

## **School Safety Management**

The key to school safety success lies in the development of a district-wide safety culture. What priority does district administration place on safety? Commitment from the superintendent, business manager and school board is perhaps the most important single determinant of safety program success.

School administrators generally agree that at least one individual needs to be committed to and accountable for safety program success. This individual will likely be the school district business manager, operations manager, facilities manager, chief financial officer or treasurer. Accountability is vital. Assign someone the responsibility for safety, provide that individual with the tools, training and authority to act and then clearly establish their accountability for safety.

Once commitment to safety is in place with district administration, address safety responsibilities and accountability within each facility and across all departments. Include employee safety measures in the performance-review process. Set safety goals, communicate expectations, establish performance measurements and hold people accountable. For example:

1. Performance measures at the operational level (supervisors, teachers, counselors, custodians, food service employees, etc.) should focus on such activities as safety audits, safety meetings, in-service training, accident reports and safety suggestions;
2. Performance measures at the school administration level (principal, assistant principal) tend to include tracking and measuring the safety activities at the operational level, as well as school-specific results, such as reduction in injuries, return to work and claims-management issues;
3. Performance measures at the district administration level (superintendent, treasurer, business manager, school board) tend to include tracking and measuring school-specific results and district-wide results, such as reduction in workers' compensation costs and impact on total budget.

Finally, develop and issue a safety policy statement that clearly communicates district administration's commitment to school safety and health.

### **Employee Involvement**

Employee involvement is a critical part of the employee safety process. Safety committees or safety teams are a common means of involving employees. The most effective teams generally include certified and classified employees, union presidents from both groups, principals, supervisors and a member of the school board. It is recommended a school board member serve on the safety committee and acts as a liaison between the committee and the board. An executive steering committee could consist of a school board member, the superintendent, the business manager, treasurer, principals and the safety team facilitator.

Effective teams have a well-defined purpose and generally include members with good decision-making skills and the authority to act on their decisions. Meetings are considered high priority and all necessary accommodations are made to allow each member to attend. Emphasis is placed on shared decision making. Involvement in safety activities is so important, these schools are willing to pay overtime, rearrange schedules or provide substitutes to allow employees to participate.

The activities and responsibilities of each safety committee/team member vary and may include any of the following:

- Conduct regularly scheduled meetings; Post meeting minutes informing the entire organization of the team's activities and accomplishments;
- Conduct safety inspections and/or oversee the inspection process;
- Monitor the status of safety issues and hold people accountable for corrective action;
- Monitor the safety-suggestion program, implement suggestions and provide feedback;
- Publish a safety newsletter or contribute to the safety section of a general newsletter;
- Form safety project teams as needed;
- Constantly communicate safety issues to top administrators to keep them informed, establish accountability and ensure timely completion of action items;

### **Safe Work Practices**

Schools need to develop safe work practices and communicate them effectively to employees. As schools employ many people performing a variety of work activities, it is necessary to develop specific safe work practices for each department, depending on the nature of the work performed.

Safe work practices are a supplement to other management actions, such as proper work place design and integrating safety into all job functions. Be sure to develop safe working practices that are reasonable and specific. Practices that cannot be enforced will potentially impair the effectiveness of other safe work practices. The most effective safe work practices are those the employees performing the work help to develop. People tend to buy into the safety process more if they are involved in the process. Participation in executive, building and departmental employee safety teams also helps educate employees on potential accident causes and methods to control and eliminate them.

Write safe work practices in language that is easily understandable and that emphasizes the proper way to do the job rather than what is prohibited. For example, say, "Use a ladder to reach..." the object instead of, "Don't stand on a chair to..." Give new employees a written copy of the general safe work practices and any department-specific practices they will need to follow to do their jobs without injury or illness.

Make safety training an ongoing process. The administrative group and safety teams should frequently review general and area-specific safe work practices with employees. All employees working in or visiting various other areas than their own need an understanding of safe work practices in ALL those working areas.

Developing safe work practices also is an ongoing process. Do not consider these practices to be cast in stone. Safety teams need to review and revise them periodically to keep them up to date.

## **I. ACCIDENT ANALYSIS**

- A) DO THE FOLLOWING IMMEDIATELY AFTER AN ACCIDENT:
  - 1) Ensure that the employee receives immediate medical care;
  - 2) Start the accident-analysis process promptly;
  - 3) Maintain conditions at the accident scene as much as possible;
  - 4) Involve the supervisor, the affected employee and any witnesses;
  - 5) Form a fact-finding committee in the event of serious accidents.
  
