

Manager/Supervisor Risk Management

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A twice weekly e-mail training for YCPARMIA members

TOPIC: SAFETY – DEAD-END INSPECTIONS

Every State compliant IIPP includes procedures for identifying and evaluating workplace hazards making safety inspections of premises one of the most common safety practices. The frequency, quality and response to inspections varies greatly among YCPARMIA members; they have over 700 locations listed on their insurance list, making it virtually impossible that formal inspections will ever be conducted on all of them. Instead, a risk assessment concentrates inspections on the most significant exposures.

There are a few common reoccurring problems that are encountered in some departments/locations:

- Inspections are resisted or discounted by some managers who, for a variety of reasons, withhold cooperation and resources;
- Parts of premises are locked, and no one present has a key, creating the impression that things are being hidden – the inspection team should include someone who knows, and has access to all parts of the premises;
- Problems identified in past inspections have not been addressed (sometimes for years) and are allowed to compound – this may be the most common issue;
- The inspection team does not include someone who has responsibility for fixing identified problems -- often the majority of problems can be resolved, at little or no cost, before the end of the inspection – the proverbial low hanging fruit;
- Time is wasted during and following inspections by staff attempting to justify, discount identified problems, or transfer blame – the safety purpose of the inspection is lost;
- Budget constraints are used to excuse or justify identified risks – even those that cost nothing to remedy – this serves to transfer responsibility from employees to the unresponsive budget;
- Inspections are repeatedly postponed or abandoned due to other pressing priorities – the too common reoccurring theme of “*safety is what you get to when everything else is done*”;
- Inspections can become unfocused, take too long, and can be disruptive for the workplace– there needs to be organization and priorities;
- Similarly, some employees attempt to “hijack” the inspection process for leverage on other unrelated issues that they might have – the team has to keep the process focused on the premises.
- The inspection team does not include someone from the Safety Committee so the inspection becomes an isolated occurrence rather than part of the entity’s organized safety approach;
 - There is no schedule of inspections as part of an organized, ongoing approach; and,
 - The person with overall responsibility for the entity’s safety program knows nothing of the inspection, its findings, and the remediation efforts.

The bottom line is that inspections and remediation should be part of an ongoing, methodical process; as potential hazards are identified and resolved, future inspections of those premises become progressively simpler requiring smaller investments of time and resources.

Next Topic: Safety – Accident Investigations