# Importance of Health and Safety at Workplace: Role of Management in implementation of "Safety Management System" at workplace

Rajat Vashist

**Abstract: A safe and healthy workplace protects workers from injury and illness, as well as it also lowers injury/illness costs, reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and quality, and raised employee morale. In other words, we can say that safety is good for business. Employers can save a huge amount that can be spent on a safety and health issues indirectly. Workplaces with successful safety and health management systems reduce injury and illness costs 20-40%, according to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).For a small business, one injury can mean financial disaster. Costs to a business include: Production losses, Wages for work not performed, Increased workers' compensation insurance costs, Damage to equipment or machinery, decline in product quality and worker morale. The cost of workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths is much greater than the cost of workers' compensation insurance alone. Insurance is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to these costs.**

**The cost of injury prevention is far less than the cost of an injury. In Maine each year about 17,000 workers lose time from work because of job-related injury or illness. The National Safety Council estimates the average cost of a lost-time injury to be $33,000 in 2002. That's $561,000,000 wasted each year in Maine alone. At $170 billion a year nationwide, the direct and indirect costs of work injuries and illnesses equal those of cancer, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. These are only financial costs. There's no way to know the value of the quality of life lost to injuries and illnesses.**

**Index Terms -** Health and Safety, Training programs, Occupational health, Accidents, Employee safety & health, Rewards, Hazardous factors, ISO 14001, Occupational Health and Safety Management System

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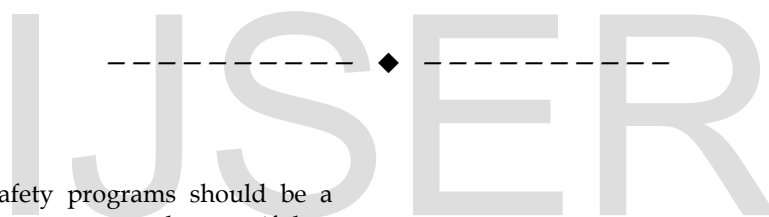
## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Employee health and safety programs should be a major priority for the top management because if they will be safe and healthy then it will automatically increase productivity, and reduce costs. These health and safety programs should stress employee involvement, continued monitoring, and an overall wellness component Work safety requires that safe working conditions should not create significant risk of people being rendered unfit to perform their work. Health and safety at work is therefore aimed at creating conditions, capabilities, and habits that enable the worker and his/her organization to carry out their work efficiently and in a way that avoids events which could cause them harm. It is clear that safe working conditions have an effect on the habits of workers, which in turn impacts on efficiency. This implies that

❖ *Rajat Vashist is currently pursuing Master degree program in Industrial Safety Management in IPS Academy, Rajiv Gandhi Prodhyogiki Vishwavidyalaya, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India.*

*PH-9568074272. E-mail: rajatvashishtha1408@gmail.com*

employees working in a safe condition are likely to perform in a way that will not cause them harm.

## 1.1 ROLE OF TOP MANAGEMENT IN HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION:

The role of Top Management is regarding commitment means giving safety "equal billing" compared to other organizational priorities. It means providing necessary financial and labor resources to accomplish the vision of excellence. But throwing dollars at the safety improvement process and providing the occasional lip service alone won't cut it. Safety must become a "hot button" issue if improvements are going to occur and the safety culture change. But most important, ensuring performance accountability at all management and employee levels is imperative.

Early research by psychologists and sociologists examined individual dispositions and social causes utilizing disciplinary frameworks in developing concepts and theoretical insights into Occupational Health and Safety. The findings were enhanced by the results of workplace surveys by industrial relations specialists that drew attention to the importance of legislation and innovative non-regulatory as well as regulatory strategies. The concern for health and safety has been there in history. Early researchers were

concerned about theoretical insights into employee health and safety. Surveys which were done later focused on the importance of legislation. In technical questions pertaining to workplace health and safety, there is the social element. That is, for example, the power relations in production: who tells whom to do what and how fast. After all, a machine does not go faster by itself; someone designed the machinery, organized the work, and designed the job. This implies that 'health and safety is not simply a technical issue such as supplying hard hats and goggles or ensuring adequate ventilation, because it raises the question of economic costs and power relations' This is true of all institutions including schools.

A review conducted by the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) under health and safety regulation in 1994 revealed that people were confused about the differences between; Guidance, Approved Codes of Practices and Regulations. The commission went ahead to provide a way out of this confusion. The results included what health and safety law requires. The Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974, sets out the duties which employers have towards employees and members of the public, and also the duties of employers to themselves and to each other. Legislation applies to employers and employees. The legislation at the national level is supposed to be made part of domestic law by employers (HSE, 2003/2008).