- B) COLLECT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON THE INJURED PERSON:
  - 1) Name;
  - 2) Date and time of injury;
  - 3) Occupation and task being performed at the time of the injury;
  - 4) Normal work hours;
  - 5) Department;
  - 6) Address;
  - 7) Sex;
  - 8) Age or date of birth;
  - 9) Social Security number;
  - 10) Length of service;
  - 11) Physician and hospital name;
  - 12) Type and extent of injury;
  - 13) Description of accident or illness scenario;
  - 14) Analysis of causal factors;
  - 15) Recommended corrective action;
  - 16) Injured employee statement;
  - 17) Witness statements;
  - 18) Name of person completing the form and the date.

## **II. SAFETY & HEALTH MEETINGS**

- A) CONDUCT REGULAR SAFETY & HEALTH MEETINGS
  - 1) Schedule regular meetings: once a week, twice a month or at least monthly;
  - 2) Plan for 15- to 30-minute meetings. Start and end on time;
  - 3) Use a reference source, such as the Safety Leader's Discussion Guide (available at no charge from the Ohio BWC Division of Safety & Hygiene);
  - 4) Encourage all to participate by asking questions or seeking suggestions;
  - 5) Seek quiet areas to meet;
  - 6) Devote the meeting exclusively to health and safety matters;
  - 7) Use visual aids to supplement, but not replace, your presentation;
  - 8) Prepare and distribute a meeting summary and minutes of the last meeting;
  - 9) If discussing an accident or illness, focus on facts surrounding the incident, the injury and causes;
  - 10) Discussion of failure to adhere to a safety procedure should cover why the behavior was unsafe, the potential hazards and constructive discussion on following procedures.

### **III. EMPLOYEE SAFETY AND HEALTH TRAINING**

#### **A) OFFER EMPLOYEE TRAINING FOR THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:**

- 1) Bloodborne pathogens;
- 2) First-aid training;
- 3) Electrical safety;
- 4) Lock out/tag out;
- 5) Emergency action;
- 6) Fire prevention;
- 7) Hazard communication;
- 8) Laboratory chemical safety;
- 9) Hot work;
- 10) Respiratory protection;
- 11) Hearing conservation;
- 12) Confined space entry;
- 13) Crane and hoist;
- 14) Powered industrial trucks;
- 15) Personal protective equipment;
- 16) Access to medical and exposure records.

#### **B) CONDUCT REGULAR SAFETY & HEALTH TRAINING WHICH MAY INCLUDE:**

- 1) Monthly safety and health meetings;
- 2) Regular personal safety contacts;
- 3) Safety training related to changes in work processes or procedures;
- 4) Safety training related to the nature of the work or safety compliance issues, such as hazard communications, fire safety and emergency procedures.

### **IV. TREATMENT OF SICK OR INJURED EMPLOYEES**

#### **A) DEVELOP MEDICAL RESPONSE PLAN INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:**

- 1) Emergency telephone numbers;
- 2) Roles and responsibilities of first-aid providers;
- 3) Identification of all types of medical emergencies;
- 4) Training in techniques to prevent the spread of bloodborne pathogens;
- 5) The medical-emergency response process for each type of medical emergency, including the medical provider and method of transportation;
- 6) How to report and document the medical incident and response.

#### **B) TRAINING**

The school must ensure that those individuals who will provide emergency medical assistance are trained not only to provide first aid, but also to prevent the transmission of bloodborne pathogens. Conduct training at the time of employment and annually thereafter. At a minimum, the training should cover these topics:

- 1) A copy and explanation of OSHA's bloodborne pathogen standard (29 CFR1910.1030);
- 2) Causes and symptoms of bloodborne diseases;
- 3) Disease transmission modes;
- 4) The school's exposure-control plan and how to obtain a copy;
- 5) Tasks and activities that might cause exposure to infectious materials;

- 6) Methods to prevent or reduce exposures, including engineering controls, work practices and personal protective equipment (PPE);
  - 7) Proper use, location, handling, removal, decontamination and disposal of PPE;
  - 8) Reasons for selecting PPE;
  - 9) Information on hepatitis B vaccine;
  - 10) What to do in case of contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials;
  - 11) Post-exposure evaluation and follow-up actions;
  - 12) Signs, labels and color-coding requirements.
- B) POLICIES & PROCEDURES
- 1) Make first-aid supplies available to employees. These must be physician approved, inspected monthly and replenished as necessary.
  - 2) Employees should have a managed care organization (MCO) card that explains procedure to follow in case of injury;
  - 3) Create a policy establishing a process for claims management between the administrative group and all employees;
  - 4) Follow MCO card procedure for medical treatment from school's preselected medical provider, report injury immediately, medical provider reports back to administrative group, selected medical provider should have a philosophy of sports medicine;
  - 5) Collaboration should occur between the school, the administrative group and employee unions to provide wage continuation and return-to-work strategies.

