Annual Review of Safety and Health Programs

An organization’s safety and health program is a comprehensive plan of action used to prevent and/or reduce accidents and occupational diseases. To maintain an effective program, regular evaluations should be performed to identify the program’s strengths and weaknesses, determine if improvements are needed and correct any deficiencies. Some organizations may choose to review safety programs on a more frequent basis; however, they should be evaluated at least annually by management, the safety committee and the safety coordinator or person in charge of the safety program.

Objectives of the Annual Review
Reviews can be in a variety of formats, but the most common purposes of the review are to:

- Confirm organizational commitment to a safety and health culture
- Examine safety and health organizational objectives
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the safety and health program
- Determine if the program is compliant with nationally recognized standards (e.g., OSHA, ANSI, NFPA®)
- Define areas in need of improvement, especially areas where injuries have occurred
- Compare the organization’s program with established benchmarks and other organizations
- Ensure that programs reflect changes in the organization’s operations

Safety reviews can be performed at various times of the year, but it may be beneficial to perform them occasionally in January or February when the OSHA 300 log from the previous calendar year becomes available. It may assist in determining if changes are needed. For example, if the safety committee is trying to determine if the machine guarding program is effective, they can refer to the OSHA 300 log to determine if any machine guarding accidents occurred, where they have occurred and if there is any pattern in occurrence. If there were injuries, it is also important to review the accident investigation program to determine whether any operational change was immediately implemented to help prevent recurrence of similar accidents.

The safety program review is a proactive approach to reducing injuries, rather than being reactive when programs are changed only when an injury occurs. While the OSHA 300 log is one tool for determining if changes are needed, input from safety committee members, senior management and all other employees is very valuable toward preventing accidents in the future.
Senior management should be included in the audit process, so they can be apprised of the previous year’s results and encouraged to support initiatives to improve on these results in the future. Most safety professionals agree that active management involvement is the most important part of a successful safety program. Management involvement in the safety audit demonstrates an active interest in employee safety, which can build employee morale and create a safety-excellence culture valued by all employees.

Performing the Review
While there are several methods for completing a review, perhaps the most effective approach is to create a plan detailing all aspects of the safety program. If changes are needed, they should be addressed immediately. It is counterproductive to spend time determining where improvements are needed, yet do nothing to improve the situation. Making changes to improve the safety program not only reduces the risk for employee injuries, but also improves the organization’s bottom line results through reduced turnover and absenteeism, improved productivity and quality, lower Workers’ Compensation costs and a variety of other benefits.

For Additional Information
Occupational Safety & Health Administration: www.osha.gov
- Safety & Health programs
EMC Insurance Companies: www.emcins.com
- Tech Sheets – Work Comp Safety Program, Employee Safety Incentive Programs
- Loss Prevention Information Manual