

TRUCKING TIPS

February 1, 2007

Injuries cost money. Creating a safer workplace will cut injury costs. Start by training employees and making safety improvements – in the office, the shop and in and around your vehicles. You can head off some predictable problems that cause injuries so your workplace casualties and costs stay under control.

As of February 1, 2007, employers are required to post a summary of the total number of workplace-related injuries and illnesses occurring during the last year. Employers need only post the Summary (OSHA Form 300A), not the OSHA 300 Log, from Feb. 1 to April 30, 2007. Copies of the required OSHA Forms, 300, 300A and 301 are available on the OSHA recordkeeping web page at www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/index.html.

1. Write a Company Policy Statement. If you are committed to a safe workplace, you must say so. By writing and disseminating a statement, you let your employees know that safety is a priority. This statement need not be long or involved, but it must clearly state your company's stance for safety.

2. Involve Your Employees. Employees can begin to get involved from the very beginning of a safety program. They can perform inspections, train new employees in safety issues, and help to investigate accidents. This involvement will help to foster ownership of safety throughout your organization, not just from top management. If safety is owned by the entire group, it is far more likely to be sustainable.

3. Establish a Hazard Prevention Plan. [Identify safety hazards.](#) First, you must decide what your potential safety hazards are. A good place to start is with any injuries that have occurred. What kind of injuries? Where did they happen? Were there any common factors? [Establish a prevention plan.](#) Once you have documented the risks, it's time to make a plan to control each and every one. A prevention plan is simply a basic action plan. It should: (a) Name the hazard; (b) Describe a change or alteration to be implemented; (c) Determine who is responsible for correcting or abating the risk; (d) Set a deadline for completion; (e) Provide funds (if necessary); and (f) Follow up to check on completion. [Develop safety rules and a disciplinary system to deal with rule-breaking.](#) Once you have controlled potential risks, you must then work with employees to ensure that they understand and will do their part in creating a safe workplace. Written rules are important to set forth broad, easily understood guidelines. While some general rules are common sense to some, they must still be explicit to avoid any misunderstanding. Rules may include: (a) A requirement that any unsafe condition or accident is reported immediately to a supervisor; (b) The prohibition of illegal drugs, alcohol, firearms and horseplay in the workplace; (c) A requirement that employees always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment such as hard-toe boots, hard hats, or safety goggles. A progressive disciplinary system (Warning, Final Warning, Dismissal) should be established to deal fairly and effectively with those who endanger themselves or co-workers by breaking safety rules.

4. Provide Safety Training. [Make certain to train your employees about potential hazards associated with their job.](#) Training is a simple concept but it is too often ignored. An employee might think he or she can learn a job simply by watching another do it. Or they might think they could "figure it out" on their own. But if you want an employee to work safely, you must teach them how. Each job's hazards as well as how to avoid them should be part of the training. [Provide safety training for all new employees and for any employee who switches jobs or takes on new tasks.](#) Even if they are experienced in the particular job, new employees should receive training in safe work practices to assure that they are aware of all potential hazards. (This training will often be a source of information for you, too. Experienced workers can relay information about safe work practices deployed with their past employers.) Don't forget to train workers who are taking on new tasks. [Encourage employee attendance at training workshops, or develop in-house programs.](#) Employees who attend training workshops can learn new skills to avoid injury.

What's more is that a workshop reminds employees that safety is an important priority. Your local fire department, or state and federal organizations can help you to design your own programs.

5. Review Your Workplace. [Conduct safety audits for continuous review and improvement.](#) Your safety plan is in place. Your employees have been trained and they understand that a fair disciplinary system is in place. This is no time to rest. As with any plan, you must continuously review it to make certain that your plan is being carried out and that it is working. Safety audits are a good way to check. You may perform them yourself or have a member of your safety committee perform them. Any problems should be reported and corrected immediately.

6. Keep Records. In order to help you maintain your safety program, it is important to keep records of your actions. You should:: (a) Take minutes at safety committee meetings; (b) Keep notes of weekly safety talks; (c) Make records of all inspections and audits; (d) Document regular maintenance; (e) Maintain OSHA form No. 300, which will also help track any accident trends; (f) Make note of all safety training activities; (g) Document all aspects of on-the-job accidents.

7. Manage Injuries to Get Workers Well and Back to Work. Before you ever have an injury at your workplace, you can do something that will serve you and your employees well should an injury occur: Choose a preferred provider. These professionals help get your worker well again and back to work promptly. That helps you to get your worker back on the job while reducing the ultimate cost of the injury.

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