



## ACCIDENT & INJURY PREVENTION FACTSHEET

Most workplace injuries, illnesses, and deaths are preventable. Hazards leading to these “accidents” are often known prior to their occurrence. Prevention of accidents and injuries is the best way to safeguard the most important part of the workplace, its people. This factsheet offers information to assist in developing workplace safety and health programs. Nine essential elements of an accident and injury prevention plan are:

### 1. Top management commitment

Under OSHA/PESH law, management is responsible for safety and health, having a duty to furnish each employee “employment and a place of employment, which are free from recognized hazards” that could lead to death or serious physical harm. Written Health and Safety Policies, jointly developed with the unions, and periodically updated are key expressions of management commitment.

Only top management can set priorities and authorize the use of time and resources to address problems. In organizations where a zeal for health and safety is communicated from the top, real changes in accident and injury rates have occurred. Accountability for accidents and injuries must begin at the top levels of management. Governmental organizations are no exception.

### 2. Employee involvement

PEF members should be actively involved in all aspects of the health and safety program through their Health and Safety or Labor/Management Committees. PEF members should provide leadership in developing, implementing, and monitoring the program. Methods of participation may include focus groups, regular workplace walkthrough inspections, and employee surveys.

### 3. Safety and health planning

PEF members should have a voice in all decisions that affect workplace health and safety. Is your agency moving to a new site, considering the purchase of ergonomic furniture, or personal protective equipment? Emergency planning for fire, medical, and other emergencies are another example of where worker and Health & Safety Committee participation is essential.

### 4. Hazard identification and control

The goal should be to identify and control hazards before people are exposed or injured. Health and Safety Committees can use a variety of methods such as reviewing injury and illness data, walkthrough inspections, or bringing in union, agency, or consulting experts. Recommendations for hazard prevention and control should be fully considered, preferably through a consensus process, by the Health and Safety Committee. Management must implement key recommendations.

## 5. Assignment of responsibility

Clear organizational accountability for safety and health policies, tasks, and conditions is critical. Individuals must understand their roles and be trained to carry them out, and their performance should be regularly evaluated. Accountability must be maintained, even through difficult periods of downsizing and organizational change.

## 6. Health and safety training

Workers and supervisors must receive appropriate health and safety training. Updates must be provided. Some training is mandated by OSHA/PESH regulations (see PEF's OSHA/PESH training requirement booklet) and includes requirements for periodic updates. However, many important health and safety issues, such as violence prevention, indoor environmental quality, and ergonomics are not specifically regulated by OSHA/PESH. Training should still be provided in these topics. Training that is interactive and tailored to agency and worker needs will yield the greatest results. Use of videotapes and computer based training alone, should be avoided.

## 7. Accident investigation

Incidents must be investigated to assess causes and prevent future occurrences. Near miss incidents generally precede injury incidents, and should be carefully monitored. A review of your facilities injuries/illness logs (see PEF's OSHA/PESH recordkeeping requirements booklet), workers' compensation data, and incident reports will help identify problem areas. A system should be in place to insure that recommended corrective changes have been fully considered and implemented.

## 8. Medical management

Systems should be in place for providing prompt medical care and support to injured workers. Many agencies and the Statewide Employee Assistance Program have developed "critical incident response" programs. Use of the statewide network of occupational health clinics for work-related illnesses is highly recommended. In some occupations, regular or event related medical exams are required based on employee exposures to certain chemical substances. Most agencies use the Civil Service Employee Health Service for this function.

## 9. Periodic review of the health and safety program

Is there a system in place for periodic review of the accident and injury prevention program? Is the program effective? Is it regularly improving? How are improvements measured?

The goal of a progressive accident and injury prevention program is clear- zero injuries, illnesses, and incidents. This goal is attainable with effort and involvement. An active health and safety committee is the cornerstone of an effective prevention program.

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*Upon request, the PEF Health & Safety Department will provide factsheets, standards, regulations, and other resources. Contact us at 518-785-1900, ext. 254 or 1-800-342-4306, ext. 254. Also, visit our webpage at [www.pef.org](http://www.pef.org).*

**Funded in part by a NYS Hazard Abatement Board OSH T&E Grant.  
Produced by the New York State Public Employees Federation**

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