## **V. JOB SAFETY ANALYSIS**

For years, job safety analysis (JSA) has been a simple, but effective means to identify hazards and potentially unsafe procedures associated with a specific task or job. Schools can benefit from the JSA process to identify hazards and educate employees in safe procedures. JSA techniques are effective tools for all employees because they efficiently analyze the job or task and produce detailed information on task-specific accident risks, process improvements and control measures.

JSAs may not fit into all employee tasks. In certain areas, such as custodial, maintenance and others that the safety involvement team discovers, a JSA will be beneficial. When considering where to use the JSA process, analyze first the tasks or jobs having the poorest accident experience or those with the greatest potential for injury. By establishing priorities, the JSA process focuses attention on areas that can have the greatest impact on accident prevention.

### **A) DISTRICT SAFETY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- 1) Understand the objectives and means of analyzing jobs element by element;
- 2) Recognize the JSA process as an effective tool and incorporate it into the regular accident-prevention and safety-management process;
- 3) Develop and implement a correction process that responds to identified problems in a timely manner;
- 4) Review the results and take action, if appropriate, on all JSAs completed in their employee tasks;
- 5) Retain a copy of all approved safe-job procedures developed as a result of a JSA;

- 6) Educate and train employees using the information developed through the JSA process;
- 7) Regularly observe employees and ensure that they use safe work practices.

## **VI. ERGONOMICS**

Ergonomics is the task of designing the workstation to accommodate the employee, instead of expecting the employee to function in a work area that does not match his or her physical capabilities or limitations. Workstations designed for worker comfort, without excessive physical or mental stress, improve productivity, work quality, job satisfaction and attitude. Child-sized desks and chairs are a perfect example of fitting the workstation to the person.

### **CTDs**

Cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs) refer to wear and tear on the musculoskeletal system. The effects of repeated stress on a certain body part add up over a period of time, resulting in injury. Any part of the musculoskeletal system can be subject to CTDs. For example, pressure on the median nerve in the wrist, either from work that requires constant bending of the wrists or direct pressure on the nerve from a work surface, causes carpal tunnel syndrome.

### **Identifying Problem Areas**

You can use several methods to determine employee work areas in your facility where ergonomics risk factors might exist. Accident records, workers' compensation history and first-aid reports will help pinpoint the types of injuries, that occur. Personnel records can help identify where absenteeism and tardiness are problems. And interviews with employees can provide information on symptoms. Task analysis or job safety analysis (JSA) is another effective technique for finding and documenting ergonomic problems.

## **VII. TRANSPORTATION**

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), nearly 400,000 school buses travel more than a billion miles transporting children to and from school. Those two factors alone drastically increase the likelihood of a bus-related accident; yet, remarkably, less than one-half of 1 percent of fatal traffic crashes since 1988 involved school buses.

While traffic safety is important, ergonomics are perhaps an even greater concern for those who drive the buses and hazardous exposures are more of a problem for those who maintain and repair them.

### **Bus Ergonomics**

School buses are designed more with utility than comfort in mind. They're designed to transport as many students as possible. Unfortunately, certain factors are sacrificed with that design.

Prolonged sitting and bus vibration are sources of back injuries among drivers. Shoulder and back injuries can be traced to operating the levers that open and close bus doors, which a driver must do repeatedly during the day.

Seats designed for better shock absorption can be retrofitted to older school buses to help protect the driver against cumulative vibration effects. Air-powered doors also are available, which the driver can operate with the push of a button on the dashboard instead of having to lean out from his or her seat to

operate levers. If purchasing new buses, contact the manufacturer to see if they can be equipped with these features at the factory.

### **Safe Bus Operation**

Because they are entrusted both with their own safety and the safety of many schoolchildren, it is imperative that bus drivers be well-trained and up-to-date on all school policies, traffic laws and safe operational techniques. Regular inspection and maintenance also are important to the safe operation of school buses.

### **Chemical Exposures**

Carbon monoxide (CO) from vehicle exhaust can be a concern for bus drivers, passengers and mechanics. CO is a byproduct of incomplete combustion. It is a tasteless, colorless and odorless gas that displaces the oxygen in air and causes asphyxiation for its victims.

