

How to develop an effective safety committee

The requirements

If you employ more than 11 workers on a shift you need a safety committee. Smaller employers may choose to have monthly safety meetings instead.

Is there a magic number for membership?

There is no magic number or required number, but 6 members seems to be a common recommendation. If the committee gets too large, it'll be harder to get work done. If you feel you need better representation across departments

then you may want to include as many as 10. Keep in mind, that your meeting should last for less than an hour and that time can go by quickly when 10 opinions need to be heard.

Choose your team carefully

Your committee needs to be made up of both employee-elected and employer-selected members. Taking time to carefully select your members at the start will ensure that your committee is effective in troubleshooting and preventing injuries at your company.

Choose representatives that are positive and open to new ideas, but can also bring the discussion to a thoughtful conclusion or solution. Employee-elected representatives should equal or out-number employer-selected members. Remind workers that safety committee members are their voice on the committee so they should choose people that they trust to represent them. The committee members elect their own chairperson.

How to effectively use the hour

Develop an agenda to keep the meeting on track and useful. At minimum, the agenda should cover:

- Any action items from the previous meeting.
- Review of safety and health inspection reports.
- Review of incident or injury reports including close calls.
- Review at least one section of your accident prevention program (APP) to ensure it's still relevant.
- Open the discussion to general injury prevention ideas.

Maintain minutes that include timekeeping, topics covered and attendance.

As always, free safety training materials, simulations and posters are available on our website.

For the complete rule see WAC 296-800-130.