In India, for an employer to meet the legal requirements, he or she must provide Labour welfare facilities. The two stated that labor health, safety and welfare activities are necessary for improving employee working conditions, economic and living standards. They were very quick to point out that in the olden days, employers suppressed the worker by paying less salary and extracting more work in an unsatisfactory working environment. With the birth of the "Regulation and Employment Act" of 1948, employers were required to provide satisfactory working environment. The Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act of 2005 repealed and replaced the Safety, Health and Welfare at work Act of 1989. The purpose of the former was to make further provision for the safety, health and welfare of persons at work. The act clarifies and enhances the responsibilities of employers, the self-employed, employees and other parties in relation to safety and health at work. It also provides a range of enforcement measures that may be applied, and specifies penalties that may be applied for breach of occupational safety and health laws (Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act of 2005, accessed, 2015).

Many states have passed the 'right to know' legislation that guarantees individual workers the right to know of hazardous substances in the workplace, and requires employers to inform employees of the same. There are state and federal laws to protect the welfare of the worker. The major one is the Occupational and Safety Health Act (OSHA), which became effective in 1971, whose purpose is "to assure" as far as possible, every working woman and man in the nation safe and healthy working conditions, and to preserve our human resources." To accomplish this, there are provisions for safety and health standards, research, information, and education and training in occupational safety and health. OSHA is comprehensive, covering such things as record keeping, inspection, compliance, and enforcement of safety standards. It lists over 5000 safety and health standards, ranging from density of particle in the air to the height at which a fire extinguisher is to be mounted.

Top Management or Managers can exert a greater influence on health and safety. They are in immediate control and it is up to them to keep a constant watch for unsafe conditions or practices, and to take immediate action. They can achieve by establishing safety committees consisting of health and safety representatives who offer advice on health and safety policies and procedures.

## 1.2 ROLE OF SENIOR LEVEL MANAGEMENT IN IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:

Senior managements need to demonstrate commitment to safety, demonstrate involvement in safety, and demonstrate accountability for performance. Demonstrated commitment means having unbending expectations for achievement of safety excellence. Demonstrated involvement means personally leading the organizations improvement efforts and physically participating in activities to visibly show involvement. Finally, accountability translates to not tolerating poor safety performance or performers at all levels of the organization.

The role of senior managers regarding involvement entails becoming a safety champion as well as constantly communicating the vision for improvement. In addition, senior managers need to be engaged in performing structured activities such as: safety tours; safety stand-downs; safety stand-ups; root cause evaluations; chairing safety leadership teams; measuring, monitoring, leading, and trailing safety performance indicators; and performing frequent managerial safety performance reviews.

To achieve safety performance excellence, management and supervisory accountability is imperative. Senior managers need to prevent line managers from shirking their safety responsibilities. They can't allow line manager safety activities such as facility audits, worker observations, incident investigations and safety communications to be done poorly. They can't accept rationalizations for poor performance or try to rationalize it themselves. They

can't be satisfied with just being good. Under no circumstances can they compromise safety for the sake of achieving any other business objective. Finally, they need to avoid delegating the safety responsibility to others and must spend quality time on managing safety improvements.

## 1.3 ROLE OF MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGEMENT IN IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:

Middle level managers also play an important role with respect to improving organizational safety performance. Ultimately, the behavior of supervisors and workers relative to safety performance is normally a direct reflection of the desires conveyed by their boss. If middle managers are not executing their roles successfully, the critical link between senior managers and first line supervisors is broken. Therefore, excellence will not be attained and the safety culture will be perpetually stagnant.

Managers at all levels of the organization need to play an active and visible role in safety management. First line supervisors need to carry out specific tasks and be measured on the effectiveness of those tasks. Middle managers need to assure subordinates meet performance measures and assure they perform safety activities in a quality fashion. In addition, middle managers also need to become physically involved in tasks to demonstrate their commitment to safety process.

For all line managers and supervisors, competing priorities, if not properly balanced will always cause safety performance to suffer. These competing priorities in most organizations include production output, quality, cost management, and safety. Balancing these priorities is a matter of management and supervisory behavior. Achieving safety excellence has always been about changing behavior. Proper management behaviors will ultimately produce the desired supervisory and employee behaviors. Middle level managers play a key role in helping first line supervisors keep things in balance.