Factors that can cause CO to enter a vehicle include damaged or defective exhaust pipes, openings in the floorboard or body of the vehicle or open windows if the vehicle is idling. Inspect exhaust systems and the vehicle's structural integrity regularly to prevent the chance of exposure.

Do not allow an engine to run for prolonged periods when the vehicle is indoors, such as in the bus-maintenance area. Maintenance areas must be adequately ventilated to prevent overexposure to CO and vapors from petroleum products and other chemicals.

Asbestos exposure is a hazard for anyone performing brake repairs. Safe work practices, such as wearing PPE, can minimize the threat. The use of a wet-washing technique for cleaning brake assemblies can control asbestos emissions. Only properly trained employees with special brake-cleaning equipment should be permitted to perform brake work when asbestos exposure may occur.

### **Physical Hazards**

Housekeeping measures, such as keeping floors clean and dry and walkways unobstructed, can prevent slips, trips and falls. Proper storage techniques also can reduce fire hazards by keeping flammable and combustible materials away from heat sources, such as welders or portable heaters.

## **VIII. PHYSICAL HAZARDS**

### **Machine guarding**

Unguarded pinch points on machinery, such as grinding wheels and saws are a source of many serious injuries. Pinch, nip or shear points are the points at which a person can be caught between the moving parts of a machine or between the material and the machine's moving parts. Guarding problems may exist in shop class equipment as well as in equipment the custodial staff uses.

You can identify machine hazards by asking these questions:

- Can an individual be caught in, on or between two objects?
- Can an object strike an individual?
- Can an individual come in contact with a hazardous object?

Effective guarding can eliminate many of these hazards. When possible, purchase equipment with factory-installed guards. You should guard a machine's point of operation — where the saw blade meets the wood, for example — at all times. Point-of-operation guarding usually is required on the mechanical power transmission components of machines. Also, equipment, such as portable power tools, lawn mowers and grinders should be guarded to protect workers against injury.

**Guarding Methods:**

- Light curtains (a beam of light which, if interrupted, automatically deactivates the machine);
- Air clutches with palm buttons;
- Steel mesh;
- Guardrails;
- Lawn mower covers;
- Flexible guards, such as the movable guard on a power saw;
- Mechanical barriers,

**Hand Tools**

For tools to be used safely, they must be designed for the job, in good condition and used properly. Workers who ignore any of these factors put themselves at serious risk of injury. Repair or replace tools with damaged or defective striking surfaces and replace damaged handles. Keep tools clean and free of rust and keep cutting edges sharp and clean. Ensure screwdrivers and wrenches are the right size for the job. Store tools properly to prevent accidental contact.

**Portable Power Tools**

Nearly all power tool accidents are due to inadequate training, improper technique, failure to wear PPE or poor maintenance. Allow workers to use power tools only after they are familiar with their controls, safety requirements and operating procedures. Have workers inspect all tools before use to ensure they are clean and in good condition. Make sure the power switch on the tool is turned off before connecting it to a power source and ensure all safety guards are installed.

Disconnect power tools from the power source before performing adjustments or maintenance. Equip tools with a three-pronged plug for proper grounding or double-insulate. Replace or repair loose wires or frayed insulation and replace rather than splice electrical cords.

Ground-fault circuit interruption is necessary to prevent accidental shock when working in wet conditions. Power-tool operation requires the worker's undivided attention; prohibit horseplay.

**Walking and Working Surfaces**

Slips, trips and falls lead to many workplace injuries. They often can be attributed to housekeeping issues or unguarded openings. Keep floors and hallways clean, dry and free of obstructions that might create tripping hazards. Run cords and wiring overhead so no one will trip. Repair or replace flooring with holes, loose boards and protruding nails or splinters. Repair or replace broken stairs and rebuild uneven steps to a uniform height and tread width.

Guard openings in floors with covers, grating or standard guardrails (42-inch top rail, one inch mid-rail and four-inch toe board). Round metal tubing is recommended, but you may use two-by-fours if they can withstand 200 pounds of horizontal pressure.

Open-sided stairways and floors, elevated platforms and runways also should have standard guardrails. Place stairway handrails 30 to 34 inches higher than the top surface of the tread with at least a three-inch clearance between the rail and the wall. Stairway handrails should withstand at least 200 pounds of pressure.

