

“Supervisor’s Role in a Safety Program”
(Provided by Safety Consultation and Training Section-Nevada Division of Industrial Relations)

It has been recognized that effective lower injury and illness rates thereby costs, improved employee morale, health management includes the safety and health program.



safety and health management results in lowering the worker’s compensation and increased production. Safety and supervisors as key players in an effective

Employees should make safety an by requiring them to establish and subordinates. This identifies the on safety, specifies the supervisor’s first step in supervisory accountability in safety. Making safety a part of the supervisor’s position description will help clarify the importance of safety in all aspects of the position.

essential element of the supervisor’s job maintain safe working conditions for their importance upper management places responsibilities toward safety, and is the

The main concerns of a supervisor are to maintain appropriate work procedures, improve employee productivity, control costs, and to maximize profits. Safety is an integral part of all these concerns.

The primary role of a supervisor in a safety program is to assure employee safety and health and to protect the company needs.

Supervisor’s Responsibility and Accountability: Supervisors should be made responsible and held accountable for:

- ☞ Detecting and correcting unsafe working conditions and practices.
- ☞ Training subordinates in proper procedures and company safety rules.
- ☞ Ensuring that each subordinate knows, understands, and follows safety rules specifically pertaining to his or her job.
- ☞ Writing policies, procedures, and/or safe work practices.
- ☞ Completing proper reports on all accidents and incidents.
- ☞ Keeping informed of new developments impacting them and their subordinates.
- ☞ Safety motivation.

Employees who are properly trained and supervised are not as likely to have accidents and are more productive.

Six Principle Safety Duties of a Supervisor

1. Teaching employees the hazards on the job, and how to avoid them.
2. Imparting to employees the understanding that violating established safety rules will not be tolerated.
3. Seeing that needed safety equipment and protective devices are provided for each job.
4. Taking prompt action to correct unsafe conditions or acts.
5. Conducting regular safety assessments and to instill safety awareness in each employee through personal contact.
6. Writing procedures that incorporate safe work practices.

To accomplish these principle duties, the supervisor must possess a definitive knowledge of the particular requirements for the area of responsibility and be able to apply that knowledge daily while on-the-job.

Supervisors should be responsible for conducting informal and formal inspections of their work areas to include procedures, safety equipment, training, equipment, and processes.

They are the best people to do this because they have the authority and responsibility to take appropriate corrective actions and to follow-up on them.

Supervisors are also the best choice to investigate small accidents and incidents involving their subordinates and participate with more experienced investigators on more serious accidents. Reasons for this include:

- ✓ They have a vested interest to protect their staff based on assigned responsibilities.
- ✓ They know their people and the work conditions.
- ✓ They can respond quickly to obtain first aid for the employees, control the scene, and start interviewing without delay.
- ✓ They will generally be responsible to ensure corrective action has been taken.

The supervisor also benefits from being involved in accident investigation because:

- ✓ It shows that management has confidence in the supervisor's knowledge and integrity.
- ✓ It shows concern for subordinates' well being and safe operations.
- ✓ It helps to highlight management's attention on supervisors who are in control.

Unfortunately, some supervisors are promoted to positions of authority merely because they are good technicians. In many cases, management may assume that personnel promoted have the necessary supervisory skills and/or will learn those skills on-the-job, therefore additional training is not required. This faulty assumption often leads to problems.

If management believes that some of their supervisors are incapable of taking on fully effective roles in the company's safety program as discussed above, perhaps either the right people are not in those supervisory positions or more training in safety and/or management is indicated for those supervisors.

Supervisors need training in supervisory skills so that they can more effectively do their jobs. And supervisors not only require adequate training in those areas which will enhance their ability to lead and supervise, but also in selected safety subjects that they can then share with their employees in ensuring a safe and healthy working environment. A truly "win-win" proposition for all!