Loss Control Topic

Safety Program Self-Assessment for Religious Institutions

For workers in religious organizations, an assessment of exposures to injuries and illnesses should include focus on falls, strains, cooking operations and hazardous substances. However, in analyzing the level of safety for any organization, consideration should be given to management's concern and actions in establishing safe work procedures, and workers' involvement in creating a safe work environment.

Management

- Is there a formal and written safety program?
- Is there an understanding of the financial impact of injuries?
- Is there a safety orientation and training program for new workers?
- Are healthcare and/or other benefit programs made available to all workers?
- Are less-experienced workers properly supervised?

Falls

- Are slip-resistant flooring or mats used in appropriate locations?
- Are all areas kept neat and orderly to prevent same-level slips, trips, and falls?
- Are warning signs used during and after a floor has been mopped or waxed?
- Is adequate lighting provided in aisles, stairways, and storage rooms?
- Are good housekeeping practices emphasized?
- Is trash removed on a daily basis?
- Is worn, torn, or loose flooring immediately repaired?
- Are wiring and telephone cords properly secured to prevent tripping hazards?

Strains

- Are workers instructed in the use of safe-lifting techniques?
- Are workers encouraged to obtain help when lifting or moving heavy objects?
- Are procedures for two-person lifts used, where appropriate?
- Are overexertion injuries investigated to determine cause and needed procedural changes?
- Are supplies for custodial staff broken down into small, easily handled packages or is appropriate material handling equipment used?

Cooking Operations (Cuts & Burns)

- Are stoves, ovens, fryers, heat lamps, microwave ovens or other heat generating apparatus used and if so, is the equipment in good condition and are operators properly trained?
- Is personal protective equipment provided for handling hot utensils and appliances?
- Are signs posted to alert personnel to hot surfaces?
- Is there any potential for grease splattering?
- Does food preparation require the use of slicing machines, and are they properly guarded?
- Are knives, slicers and other cutting devices used and if so, are operators properly trained. Is equipment in good condition?

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- Are sharp instruments used during food preparation, as well as for unpacking materials?
- Are electrical appliances properly grounded, and wires in good service?
- Is the food preparation area (cooking) adequately ventilated?

Hazardous Substances

- What hazardous chemicals are stored, handled or used by workers?
- Are Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) obtained and made available to workers?
- Are all workers able to read the MSDS and understand the hazards and safety requirements?
- Are hazardous chemicals properly labeled?
- Are workers trained according to the requirements of the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard?
- Is personal protective equipment provided for workers who use or handle chemicals?
- Are chemically-soiled materials and equipment either sterilized or discarded?
- Are any carcinogenic chemicals used?
- Is the exhaust ventilation system adequate to remove flammable and toxic vapors?
- Are flammable and combustible liquids stored in approved containers?
- Are waste removal procedures for chemicals established?
- Are emergency overhead showers and eye wash stations provided?

Workers' Compensation Exposure Controls

A safety and health management system is the cornerstone of an effective occupational safety and health program. Occupational safety and health management is that portion of a complete management system that deals with preventing worker injuries and illnesses, and should be incorporated into a company's operating procedures.

Management System

Establish Safe-Work Procedures - Management and workers should be aware that the cost of accidents has a direct influence on operating costs. Management can take many actions that will directly impact the level of safety and subsequent accidents. First should be a positive, no-nonsense demand that workers use established safe-work procedures. Management must insist on strict adherence to safety protocols and the use of approved personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hard hats, safety shoes, gloves, boots, aprons, face shields, goggles, hearing protection, respirators, etc. Management should also lead by example by wearing PPE and by performing all tasks in a safe manner.

Written Safety Program - The organization should have a written safety program to help stress the seriousness of working safely and to help identify exposures that need to be addressed. Outlining the expected safe work procedures will aid in on-the-job

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training and set a foundation for unsupervised work. Management should provide initial and continuous safety training.

Employee Training - All workers should have a clear understanding of management's attitude toward safety. They should have and use the proper safety equipment for the task at hand. Workers should be responsible for inspecting their PPE each day. Workers who have a voice in the selection of PPE will generally be more receptive to its use. Workers should not take shortcuts or guess at the proper method to accomplish a task. Instead, workers should know they can count on management to help them when difficult situations arise, and that they will be rewarded for safe acts.

Fall Prevention

Climbing - Workers need to be vigilant when climbing and descending stairs, and while using ladders or step stools, to ensure they are free from slippery conditions.

Walking Surface - When pulling or pushing carts or lifting equipment, workers should analyze the path to the destination and take appropriate actions. Conditions that could cause a fall should be corrected or by-passed.

Management Actions - Management should consider the following to reduce worker exposure to falls: (1) require workers to wear shoes with a slip-resistant sole; (2) have workers clean up liquid spills as quickly as possible; (3) coat building steps with a non-slip material; (4) keep walkways and

parking areas clear and unobstructed from debris, snow and ice; (5) provide adequate lighting indoors and outdoors, including on walkways and in parking areas; and (6) inspect and properly maintain all portable ladders and step-stools.

Strain Prevention

Prevention Program - Management should have a strain prevention program that outlines the procedures for the safe use of equipment, provides criteria for two-person lifts, and reinforces the need for storing heavy objects at or below waist level.

Employee Training - Much of the success in preventing strain injuries can be attributed to understanding the exposure. Workers can help to prevent a back injury or strain by reducing bending and twisting, and asking for help with heavy loads. Manual materials handling equipment should be sized for the task and the user. Additionally, management should know which workers have back problems and ensure they are lifting safely, such as by using a buddy system. Finally, the best prevention technique to control strain injuries is recognition by the individual of the hazard and then taking the appropriate action. There should be no stigma attached with asking for help.

Cooking Operations

Written Procedures – There are numerous methods to protect employees who work in a cooking environment. Since work methods may differ by operation, management

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should ensure that procedures they want employees to follow are clearly spelled out. Some of the preventive methods that may be used include: (1) posting caution signs on hot counter surfaces below heat lamps; (2) providing towels, dry cloths, mitts, or potholders to handle hot utensils and appliances; (3) cleaning stoves and hoods on a regular basis to prevent grease buildup; (4) keeping oven doors closed when not being used; and (5) cleaning ovens, stoves, and other hot cooking equipment only after they have cooled.

Hazardous Substances

Personal Protective Equipment - Occupational injuries and illnesses can be caused by exposure to harmful substances or the environment. Management should conduct a hazard assessment to determine what kinds of PPE may be necessary to prevent worker injury. In addition, workers should be trained in the proper selection, use, and maintenance of PPE.

OSHA Hazard Communication Program - A formal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Hazard Communication Program should be established to control the handling of hazardous chemicals. The program should include written procedures, hazardous materials inventory, MSDS's, worker training and container labeling.

Other Factors - Other factors that should be considered to protect workers from hazardous chemicals include the following: (1) provide spill clean-up kits in accessible locations; (2) develop and implement written spill control plans; (3) store chemicals in areas that are not subject to physical damage; (4) do not store heavy loads on top of small, chemical-holding containers; and (5) provide proper PPE for each chemical used.

REFERENCES

Cobble, J. *Safety Checklists for Churches and Schools*. Matthews, NC: Christian Ministry Resources, 2001.

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