### **Ladders**

Portable ladders should be in sound, usable condition without cracks, splinters, breaks, bends and damaged or missing braces. Destroy defective portable ladders. Stationary or fixed ladders must be free of defects and designed to support their intended load. A fixed ladder should be at least seven inches from the nearest permanent structure.

## **IX. SCHOOL VIOLENCE**

Acts of violence have become an ever-increasing problem in U.S. workplaces. According to National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, an average of 20 workers are murdered weekly. Another 1 million or more are assaulted each year. Obviously, certain occupations face greater risk from violence, such as those that require employees to handle money or guard valuable property, in addition to those who work alone or late at night. However, recent high-profile incidents show that schools, unfortunately, are not immune to acts of violence.

The school is a special setting where the threat of violence can come from a number of sources, not just employees, but also students, parents and others. The protection of school staff and students depends on assessing the potential for dangerous situations and taking steps to counteract them. As no particular strategy will be effective for all schools, collect information on as many school violence incidents as possible to help you determine the type of prevention strategy that is necessary and effective in your school.

### **Contributing factors**

- External risk factors, such as public contact, working in high-crime areas, exchanging money and working alone or in small numbers;
- Psychological and social issues, such as domestic troubles, perceived lack of trust or caring and media influence;
- Employment and economic issues, such as job changes or downsizing and tension between administration and employees;
- Denial that violence is a problem or that it can happen in any particular setting, the belief that it is a social and not a workplace problem;
- Stress created by life-changing issues, substance abuse and personal problems;
- Autocratic or out-of-touch leadership styles, unrealistic expectations, preferential treatment and lack of teamwork.

If some combination of these ingredients comes together — a troubled employee or student, a negative environment and some sort of trigger event — the chance of violence increases dramatically. The Columbine High School tragedy serves as an example of these overlapping factors: troubled teens, an environment where they felt like outcasts and ongoing ridicule by other students.

## **Warning Signs for Pending Violence**

Type I: Increased crime in the area, employee concerns, special conditions or events;

Type II: Security breaches, close calls, employee concerns;

Type III: Employees, students, parents and fans who:

- Keep largely to themselves and have few interests outside of school;
- Hold grudges;
- Have trouble accepting authority or criticism;
- Tend to blame others;
- Repeatedly violate rules and policies;
- Have a history of interpersonal conflict, intimidation or violent behavior;
- Are preoccupied with weapons and refer frequently to them;
- Have substance-abuse problems;
- Are frequently depressed or withdrawn;
- Express an unwanted romantic interest in someone;
- Have increased absence, tardiness or grievance activity.

Type IV: Problems with personal relationship (real or perceived):

- Divorce;
- Spousal abuse;
- Recent break up;
- Stalking incident;
- Restraining orders.

## **Prevention Strategies**

- Policy of zero tolerance toward real or implied acts of violence;
- Awareness training for all employees;
- Crisis plan and crisis team to respond to and help mitigate potentially violent situations;
- Stringent hiring policies, including rigid background checks;
- Communication, trust and honesty;
- Administrative and employee involvement;
- Help with stress, change and uncertainty.

## **X. SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Substance abuse damages lives. Just as you fight to prevent drug and alcohol use among the young people in your schools, you must fight to prevent use among your employees. Substance use is often the silent and unseen cause of work-related accidents. Unfortunately, schools and their employees often are not aware of this invisible danger until it's too late. National statistics show that drug and alcohol users are more likely to be involved in a workplace accident or injure other employees. Consider the following statistics:

- *Education:* Substance users are 33 percent to 50 percent less educationally attentive than nonusers;

- *Absenteeism*: Employees who inappropriately use substances are absent an average of three weeks more yearly and tardy three times more than nonusers;
- *Accidents*: Users are three to four times more likely to have an accident on the job and five times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim;
- *Medical claims*: Substance users file 300 percent to 400 percent more costly medical claims;
- *Employee theft*: A large percentage of all pilferage, theft and loss is due to substance-using employees.

Any drug-free work place program should include the following components:

- Written policy;
- Employee education;
- Supervisor training;
- Drug and alcohol testing;
- Employee assistance;
- Safety.

Schools who want to establish such a program may use the technical assistance and support provided by Ohio BWC and the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services.

## **XI. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

Although eliminating hazards in the work environment is important, it may not always be possible or feasible to do so through engineering and other means. In the maintenance or transportation departments of the school system or in the vocational education department, for example, the use of grinding wheels and other power tools may produce particles that could be injurious to the eyes. In cases like this, the use of PPE is necessary.

