Safety Audits Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

SAFETY AUDIT AND SAFETY INSPECTION DISTINGUISHED

A safety audit (not to be confused with a safety inspection) is a formal review of employee safety training programs, policies, and procedures. The audit allows you to analyze whether job tasks are being performed safely and hazards are being eliminated. Audits include observations of employee working habits as they do a variety of tasks.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

DANGERS OF UNSAFE WORK CONDITIONS AND ACTS

Conducting safety audits solves the issues of unsafe and unhealthy conditions in the work environment. Those could arise as a result or a symptom of:

- Wear and tear
- Misuse
- Improper setup or configuration
- Corrosion
- Vibration
- Impact
- Stress and fatigue (to equipment or to people!)

Slip, trip and fall hazards fall into two broad categories: unsafe conditions and unsafe acts. An unsafe condition of your workplace is likely to cause injury or property damage. Unsafe conditions can cause slip, trip, and fall hazards anywhere you walk and work, including:

- Office and shop floors;
- Construction site grounds;
- Parking structures;

- Restaurant kitchens;
- Loading docks and warehouses; and
- Hospital rooms and classrooms.

Walking and working in these areas can become hazardous from one or more of these unsafe conditions:

- Unsafe floors and surfaces;
- Unsafe stairs and railings; and
- Poor lighting.

An **unsafe act** is a task or activity done in an unsafe or dangerous manner which can harm you or others. These acts include unsafe work practices, risky behaviors, and shortcuts.

Examples of unsafe work practices include:

- Spilling coffee on the breakroom floor and not cleaning it up.
- Mopping the floor and not putting out caution signs to warn people that the floor is wet.
- Talking or texting on your cell phone as you walk.
- Hurrying and not keeping your eyes on your path, especially when walking on uneven or slippery surfaces.
- Not reporting the burned-out lightbulb in the stairwell.

At work, not paying attention to where you are going or knowing where you should be is a risky—and potentially deadly behavior. Other risky behaviors include rushing, running, and taking shortcuts.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

A SAFETY AUDIT MEANS PROTECTION – AN OVERVIEW

A safety audit is a structured process that is used to collect information related to a company’s efficiency, effectiveness, reliability, and safety. An auditor will observe the processes, work environment, the condition of equipment, and other details to gauge these qualities. Safety audits are more thorough than technical inspections or spot-check inspections as auditors will

review the company’s safety documentation to determine how they can improve their processes and safety management systems.

BENEFITS OF SAFETY AUDITS FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

- Promoting constant system reviews to ensure they do not become weakened by bad habits.
- Facilitating planned improvements to programs, policies, and procedures.
- Helping to identify areas for improvement in the human resources department.
- Demonstrating a strong dedication to ensuring the overall health and safety of employees.
- Confirming that employees and management are using safety programs properly.
- Verifying compliance with applicable safety regulations.
- Discovering and identifying potential hazards (existing and new).
- Evaluating the effectiveness of existing management controls.
- Ensuring a safe workplace for employees, minimizing the risk of an accident or injury.
- Objectively evaluating the adequacy of the company’s safety training and performance.

CHECKLIST FOR SAFETY AUDITS

To conduct a thorough audit of a job or area, use a checklist. Each type of checklist has its specific purpose. Examples include:

- Machinery and tools
- Equipment, and raw materials
- Materials handling and storage
- Hand and portable power tools
- Vehicle fleets
- Administrative procedures
- Walking and working surfaces
- Housekeeping practices
- Fire protection and life safety
- Emergency response procedures

- Hazard communication program
- Electrical hazards
- Lock out and tag out
- Hazard signage
- Personal protective equipment
- Elevators
- Hoists and slings

SAFETY AUDIT TAKEAWAY

Safety audits are intended to assure that effective program elements are in place for identifying, eliminating, or controlling hazards that could adversely impact a company’s physical and human assets. Conducted properly, this type of audit will help reduce injury and illness rates, lower workers compensation and other business costs, empower employees by involving them in activities affecting their own safety and health, increase job satisfaction, and make the company more competitive.

FINAL WORD

Conducting regular workplace safety audits is critical to preventing injuries and accidents. Audits are important to effective safety management as a continuous process of workplace safety planning, analysis, and correction as needed.