

Safe Work Practices

Employers are responsible for ensuring workers know the safest way to do their work. This includes knowing the hazards of their jobs and workplace, and knowing how to control these hazards. Having written safe work practices and procedures is an essential component of an occupational health and safety program.

What are safe work practices?

Safe work practices are written documents used to train and guide workers in the safest way to perform their jobs. A safe work practice is a set of guidelines established to help workers perform a task which may not require a step by step procedure.

An example of a safe housekeeping practice: when liquid is spilled on the floor, a “wet floor” sign is placed in the area until such time as the spill is cleaned up and the floor is dry.

Important things to keep in mind regarding safe work practices:

- Safe work practices should be easily understood and cover all the activities that occur in the workplace.
- Safe work practices need to be completely and clearly communicated to all staff.
- Safe work practices should be strictly and consistently enforced.
- Safe work practices can become unsafe if they are not regularly reviewed and updated as needed.

Safe work practices:

- *Provide standards for how work is carried out*
- *Positively affect quality, efficiency and productivity*
- *Prevent injury and illness by controlling potential*

Developing safe work practices

Safe work practices should be prepared with input from all staff who will be required to follow them. The safe work practices are reviewed regularly and revised as needed (by the originating group or the occupational health committee). It may be the responsibility of all workers of the department to recommend changes to the safe work practices based on the needs of employees for a safe and healthy work environment.

Safety is everyone's responsibility!

- **Managers** are responsible to ensure that safe work practices are current, available at all work sites and followed by employees. Managers must provide their workers with training on all applicable safe work practices. Management must also provide training for specific job tasks.
- **Workers** are responsible to follow safe work practices for all job tasks. They must assist with the preparation of the safe work practices. Workers are responsible for reporting to their supervisors any hazardous work environment encountered that should have a safe work practice or the revision of a safe work practice already in place.
- **Occupational Health Committees** will assist with the preparation of safe work practices by identifying hazardous work through inspections, investigations, and concerns and complaints brought to the OHC.

Training and Education

Each worker should know, understand and follow all of the safe work practices that pertain to his/her specific work tasks. All workers must be oriented and trained in safe work practices. Training must be provided prior to the worker being exposed to hazards in the workplace. Review of all safe work practices should be performed on an annual basis.

source: adapted from Sunrise Health Region, Safe Work Practices Safety Talk, January 14, 2013

Safety Talk Discussion

Be Accountable: Choose safety - work safe - and go home injury free!