Safety in the Workplace

Roles & Duties

Employers have specific roles and duties to keep their employees safe. Employers are required to discover and change hazardous working conditions instead of only using protective gear. Other employer responsibilities include:

- Warn employees about hazards using chemical sheets, codes, training, alarms, labels, etc.

- Test air samples and other potential hazards.

- Visibly post the OSHA poster, citations, injury, and illness information.

- Provide exams or medical tests when necessary.

- Record illness and injuries.

- Contact OSHA within eight hours of employee death or three injuries.

- Protect employees who report violations from retaliation.

Ergonomics

We briefly discussed ergonomics with computer workstations. Ergonomics, in general, is used to make the demands of a job suit the needs of the workers. The science of ergonomics will increase productivity while decreasing injuries in the workplace. Employees are at risk of injury when they engage in repetitive motions, heavy lifting, pushing, carrying, or working with their hands. There are ergonomic standards for each industry. It is essential that employees be trained in proper ergonomics so that they are aware of how injuries can be prevented.

Ergonomic Tips:

- Bend from the knees.

- Lift with your legs.

- Take breaks.

- Exercise.
- Keep weight evenly distributed when seated and standing.

Violence

Workplace violence accounts for one quarter of work related deaths. Employers are responsible for the safety of employees and a workplace violence prevention program will help to build awareness and save lives. Workplace violence prevention programs teach employees how to identify and diffuse conflicts; manage stress; manage anger; protect personal safety; respect diversity; and report problems.

How Employers Can Prevent Violence:

- **Screening**: Use background checks and reference checks to hire stable individuals.
- **Security**: Implement a security protocol.
- **Mediation**: Help employees find ways to resolve disputes.
- **Balance**: Create programs that will promote work and life balance.
- **Assess**: Hire a threat assessment team to watch for potential violence.

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Promoting & Enforcing Safety Standards

Managers need to promote safety among their employees. There are several methods that managers can use to promote and enforce safety standards.

Methods:

- **Involve employees**: Ask employees for their ideas on improving safety.

- **Provide incentives**: Hold contests where winners have strong safety records.

- **Train:** On the job training and safety seminars are essential to any safety program.

- **Improve morale:** Bored or unhappy employees are more likely to ignore safety.

- **Consequences:** There should be clear consequences for breaking safety protocol, just like any other rule. Consider moving from verbal to written warnings.

Avoiding

Sometimes we create our own stress. If you really think about your stressors, there are probably some that you can avoid. Do everything you can to avoid stressful situations and improve your mental health.

Strategies:

- **Say "no"**: Do not over commit yourself. If you cannot handle a project, don't take it.
- **Avoid certain people:** End stressful relationships, or limit the amount of time you spend with stressful people.
- **Change your environment**: Avoid or adjust activities that cause stress.
- **Limit your tasks**: Cut out some activities to save time.
- **Converse carefully**: Avoid controversial topics that are likely to cause arguments.

Accepting

We all have to accept less than ideal situations. We cannot control everything, but there are ways to reduce our stress in difficult situations.

Strategies:

- **Change focus**: Focus on what you can control rather than what you cannot. This is particularly true of other people.
- **Stay positive**: Look for the opportunities in difficult situations.
- **Express yourself**: Share your feelings with friends, family, or a therapist.
- **Move on**: Forgive others to let go of negative emotions that cause stress.