the meeting, use the Chart as a reminder about ideas for each heading.

2. As the committee discusses solutions and strategies for a problem, use the Chart to guide your discussion and record agreements.

   Before you complete plans for making your case, including the recommendations, check to see what is not filled in. Decide who needs to do what to get the information you need.

   Use the Chart to prepare your "case" and a recommendation using the form. Make sure that individuals know what's expected of them, especially for the strategies.


CP.21B

Workplace safety and health committee self-evaluation checklist - How effective are we?

H.3 What tools will help us learn more about getting solutions?

- ✓ *Active listening - 10 tips to help us do it* (CP. 2)
- ✓ *Six thinking hats* (CP. 17)
- ✓ *Workplace safety and health committee effectiveness* (CP. 21A & B)
- ✓ *Incident Cost Calculator* (CP. 11)
- ✓ *Criteria for decision-making* (CP. 6A & B)
- ✓ *Force field analysis* (CP.7)
- ✓ *Healthy solutions for workplace hazards* (CP. 10)
- ✓ *Consensus - a key process* (CP. 5)
- ✓ *Recommendation form* (CP. 15)
- ✓ *Prevention triangle* (SH. 13)

H.4 What is the next step?

Follow-up and evaluation are key parts of any problem-solving cycle. Committee members and reps need to follow-up on:

- recommendations
- minutes, especially unresolved issues
- the responsibilities they are assigned

Evaluation is a feedback process that lets us know what we're doing well and what needs improvement. Legally, committee members and reps are supposed to evaluate a variety of their activities (see the checklist called *Responsibilities of workplace safety and health committees in Manitoba* - L.3). But it is also important to assess how committees do their job, how effective they are.

The *Workplace safety and health committee effectiveness checklist* (CP. 21 B) is a detailed evaluation form. Use it once a year to check how you're doing. Compare the results with those from your quick version, done in Part B of this manual. Also compare the results with your goals, described in Part C.

H.5 What's the law say about getting solutions?

The legal responsibilities for getting fixes are basically the same as those for fixing hazards, in Part G - Step 4.

The only addition is a practical one. Committees and reps need to follow up on what happens to recommendations.

Employer responses to committee recommendations are due in 30 days, if the "fix" is not made before then. If committee meetings are held every month, the responses should be on the agenda of the next meeting. If the committee meets less often, someone should be assigned responsibility for finding out what's happening with a response and letting others on the committee know about it.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Have each committee member answer the *Workplace safety and health committee effectiveness self - evaluation - a quick check* (CP. 21A) on their own. Compare the results amongst yourselves, with your goals and with the short self-evaluation from Part B, page B-17. Set aside at least an hour to discuss:

What are we doing well?

What have we achieved in the last year?

What do we need to improve?

What are our priorities for improvement?

How will we work towards them?

What is one thing we can do differently in the next month or two?

Use brainstorming and other tools for reaching agreement in the process.