

Michigan Municipal Workers' Compensation Fund

Safety and Health Resource Manual

The Purpose of Safety Committees

The municipality should appoint a formal safety committee to assist management on matters relating to the control of accidents, injuries and incidents. To maintain continuity and control, the municipality should assign the safety coordinator as a permanent staff consultant to the safety committee.

Basic functions that all safety committees perform:

1. Create and maintain an active interest in safety,
2. Reduce accidents (committees do not dictate policy nor relieve those in the line of authority of their direct responsibility), and
3. Involve fellow employees in furthering the cause of accident prevention.

Membership

The size of the municipality determines the type and number of safety committees that will function most effectively. However, the membership of each committee should create prestige for the group. For example, a main or governing committee should include important executives and workers respected by fellow employees.

The committee membership should encompass the maximum knowledge of methods, practices and conditions in the municipality. The committee should be as small as is consistent with these requirements. The types of committees found are as follows:

Safety Council

This is usually a central safety committee composed of department or division heads; it quite frequently includes such persons as department managers, and should include an hourly employee from each department.

- Department Safety Committees;
- Foreman's Safety Committee;
- Labor-Management Safety Committee;
- Housekeeping Committee

A multi-operational municipality may use more than one of these committees. A central safety committee should deal with policies and other general issues; department safety committees should focus on specific departmental issues. The department meetings should meet approximately one week before the central safety committee. Delegates, management and hourly employees from each department or operating facility should attend the central safety committee meeting. The task of the central safety committee is to provide overall guidance and direction for safety, industrial hygiene and loss control, while the task of the specific department safety committee is to solve specific problems and develop department policy.

Michigan Municipal Workers' Compensation Fund

Safety and Health Resource Manual

Activities

When the municipality establishes a committee, it should develop and communicate certain policies and procedures in writing. These should cover:

1. The committee's scope of responsibility;
2. The extent of the committee's authority;
3. The committee's reporting responsibility; as well as
4. Procedures such as:
 - a. Time and place of meetings (committees should not be required to meet after working hours),
 - b. Frequency of meetings,
 - c. Order of business,
 - d. Records the committee should keep, and
 - e. Requirements for attendance.

The safety committee should carry out the following basic functions:

- Discuss and formulate safety policies and recommend their adoption by management;
- Work through supervisors by having management-approved recommendations put into practice;
- Conduct safety inspections, discover unsafe conditions and practices, and determine their remedies;
- Stimulate and maintain the interest of supervisors and heads of departments to help them understand that safety is the responsibility of everyone.
- Stimulate and maintain the interest of workers and convince them they should obey safety rules and instructions;
- Provide an opportunity for free discussion of both accident problems and preventive measures;
- Maintain a cooperative spirit between management and employees;
- Establish procedures for handling safety recommendations and suggestions;
- Review accident investigations and make suggestions and recommendations.

Committee meetings should take place periodically and on schedule. Regular attendance of each member should be mandatory. All recommendations and suggestions from these committees (recorded in the minutes) should receive careful and prompt consideration.

There are two ways of selecting members of the workers' safety committee. Their supervisors may appoint them or their fellow employees may elect them. However, members of the committee should select their own chairperson. The success of a safety committee depends on:

1. The support that management is willing to give to the group;
2. The belief each member has in his usefulness in the overall safety program; and
3. The willingness of each committee member to accept responsibility.