Examples of PPE include:

- Face and eye protection — safety glasses, goggles and face shields;
- Head protection — hard hats and bump caps;
- Protective footwear — safety shoes, rubber boots and metatarsal guards;
- Hand protection — heat- or chemical-resistant gloves.

The type of PPE required in a given set of circumstances will depend on the specific hazards and the duration and intensity of exposure. It is important to select and have employees use the proper type of PPE to protect them from the identified hazard. To be effective, PPE must be readily available, sized correctly and designed for the use intended.

Proper care of PPE is important, as it helps protect against damaged or defective equipment and increases the protection provided to employees. When applicable, PPE must meet the requirements specified by the American National Standards Institute.

Training is an important part of any PPE program. It takes little time to explain the objectives and use of PPE as well as a school's policy on its use. As with any safety and health-training activity, document the following information:

- Date and time of training;
- Subject and instructor;
- Outline of training;
- Title of any videos or slides shown;
- Handouts used to supplement training;
- Attendance;
- Scores from written training exercises.

**The training must include:**

- When and what PPE is necessary;
- Proper way to put on, take off, adjust and wear PPE;
- Limitations of PPE;
- Proper care, maintenance and disposal.

Employees must demonstrate they understand PPE requirements and proper use before given permission to perform job tasks that require PPE. Retraining must be done whenever changes in the job task or in the type of PPE used make the previous training obsolete or when there appears to be a lack of understanding or skill in using PPE.

**The school must have a written PPE program, including:**

- Objectives;
- Definitions;
- School policies;
- User responsibilities;
- Procedures;
- Written certification of hazard assessment;
- Employee training records.

The person responsible for safety issues should be in charge of the school's hazard-assessment and PPE-selection process. The administrative group is responsible for ensuring the correct PPE is available, functional and correctly worn. Also, the administrative group should let employees know how to replace equipment and what to do if they have an equipment problem.

## **XII. SAFETY COMMITTEES AND INVOLVEMENT TEAMS**

Safety committees have the potential to significantly affect workers' compensation costs by enhancing the organization's accident-prevention process.

Safety committees foster communication, an important component of the organization's safety process. Employee involvement in school safety provides many advantages. The school benefits by tapping into a reservoir of knowledge that employees possess and by incorporating supervisors' perspectives into the decision-making process. Close collaboration between employees and supervisors encourages a closer working relationship and provides opportunities for greater understanding.

It is important the administrative group recognizes the contribution that safety committees can make with regard to accident prevention and cost containment in their organization. Administrative support is important to achieve successful outcomes.

Two-way communication is crucial for achieving success. Employees need to believe the administration is listening, that they have a say in safety-related matters and that their opinions are important. Participation in group decision-making and problem-solving discussions helps to involve employees in the school's safety processes and creates a sense of ownership.

The safety committee is not the safety coordinator's committee. The committee should be representative of ALL departments. Consequently, the safety coordinator should not be the chairperson. The chairperson should be a *regular committee member*. The safety coordinator should attend as an ex-officio member of the committee.

It is helpful to elect a vice chairperson or secretary to assist with meeting minutes, communication, scheduling and follow-up. Some committees use a system wherein the vice chair assumes the chairperson's role at the end of the term and a new vice-chair is elected for the next term. This ensures continuity and allows the new chairperson to learn important aspects of committee operation while acting as vice chair.

### **Functions and responsibilities**

Committees function best when they define their own mission and objectives. Functions vary by organization. What works for one may not work for another. You may use the following list of functions as guidance for developing responsibilities:

- Review the safety and health program for the school system;
- Conduct regular safety audits to identify safety problems with equipment, procedures or behaviors;
- Conduct safety training for the staff;
- Take action to address and correct safety-related problems;
- Develop safe work practices and policies;
- Accompany compliance inspectors;
- Represent other employees' views on safety matters.

The committee should regularly meet to review the safety of operations, the adequacy of safety training programs and the organization's illness and injury records. With this information, the committee can participate in establishing the school's safety goals and objectives. Committees also should be involved in the process of working toward achievement of agreed-upon safety and health goals.

### **Benefits**

As the school finds more and more ways to involve employees in workplace safety, the momentum for working safely will build. Employees will feel good about their contribution to the safety of their own workplace and emerge as stakeholders.

Viewed as a constructive resource, labor/management committees that focus on safety can provide very effective strategies for safety and health. The financial and human benefits include reduced costs and the preservation of human resources.

### **XIII. REFERENCES**

1. *Safety Manual for Public Schools*, Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation.
2. *Best Practices for Public Schools*, Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation.