

Safety Advisory Committee: Choosing Members

Choosing the membership for the Safety Advisory Committee can be a difficult process as it requires balancing a number of considerations. In reality however, staffing the Committee might come down to three inter-related factors:

1. Each member must have a demonstrated interest in the entity and the safety of its workers,
 - The first element is relatively simple to satisfy. The members must avoid personal agendas, and work within the group structure to address safety issues; they need to want to be there rather than having the duty imposed upon them.
2. Each member must be willing to accept that they are a member of a Committee whose role is purely advisory,
 - The second factor requires members to conduct all business with the realization that they are an advisory-only committee, and have no responsibility or authority for managing the solution or monitoring results; there is no "power" that comes from being on the Committee.
3. Individually and collectively, each selected member must establish and maintain credibility with the various stakeholders.
 - The third element is probably the most difficult. Establishing and maintaining credibility among the various elements within the entity requires a delicate balance. Tipped too far one way and the Committee is seen as a rubber stamp for management, while tipped too far the other it is perceived as a tool for other agendas. The Committee needs to be made up of members that are willing and able to report on the cause of safety problems regardless of whether they are caused by unsafe workers, unsafe management practices, or a combination of the two. Credibility is maintained by keeping the focus on improving the safety environment rather than emphasizing the blame.
 - Credibility is enhanced by having the entity appoint the required blend of supervisors and workers to the Committee.

The entity's initial choice of Committee members will go a long way towards determining how the Committee is perceived by the entity's employees. After that, it is the Committee membership's responsibility to collectively monitor its members to make sure that each has an interest in safety, can accept that their role is advisory, and can maintain credibility by making objective recommendations for the good of the entity without consideration or fear of "office politics."