



TEAMSTERS

Safety & Health FACTS

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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES- PERFORMING INSPECTIONS

The safety committee must have a system for doing its own detective work to find the hazards in every department or work area. If you are going to conduct a survey, keep in mind the following points:

- ♦ Talk to committee members, stewards, and other interested members before the survey to make sure you know about recent safety and health problems.
- ♦ Talk to workers during the survey. They may know about hazards you would not see on a walkthrough tour.
- ♦ Keep the survey results in writing. This allows the committee to keep track of what hazards have been found and what's being done about them.
- ♦ Make diagrams that show the hazards you find. For example, you might mark an area where you heard loud noise, where there was an uncovered hole in the floor, or where you smelled chemical vapors.

Write down the number of workers who are affected and whether they have ever complained to management.

Put reminders on the diagram if you need to get more information about a hazard you saw.

These diagrams are useful in union discussions, joint meetings with management, or OSHA inspections. Be sure to put the date on them.

- If necessary, do only part of the survey at one time. If you do not have time to cover the whole plant without rushing, it may be better to do complete surveys of one department at a time. Or you may want to survey the whole plant but only look for certain problem

The following is a sample list of questions you should ask yourself during a plant survey. After looking at your plant, you may want to develop your own list for committee members to use.

SAFETY HAZARDS

- Are the work areas, walkways and stairways kept clean and in good repair?
- Are guardrails provided where needed?
- What kind of safety training is provided to workers?
- Are fire exits marked properly?
- Are electrical boxes covered?
- Are all cables in good repair?
- Do machines have needed guards to keep workers from being caught in moving parts or from being hit by moving material?
- Are toxic materials stored properly?
- Is there a lockout system to prevent injuries from moving and energized machinery when repairs are being made?
- Are welding operations screened and well ventilated?
- Is lighting adequate?
- Are workloads and the work pace reasonable?
- Have there been any accidents or near-misses?
- Are "job safety analyses" posted, showing the hazards and safe work procedures for each job? What special precautions do they suggest? Make a note to get copies.
- Are there any problems you think might be OSHA code violations?

HEALTH HAZARDS

- What chemicals come into the plant on the loading dock and where do they go? What are the trade names of the chemicals? Do workers know what the "real" names are so that you can look them up? Write down what is on the label.
- Has the company obtained Material Safety Data Sheets from suppliers of chemicals, telling what the ingredients and hazards are? If so, ask for copies.
- Do workers ever get chemicals on their skin? Are gloves supplied? Who pays for them?
- Do you see dust or smoke in the air? Do you smell solvent vapors?
- What does the ventilation system look like? Does it seem to be working adequately? Any visible dust in the air? Does the company ever check the system? Ask them for design specifications to see if it's doing what it was designed for or if it is overloaded.
- What areas of the plant are noisy? Which specific machines? Could engineering controls such as enclosures or insulation reduce noise exposure?
- Are any work areas too hot or too cold?

- ♦ Are there any new or unusual processes that have recently been introduced? Could they be creating new hazards?
- ♦ Has anyone had to take hearing tests, X-rays, or medical exams? Why? Have they gotten the results?
- ♦ Does the company do air sampling for toxic chemicals or tests for noise levels? Why? What were the results?
- ♦ Does anyone have a health problem that might be work-related? Headache? Dizziness? Bloody nose? Skin rash? Trouble breathing?
- ♦ Is there a high turnover on certain jobs? Why?
- ♦ Are signs posted where asbestos is used, as required by OSHA?
- ♦ Where do people have to wear masks, earplugs or other protective equipment? Is the equipment in good condition? Does it work?