Work Area Best Practices Meeting Kit

Whether you work in a construction site or in a high-rise office, it is mandatory that employers provide a safe and secure space to work.

Management and employees should have at basic knowledge on how to spot unsafe work practices existing in their workplace and how to deal with them.

But not everyone is trained to do so. However, that doesn’t mean everyone else in the company is exempted from the responsibility of maintaining a healthy and safe workplace.

BEST SAFETY PRACTICES FOR THE WORKPLACE

Workplace safety requirements requires a safe work environment for employees. An injured worker is an unproductive employee, costing your business the services of a valued employee as well as driving up your insurance costs.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL

You can have a safety program in place, but it is no good to you or your employees if people are not held accountable. Your team must be on the same page when it comes to workplace safety and if they are, your business will benefit.

IDENTIFY WORKPLACE HAZARDS

Holding people accountable, knowing the law and having a grasp on your insurance needs are important. But, handling hazards as they occur requires the crafting of a comprehensive safety plan. That plan should include methods for identifying and handling hazards, the placement of warning signs, removal of fluids or toxic

materials period.

HAZARDS CREATED BY CHAOTIC WORK AREAS

Struck-by incidents: Work areas that do not have any designated paths for personnel walking through or areas blocked off for specific work tasks such as grinding, create struck-by hazards can be particularly dangerous. Flying debris, lifting loads, and moving objects can all create struck-by hazards for anyone in the area.

Slips, trips, and falls: Objects on the ground due to poor organization or housekeeping create trip hazards for any walking through that area. Slippery surfaces due to moisture or other liquids such as oil can cause a slip or a fall. Uneven surfaces, steps, or unexpected drop-offs are also a common trip hazards in poorly designed work areas.

Caught in or between incidents: Work areas that place people near moving parts or equipment is also a huge concern. Moving equipment such as belts or fans can grab a hold of a person’s clothing or hair pulling them into the moving parts.

BEST PRACTICES FOR WORK AREA SETUP

Delineate walking paths from actual work areas. Consider when physical barriers such as a fence or wall are needed to protect people from a hazardous work process. Consider color coding for work areas or the facility as a whole.

Organize all tools, equipment, materials, etc. in an area. Everything should have its own place that does not pose a hazard to anyone in that area. Housekeeping is one of the most basic safe work practices there is.

Always guard moving parts and equipment even when they are not in the immediate planned walking path. If people can fit into an area and the moving parts are not physically blocked off there is a chance of a caught in or between injury.

Keep walking and working surfaces kept up and safe. Mark any elevation changes with bright fluorescent paint. Patch any holes or major cracks to prevent trip hazards. Always strive to keep dry clean floors. Consider applying some type of grit or material that improves traction in areas where moisture can occur.

CREATE A WORKPLACE SAFETY CULTURE FOR WORKERS

If you want to reduce workplace injuries, consider making workplace safety an important part of your company's culture. You can begin by understanding the root causes of your most serious workplace injuries and regularly surveying the workplace for potential safety hazards in equipment and work design.

1. **Train employees well:** Comprehensive training is a must for preventing workplace injury.
2. **Reward employees for safe behavior:** Rewards are an easy way to encourage workplace safety. Giving out small rewards to employees who follow safety policies keeps them engaged, which can make a big difference in reducing workplace injuries.
3. **Partner with occupational clinicians:** Occupational medicine clinicians can provide valuable insight into workplace injury and prevention. Physical and occupational therapists can also improve workplace ergonomics and develop human performance evaluations to help you screen candidates for physically demanding roles and aid in the return-to-work process.
4. **Use labels and signs:** These tools are good reminders and warnings for even the most experienced worker.
5. **Keep things clean:** Make sure boxes are stacked safely and spills are cleaned up quickly. Conduct regular inspections to check for potential dangers such as tangled cords, messy floors, and disorganized tools.
6. **Make sure employees have the right tools and have regular equipment inspections:** The right tools and equipment create a better product and a safer work environment. It's also

important that all equipment is cleaned, serviced, and inspected regularly.

7. **Encourage stretch breaks:** Taking even five minutes to stretch can ease muscle tension and loosen joints, reducing the potential for repetitive motion injuries.
8. **Implement safety protocols from the start:** Workplace safety starts from day one, which means hiring qualified people who pay attention to detail. A safe workplace starts with employees who follow safety requirements and perform their jobs per the established procedures.
9. **Keep an open dialogue:** Make it easy for your employees to come to you with health and safety concerns.
10. **Have regular meetings on workplace safety:** Regular meetings to review safety rules and discuss prevention.

FINAL WORD

The above hazards and best practices are just a few of the many that are related to how a work area is setup and maintained. What hazards are we not addressing in our work areas? What improvements can we make today and in the future to create a safer workplace? What other hazards and best practices are out there?