OSHA® **Fact**Sheet

Voluntary Safety and Health Program Management Guidelines

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued voluntary safety and health program management guidelines in 1989 to encourage employers to do more to protect their employees.

Compliance with the law and OSHA standards is an important objective. An effective safety and health management system, however, is tailored to a particular site's individual needs. It looks beyond specific legal requirements to identify and analyze existing hazards. It seeks to prevent injuries and illnesses, even when compliance is not at issue.

The guideline's recommendations are appropriate for general industry, shipyards, marine terminals and longshoring activities, regardless of the size, nature or complexity of operations. OSHA's construction standards contain separate requirements for safety and health management systems in the construction industry. OSHA also has guidelines for shipyards in the *Shipyard Industry Digest*.

The guidelines – a combination of successfully applied safety and health management practices – are supported by safety and health professionals and consultants representing corporations, professional associations and labor unions. They have stood the test of time; they work!

The Guidelines
The guidelines call for the systematic identification, evaluation and prevention or control of general workplace hazards and the hazards of specific jobs and tasks.

Safety and health systems may be written or oral. As the size of a worksite or the complexity of a hazardous operation increases, the need for written guidance increases in order to ensure consistent and fair application of rules and clear communication of policies and priorities. Ultimately, the system's effectiveness in practice is what is important.

Major elements of an effective occupational safety and health management system include:

Management Commitment and Employee Involvement, which calls for:
- A clearly-stated worksite policy on safe and healthful work and working conditions so that all personnel at the site or working for the site understand the priority of safety and health protection.
- A clear goal for the safety and health management system and objectives for meeting that goal so that all members of the organization understand the results desired and the measures needed to achieve them.
- Top management involvement in implementing the system to demonstrate management's commitment.
- Employee involvement in the structure and operation of the system and in decisions that affect their safety and health.
- Assignment of responsibilities for all aspects of the management system, so that managers, supervisors, and employees in all parts of the organization know what they need to do.
- Provision of adequate authority and resources so that everyone can meet their assigned responsibilities.
- Holding everyone at the site–managers, supervisors and employees–accountable for meeting their responsibilities.

- Annual reviews of the system's operations to evaluate success in meeting the goals and objectives, so that deficiencies can be identified and the program and/or the objectives can be revised as needed.

Worksite Analysis, including:
- Identification of all hazards by initially conducting comprehensive worksite surveys for safety and health, and then periodic updates/surveys.
- Analyses of planned and new facilities, processes, materials and equipment.
- Analysis of hazards associated with jobs, processes and/or phases of work.
- Regular site safety and health inspections to identify new or previously missed hazards and failures in hazard controls.
- A reliable system to encourage employees, without fear of reprisal, to notify management personnel about conditions that appear hazardous and to receive timely and appropriate responses.
- Investigation of accidents and "near miss" incidents to determine their causes and to create prevention strategies.
- Analysis, if possible, of injury and illness trends over extended periods to identify patterns and prevent problems.

Hazard Prevention and Control, calling for:
- Elimination or control of all hazards in a timely manner. OSHA encourages adoption of the following measures: engineering controls, the most reliable and effective; administrative controls that limit exposure to hazards by adjusting the work schedule; work practice controls; and personal protective equipment.
- Systems adapted to meet each workplace's particular characteristics.
- Planning and preparing for emergencies and conducting emergency training and drills.
- A medical program that includes first aid and emergency medical care.

Safety and Health Training, which will:
- Ensure that all employees, including contract workers, understand the hazards to which they may be exposed and how to prevent harm to themselves and others.
- Ensure that supervisors and managers understand their responsibilities and the reasons for them so that they can carry out their roles effectively.
- Ensure periodic refresher training for all employees.
- Establish a medical program for first aid and emergency medical care.

For more information, visit the Safety and Health Management Systems eTool at www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/safetyhealth/index.html or the Safety and Health Programs page on OSHA's website at www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/safetyhealth/index.html.

For more complete information:

OSHA® **Occupational Safety and Health Administration**

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DEP 7/2005