Safety starts at the top

Successful organizations establish safety as a core value of their operations. Senior leadership, including the top executive on site, must be role models to all employees for creating a safe work environment. Active leadership includes, at a minimum:

- Authorizing the necessary resources for accident prevention.

- Discussing safety processes and improvements regularly during staff or employee meetings.

- Ensuring that all members of management are held accountable for accident prevention activities and processes.

- Annually assessing the success of the safety process by utilizing perception surveys, personal interviews, and behavior sampling strategies.

- Encouraging employees to take an active part in maintaining a safe workplace.

Implementation

Senior leadership must assume the leadership role in establishing the importance of safety in all operations. By taking the lead, leadership can effectively use its safety process to contribute to the bottom line and better service to customers by reducing losses due to accidents. The full support and active commitment of senior management is vitally important because it encourages supervisors at all levels to make the safety process a success through accountability. This requires measuring actual performance against pre-established objectives and goals through the organization's performance appraisal system.

There are many ways senior leadership can participate to show active leadership in safety processes:

- Issue a written Safety Policy, affirming safety as a core value to the organization.

- Establish both annual and long-term safety goals.

- Establish safety responsibilities and a system of accountability for all levels.

- Regularly include safety topics in meetings.

- Regularly review progress of the safety process with department heads, supervisors, and employees.

- Accompany supervisors or safety team members during their periodic safety inspections.

- Review copies of all completed accident investigation reports.

- Openly discuss safety with employees during periodic tours.

- Participate, as a student, in employee safety training programs, such as first-aid training.

- Participate in meetings with loss control consultants.

- Use accident loss reports to analyze and develop solutions.

- Review minutes of safety team meetings.

- Review safety survey reports.

As noted above, a written safety policy is a sign of your organization's commitment to providing a safe working environment. Essentially, this policy should be a mission statement to foster a culture conducive to a safe work environment. The requirements include:

- Top executive's philosophy on safety and well-being of employees and commitment to compliance with all applicable governing agencies.

- Manager, supervisor, team facilitator and employees' responsibilities regarding the organization's commitment to workplace safety.

- Commitment to returning injured or ill employees to work at the earliest and safest opportunity.

- Signed and dated by the top executive.

- Communicate to new and existing employees verbally, on bulletin board(s), and in employee handbook.

- Review the policy on an annual basis with all employees.

Although this seems like a minor step, it is the foundational step in implementing an effective safety process. It expresses the commitment of your organization, its ownership, management, and employees to maintaining a safe work environment for all employees. This communication of intent should be just as important as the organization's statement of quality of product or service.

If you have questions or would like to review in more detail, please contact Jim Wirth at 614.546.7331 or jim.wirth@sedgwick.com.