## 1.4 ROLE OF FRONT-LINE MANAGEMENT IN IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:

Front line managers also play a pivotal role in attaining safety performance excellence. they create and control the workplace environment where incidents and injuries occur. Safety performance excellence equates to how well line supervisors influence the behaviors of their workers and it's no different than anything else.

Front line managers need to first and foremost be observing rules and constantly working on modeling the behaviors they expect their employees to emulate. Front line managers also need to spend ample time communicating their safety performance expectations to employees. They also need to assure employees are provided with the necessary safety resources. They need to be personally involved with conducting frequent structured and measured activities such as worker safety observations, safety meetings, safety training, and incident investigations. To be successful, first line supervisors also need to spend time publicly recognizing good performance and effectively dealing with poor performance.

Additional first line supervisor key activities include:

- Conducting pre-task safety reviews/briefings to assure workers are properly advised of pending risks, hazards, and remediation measures.
- Facilitating group safety problem solving meetings.
- Developing safe job procedures and rules.
- Training employees on safety rules, regulations, procedures, and consequences for nonconformance.
- Frequently observing and discussing individual worker safety performance.
- Formally counseling at-risk employees to correct poor safety performance and/or at-risk behaviors.
- Utilizing formal corrective action along with recognition and rewards to produce desired behaviors.

## 2 ROLE OF MANAGEMENT IN MAINTENANCE OF SAFETY EQUIPMENT:

A study on employee welfare facilities adopted at Bosch limited, and involving 100 employees observed that 65% of the respondents indicated that they were provided with safety equipment at work in the organization, 35% of them reported that the organization did not provide safety equipment. The researcher concluded that, due to the higher percentage of those who reported that the company provided safety equipment at work, the company then provided safety equipment to its employees during work.

The fatalistic notion that accidents cannot happen to us or that they will occur because of "bad luck" regardless of our efforts to prevent them is contrary to the facts. The role of luck (including such things as unavoidable equipment malfunction), as a cause of accidents, has been the subject of considerable study. Estimates of the percentage of accidents due to such causes, and therefore unpreventable, vary between 10 and 20 percent. On the same argument, stresses that health and safety inspections are designed to examine

a specific area of the organization—to locate and define any faults in the system, equipment, plant or machine. The concern of these writers reveals the importance of maintaining health and safety equipment.

The health and safety function are directly related to the elements of the HRM cycle-selection, appraisal, rewards and training. Maintenance of a healthy and safe workplace can be facilitated in the selection process by selecting applicants with personality traits that decrease the likelihood of accidents. Safe work behavior can be encouraged by a reward system that ties bonus payments to the safety record of a work group or section.

Managers and supervisors must serve as role models for the safety programs. They should ask for employee suggestions for improving workplace safety, and implement the suggestions in a timely fashion. It is the managers' responsibility to perform the job exactly as outlined by the safety programs. Workers will want to know "what's in it for me". While the Company is sure to benefit from increased safety through such programs, workers may not see a personal advantage to abiding by the new safety plan. Therefore, including incentives for workers could often reverses this trend and increases compliance.

## 3 MANAGEMENT PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN SAFETY INITIATIVES:

Employee participation, which influences the effectiveness of an OHSMS, is "a variety of processes and structures which enable, and at times encourage, employees to, directly and indirectly, contribute to and influence decision". OHSMS models emphasize the active participation of employees as a critical element in improving safety performance. The purpose of employee participation in OSHMS is to reduce the accidents at work and to improve the employee health. In other words, employee participation in OHS management is crucial for the success of OHSMS and safety performance. Involved and satisfied employees perceive that safety is accorded the priority it deserves by everyone, at all levels of the organization. This comprehensive approach to management participation leads to fewer accidents and injuries in the workplace.

Mullen et al. (2017) reported that there has been strong empirical evidence between safety participation and the reduction of accidents and injuries. However, there are few studies in the OHSMS literature that examine the relationship between the active participation of employees in OHS related issues and safety performance. However, Li et al. (2010) and Neal and Griffin (2006) empirically found that participation has a

positive effect on reducing injuries. Number of research showed that employee involvement in OHS activities has a positive effect on reducing absenteeism rates arising from occupational accidents and diseases. Carrivick et al. (2005) determined that a participatory ergonomics approach provided a 35 percent improvement in reducing injuries from manual handling. Furthermore, International Labor Office (2011) reported that there were relationships between lower rates of lost-time injuries and the presence of coordinated OHS committees or coordinated trade union participation.

