Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VI

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Discuss OSH program aspirations and how they affect risk management efforts.
2. Describe the process involved in developing effective OSH training and apply the process in the development of an OSH training plan.
3. Explain the roles of warnings, safety devices, and housekeeping in OSH programs.
4. Analyze the process used in developing an effective emergency preparedness plan.
5. Describe and discuss the attributes of a strong safety culture and differentiate between safety culture and safety climate.
6. Discuss the role of employee perception surveys in establishing a strong safety culture.
7. Examine safety management systems and identify components common to many of them.
8. Explain the differences between proactive and reactive approaches to professional ethics, and apply professional ethics to situations.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 12:
Common Components of OSH Programs

Chapter 13:
Tools for Managing OSH Programs

Unit Lesson

How does your organization view its safety program? Is it an integral part of all operations, or is it something that is done to keep the regulators happy? If it is the second one, then Hansen (2005) describes the organization as being in the SWAMP – Safety Without Any Management Process. In other words, safety is only important when OSHA is knocking on the door or after a serious injury or fatality. At any other time, safety is ignored. These organizations typically have a very short shelf life. Perhaps your organization has hired a safety manager to “fix” things. Posters are put up in the workplace and accidents are investigated, with blame typically going to the worker. Lots of rules are in place. This is Naturally Occurring Reactive Management – the NORM (Hansen, 2005). Better than the SWAMP, but not by much. EXCELLENCE describes organizations that have started to integrate safety into their operations (Hansen, 2005). Instead of “safety” procedures, there are standard operating procedures in which safety is included (not separate). Accidents are investigated and root causes are identified. Safety is recognized as a way to reduce costs, not increase them.

If you are really fortunate, you work for an organization that is WORLD CLASS, where “Safety is managed, not led” (Hansen, 2005, p. 46). In these organizations, safety is considered a value, not a priority. Can you explain the difference?

A priority can, and often will be, changed. It is easy to say “safety first” until something more important comes along. Values represent the core beliefs of an organization and are embedded in everything it does (Roughton & Mercurio, 2002). When safety is a value, it may seem that it is not there, but since it is present in everything, there is no need to view safety as a separate program. It may take a lot of time and effort for safety to become a value, but once established, it is not likely to change.
Many organizations fall somewhere between NORM and EXCELLENCE. They need some program effort to guide them to the next level, such as risk management. If they have a functioning safety program, they already have many important tools that can aid them in the risk management process.

After an incident investigation or a risk identification exercise, human error is often identified as a contributing factor to the risks. A common proposal for solving this human error problem is training. This can be a good solution if lack of training or ineffective training was truly the cause, and not just a knee-jerk reaction as a quick fix. But let’s face it, if workers are initially trained in the use of hearing protection, and they understand that this protection is required in certain areas, is training them again going to make any difference if we find them not wearing the required protection? They know they should wear it, and we need to look deeper to find reasons why they are not doing so.

This is not to say that all training is ineffective. However, to be effective, training must meet the needs of the employees. They have a right to know about the hazards they work with and how to protect themselves from these hazards (Jensen, 2012).

When developing safety training for the workplace, adult learning theory should be used in determining how best to address the needed knowledge or skill. Always keep in mind that training is not the final solution to risk reduction, only one of the tools. In addition to training, Jensen (2012) lists warnings, safety devices, housekeeping, and emergency preparedness as common to most safety programs and important components of our risk reduction efforts. We will be applying them frequently in the last two units of the course.

What do SWAMP, NORM, EXCELLENCE, and WORLD CLASS have in common? They all represent a safety culture. What?? How can SWAMP be a safety culture, when it has no safety program at all?
Think of safety culture as the combination of the values, attitudes, and practices related to safety (Jensen, 2012). While SWAMP has poor values, attitudes and practices, it does have a safety culture – albeit a very poor one. The remaining classifications are somewhere on the safety culture continuum from poor to outstanding. Since we know that an improved safety culture aids in risk reduction, it is helpful to know where our own organization falls on this continuum.

Safety climate is the measurable part of a safety culture (Jensen, 2012). By using safety climate surveys, we can measure factors such as management commitment, employee involvement, and safety accountability. But what do the measurements mean, and how do we know if the results are good or bad? It is no coincidence that current safety management systems such as ANSI/AIHA Z10-2005 contain these same elements, and more. Safety management systems provide us with the benchmarks necessary to measure safety climate and assess the overall safety culture. In recent years, organizations in the United States have started to understand the benefits of a standardized safety management system. As companies become global, they find that many organizations outside the U.S. are using safety management systems such as OHSAS 18001 and ILO-OSH 2001 as benchmarks for their risk reduction programs. Adoption of a safety management system has become critical if an organization is to remain competitive.

Regardless of the safety culture at their organizations, safety practitioners are sometimes faced with the dilemma of resolving issues that conflict with their loyalty to the employer and the need to protect employees. There is no simple resolution to these ethical dilemmas. Jensen (2012) recommends taking a proactive approach by establishing an ethics policy statement that fits the culture of the organization. Professional organizations such as the Board of Certified Safety Professionals and the National Safety Council have developed ethics policy statements that can be used as guidelines.

With the completion of this unit, we will have filled our risk management toolbox with all the resources we need to effectively identify, assess, and reduce risks. In the next two units, we will learn how to apply these tools to a wide variety of workplace conditions and behaviors.

References


Suggested Reading

Find out more about this unit’s topics by researching in the databases of the CSU Online Library. The following articles are available in the Business Source Complete database:


Using the Internet

Learn more about what is included in a code of ethics by reading the Board of Certified Safety Professionals “Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.” You can find a .pdf version online by using your favorite search engine to search for “CSP Code of Ethics.” You will know you have the right one if it is located on the www.bcsp.org site.

Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Apply What You Have Learned

1. In his May 2005 article in Occupational Hazards Magazine, Larry Hansen discusses four stages on the continuum of safety excellence. Read his article and determine if your organization is in the SWAMP, the NORM, EXCELLENCE, or WORLD CLASS.


3. Consider the following exchange during a meeting of the emergency planning committee. This particular meeting is for selecting a short list of foreseeable emergencies to address in planning. Jim says that the chance of a hurricane is so tiny that it should not make the short list of emergency planning. Robert describes an instance where a similar facility was hit by a hurricane, resulting in two deaths and extensive damage to the facility. He says he does not want to be held responsible if a hurricane strikes the facility. If you are chairing the committee, what might you say?

4. Search the Internet for samples of ethics policy statements for various safety-related organizations. Try writing a safety ethics statement for yourself that would align with your current organization’s mission statement.

5. Develop a short employee safety perception survey and have some of your co-workers complete it. Are the results what you expected? Do you think you would get similar results if you surveyed upper management?

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.