

Manager/Supervisor Risk Management

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A twice weekly e-mail training for YCPARMIA members

TOPIC: SAFETY – IIPP – MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

The first element of the IIPP required by the State is the identification of the person with the authority and responsibility for the entity's health and safety program. The designation can be a "position" rather than a particular person like the "City Manager" rather than the actual name. It probably should be, but does not have to be, the individual responsible for overall operations.

While it is the responsibility of everyone to maintain a safe workplace, action is ultimately a management responsibility. An active commitment and involvement from the top is the only effective way to create and maintain the desired culture. Experienced and knowledgeable employees can be involved in the process, but they generally lack the authority to ensure that needed steps are taken. The delegation of responsibility for safety, without the corresponding authority, will probably result in activity without progress or results.

The IIPP will outline policies and procedures that generate information and potential actions. Too often the process stops with the individual or committee that creates or gathers that information. The next step in the process is getting it to the individual or group that has the authority to do something with it. It is their decision, based on many factors including budget and staffing, as to if, or how the entity will proceed. The last step is to communicate back their decisions or actions to the involved employees so that the process remains viable.

Delegation to other managers is essential and desirable in that it can further the culture by involving them in the process, but they must also remain accountable to the individual with the ultimate safety authority. Establishing safety goals, holding staff accountable for safety and accidents, encouraging upward information on safety issues, and allocating entity resources are all functions best implemented by upper management. Having the head of the organization exercising responsibility and authority for the safety program has an additional benefit – it minimizes the likelihood that safety will be lost to expediency in the everyday work at the various levels of the operations.

The last element of management commitment might be leadership. Leading by example, following and enforcing safety procedures, and allocating needed, albeit scarce resources is all part of setting a necessary example. Without this leadership, the various levels of the organization may lose interest, resulting in safety becoming an empty term.

Next Topic: IIPP – Communication