

Safety Management – Safety & Disciplinary Action

One of the most important safety responsibilities that all supervisors have is to “Enforce All Safety Rules”. It’s a great way to establish standardized, acceptable behavior in a work environment and create a model safety culture. However, many will agree that enforcing the rules is much easier said than done. To accurately apply and enforce safety policies, a few steps should be considered.

First of all - **Document, Document, Document.**

- **Written Job Descriptions** – Safety consultants are frequently asked why they recommend written job descriptions for their clients. Quite simply, written job descriptions establish in writing the expected day-to-day activities of the staff. In other words, a company might have difficulty determining that an employee acted “...outside the scope and function of their employment...” unless there’s a documented baseline of daily expected behavior.
- **Written Safety Rules and Policies** – Safety rules are designed to outline expected employee behavior when dealing with specific work safety issues. These rules are often broken into a few different categories:
 - *General Safety Rules* – i.e. no running, no horseplay, remove your jewelry, no long sleeve shirts, don’t remove safety guards from any equipment, etc.
 - *Specific Safety Rules* – i.e. always wear a proper face shield *when using any grinder*, a hard hat is always required *in the warehouse*, etc.
 - *OSHA Safety Rules* – i.e. Respiratory Protection, Bloodborne Pathogens, HazCom, Lockout/Tagout, etc.
 - *Operational Safety Rules* – i.e. we only run the assembly line #4 when fully staffed, etc.
 - *Governmental Safety Rules* (non-OSHA) – “wide loads can only be transported on highways during daylight hours”, etc.
- **Training, training and more training** – Now that you have all of your job descriptions and safety rules written, make sure that you use this database of knowledge to train employees. Training is the key – employees will only know what the expected behavior is if they’ve trained on it. It’s also been said that, “...employees will do whatever they want to do until you tell them to do differently...”. Also, document **all** your training. It’s also been said that, “...if it’s not written down, it never happened...”.
- **Progressive Disciplinary Policy** – Work with your HR (Human Resources) department (if you have one) to develop a policy that ensures that all staff members are treated fairly and equally when they’ve violated established safety rules. The policy should be equal, fair and serious. Follow the standard HR progressive application of action. For example:
 - First Offense – documented verbal warning, consultation and retraining.
 - Second Offense – documented written warning, consultation and retraining.
 - Third Offense – documented full shift suspension, without pay. Retraining.
 - Fourth Offense – Termination.

“You’re suggesting that I terminate employees for violation of safety rules!?” Yes, if it becomes necessary. A true, functioning safety culture treats violations of safety rules with the same respect that operational violations would get. Be as lenient as you’d like to be – just be fair and equal to everyone and document, document, document.

Be prepared to send employees home healthy rather than allowing them to get hurt.