

Guide to Establishing a Facility Inspection Program

Establishing a facility inspection program is an essential part of any organization's overall safety program. An effective program can help preserve company resources, improve operating results and reduce or eliminate accidents.

To obtain the most from this mechanical process, the identification of hazards must be expanded beyond those normally associated with employee injuries. The idea is to correct any problem that interferes with the most efficient use of time, material and equipment before it becomes a problem. Identification of hazards must include a study of the methods, behavior, layout, maintenance, critical operations, periodic operations and raw materials. All aspects of plant operations need to be reviewed and analyzed. This includes operations, processes and employee actions.

Developing and implementing a facility inspection program:

- Establish a company policy directing planned inspections of operations, methods, work areas, equipment and personnel
- Assign responsibility, authority and accountability for the administration and operation of the program
- Develop procedures for persons conducting inspections including:
 - assigning specific duties for those involved in the actual inspection
 - establish authority and lines of communication for hazard correction which involve engineering, maintenance, purchasing, safety, etc.
 - develop tools for the inspection, report format, checklist, work orders, etc.
- Arrange for training in planning and conducting inspections
- Establish specific dates or deadlines for policy and procedure implementation
- Develop methods for monitoring the program
- Measure the progress and results achieved in long-term benefits to the company such as:
 - fewer employee injuries, lost time
 - less damage to equipment, tools, materials
 - improved productivity
 - improved quality
 - less scrap and rework
 - fewer equipment breakdowns
 - improved employee morale
 - legislative compliance
 - controlled costs

Inspection procedure:

The process of inspection poses one of the greatest challenges for a comprehensive and effective program. An inspection too broad can be overly time consuming or superficial, not appropriately identifying and correcting hazards. An inspection too narrow can be overly constraining to operations and processes and miss identifying other hazards present in the organization. The objective is to develop a program that finds a happy medium. One that identifies and corrects observable hazards on a regular basis with an efficient process with minimal time invested in the process.

Planning should address:

- Know what you are looking for

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- Be familiar with the operations and hazards that are typical to it
- Review accident records to determine where and how injuries have occurred in the past
- Review past inspection reports to identify problems previously observed or that tend to occur
- Know the company's policies and procedures, safety rules, rules of employee conduct and behavior, etc.
- Review maintenance work orders to determine which operation or equipment requires more frequent inspection because of maintenance of breakdowns
- Review high-hazard areas where process presents greatest risk to employees
- Develop a checklist for items to review and observe during inspections

Listed are items that may merit review for their relationship to your operations and possibility for inspection:

Inspection Items (Examples)	
Unsafe Acts	Materials
Operating without authority	Acids
Unsafe speeds	Caustics
Removal of guards	Toxic
Use of defective tools	Flammables/explosives
Improper use of tools	Dusts, vapors, fumes
Adjusting moving machinery	Heavy metals
Improper protective equipment	Poisons
Non-use of protective equipment	Sharp
Violation of company rules, safety rules	Hot/cold
Proper method not followed	Heavy
Machines	Fire Protection Equipment
Point of operation hazards	Fire extinguishers
Drive systems	Hoses
Noise level	Automatic equipment
Location	Spray booths
Start/stop mechanism	Smoking controls
Other:	Hot work permit
Tools	First-Aid
Hand tools	Training
Power tools	Kits
Ladders	Stretcher
Scaffolding	
Material Handling Equipment	Emergency Procedures/Equipment
Forklifts	Emergency exits
Overhead hoists	Emergency action plan
Cranes	Phone numbers
Conveyors	Lighting
Wire ropes, slings, chains	Alarms
Pallet jacks	Other:
Other:	Other:

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Other:	Other:
Equipment & Processes	Electrical
Compressed gases	Grounding
Pressure vessels	Insulation
Gas or oil fire equipment	Lockout /tagout
Elevators	Assured equipment grounding
Tanks	Other:
Welding and cutting	Housekeeping
Grinding/polishing	Oil, water
Woodworking	Material storage
Plating	Waste disposal
Ventilation	Aisleways
Painting/coating	Operator stations
Molding	Other:
Walking Surfaces	Personal Protective Equipment
Floor coverings	Glasses
Extension cords	Gloves
Guard rails	Respirators
Steps	Shoes
Traffic	Hearing protection
Overhead	Other:
Storage	Other:
Conveyors	Other:
Lifting	Other:

Corrective actions:

Once known hazards are identified, eliminating them before accidents occur is paramount. Developing methods to eliminate is an integral part of any inspection program. By eliminating, you ensure that hazards don't become a continuing problem. Consider the following:

- Eliminate the substance, material or procedure
- Substitute something less hazardous that will do the same job
- Protect employees with protective devices, equipment
- Isolate the operation, process or equipment from personnel or other equipment
- Repair
- Replace
- Guard
- Move it to another location
- Provide better maintenance
- Reorganize – improve layout, improve clearances, improve housekeeping
- Develop a better method
- Develop a rule or standard
- Train or instruct personnel
- Improve employee job placement procedures
- Motivate
- Discipline
- Correct the problem immediately if possible
- Develop follow-up protocols to ensure corrective actions are completed

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Hazard classification:

When inspections uncover multiple issues to address, it becomes necessary to itemize or prioritize the hazards identified. Assigning a hazard classification is helpful in quantifying the severity and need for correction. The following may be used as a guide:

- Class A: Conditions that threaten permanent disability, loss of a body part or extensive damage to equipment, material or building structure
- Class B: Conditions that threaten serious injury, illness or damage to equipment, material or structure
- Class C: Conditions that threaten only minor injury, illness or damage

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