## 4 EVALUATION AND MONITORING OF SAFETY PERFORMANCE:

An effective OSHMS requires appropriate and reliable OSH performance measurement. Safety performance can be defined as "the level of safety that determines the incidences of workplace accidents, injuries and fatalities". Accident rates are the criteria most commonly used to measure safety performance. While factors based on accident weight ratios are good indicators of managing accidents resulting in employee injury, they are poor indicators of controlling major hazard risks (Health and Safety Executive, 2017). Today, the indicators of OHS performance are often a combination of lagging indicators and positive performance indicators. Lagging indicators measure the effectiveness of the organization in achieving the targets while positive performance indicators measure the achievements in reaching the targets.

With respect to understanding, accepting, and executing roles, senior managers, line managers, supervisors, and staff support functions need to be trained. They need to be trained to understand their specific roles and key activities. They also need to be trained on how to properly execute their roles. This is not something that everyone simply understands because they are a senior manager, middle manager, first line supervisor, or staff professional. Training is essential for long term success. And, ongoing assistance is necessary from EHS and other support staff after training concludes.

Measurement of role execution is another important consideration for long-term success. To accomplish this, attainable leading, current and trailing performance goals need to be established. Constant measurement and continual feedback to those responsible for goal attainment is imperative.

Finally, establishing accountability and ownership is the most critical function in making sure roles are accepted and executed flawlessly. Employee safety perception surveys along with 360-degree safety

reviews should be used regularly to assess and promote safety ownership. As part of the performance review process, safety performance goals need to be appropriately weighted among other performance goals to assure adequate attention is focused. Similarly, salary increases and bonuses need to also be weighted appropriately to assure that focus on other business areas won't compromise the attention being afforded to managing and improving safety. Finally, personal as well as historically managed safety performance experience should be a strong consideration with respect to line management and supervisory promotions. Organizations that are serious about attaining safety excellence do not promote persons to positions of higher authority and responsibility when they have proven to be unsuccessful at managing safety. They fully understand that safety is a relatively easy function to manage. A lack of success in safety management normally translates into a lack of success in other functions managed.

Improved safety performance can enhance employee satisfaction, which manifests itself in terms of Improved productivity, mental and physical health and reduced turnover and absenteeism. Employees are negatively affected by injuries or accidents occurring in the workplace, this leads to poor job satisfaction and stress. Only a few researchers investigated the relationship between safety performance and employee satisfaction. a significant positive relationship between safety performance and employee satisfaction.

# 5 CONCLUSION:

"Safety Management System is a management tool to make better safety decisions". An SMS should be viewed as a strategic framework that can support the development of specific tactics and methods by service providers to manage safety risk, with the assistance and oversight of the regulator. With the proper use of SMS, both regulators and service providers can evolve from a substantially compliance (rule) based approach to a performance-based safety management system. This entails reframing the responsibilities of the service provider, from that of compliance focusing on following the rules, to one of performance where an organization shows that it has established and documented management accountability and the appropriate risk management procedures to ensure safety.

# 6 RECOMMENDATIONS:

a. The benefits of running safety management system and safety programs in the workplace is a matter that should be given priority by the Government

through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Haines (2007) confirms this when he asserts that health promotion programs positively impact on employees' health, increase staff productivity and reduce work absenteeism.

b. The Government through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should come up with a policy to support the existence of an Emergency Response Plan in each school so that emergency cases are responded to with the urgency that they clearly deserve.

c. The authors recommend that the government organizes the preparation of Training Manuals on the safety of the teaching staff, and create training forums in all the forty-seven counties to create a better safety management system at workplace.

d. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should incorporate the staff in forums that are supposed to address the challenges of their own safety.

e. The authors also recommend creation of safety committees by the administration to look into ways of implementing existing policies on safety, and create new policies to strengthen safety management system.

f. As Klein et al. (2008) puts it, it is the duty of the administrators to review periodically, with the managemental members the use of the fire-fighting apparatus found at workplace for their effective use.

g. Safety management system's trainers should ensure their own safety by participating in formal/informal meetings and reading safety information on notice boards and guiding manuals on safety.

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## 9 ABOUT AUTHOR:



*"Safety Pays for Everyone"*
*A safe and healthy workplace attracts and retains quality employees. It's an asset to a community, operates more efficiently and enjoys a healthy bottom line. The business and the workers thrive in a safe, healthy, respectful and caring environment.*