

Workplace Inspections

When a worker suffers an injury or illness, it not only impacts the injured worker but also their family, co-workers, the employer, and society. Inspection programs are a useful preventative tool to help identify and improve workplace and equipment conditions, processes and procedures. Inspections proactively identify hazards requiring correction which prevents incidents, injuries and illnesses. Having an inspection program is a legislative requirement and is an important part of maintaining a safe workplace.

A comprehensive inspection program may include:

Inspection Program

- Inspecting prior to regularly scheduled safety committee or representative meetings
- Daily/weekly formal and informal supervisor inspections
- Daily inspections of equipment, tools, and personal protective equipment
- Initial start-up inspections of machinery
- Pre-use inspections of hoists, cranes, and other powered mobile equipment
- Annual 3rd party inspections of specialty equipment

The safety and health committee or representative are one of several workplace parties involved in performing workplace inspections. In addition to regularly scheduled inspections, you need to inspect your workplace after an incident or when you have added a new work process or equipment.

What is the Danger?

There are different ways to approach workplace inspections. Looking at the components of your health and safety program will help. For example, you can focus on the most common tasks your workers perform or on specific issues addressed by your program, such as material handling, working with machinery, or workplace violence. You may wish to break up the worksite into specific departments with focused checklists to look at specific hazards and activities in each area. Inspectors should identify and document all hazards observed.

Main Categories of Hazards			
	Biological	Potential to cause health effects through exposure to organisms or organic material.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bacteria • Viruses • Animals / Humans
	Chemical	Hazardous substances that may cause immediate or long-term health effects through exposure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning products • Paints or adhesives • Solvents
	Ergonomic	Result of physical factors that can cause musculoskeletal injuries (MSI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetitive movements • Improper workstation setup • Awkward postures
	Physical	Environmental factors or workplace conditions that can harm a worker without necessarily touching them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical • Sharps / Crushing • Slip, trip, and fall
	Psychosocial	Hazards include those that can have an adverse effect on a worker's mental health or well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress / Work demand • Violence • Harassment



If your inspection reveals a problem, try to get to the root of it. For example, if you see a wet floor, ask why. Possible explanations may include a water leak, a job process that is creating the problem, or a lack of training on how to clean up the hazard. Fix it right the first time and the problem will become less likely to occur.

Safety Tips

- ✓ Consider frequency of workplace inspections based on the level of risk of work being performed. The higher the risk, the more frequent inspections should be conducted. For example, monthly workplace inspections rather than quarterly.
- ✓ Ensure workers who are required to perform inspections have received appropriate training.
- ✓ Use a checklist that is specific to your workplace to ensure that your inspection is thorough and consistent.
- ✓ Ask workers to demonstrate how they perform their tasks to gain a better understanding.
- ✓ Ask yourself what hazards are associated with the job that that would be performed in that work area.
- ✓ Engage in an open conversation with workers about any concerns or suggestions they may have about health and safety in the workplace.
- ✓ Consider rotating different workers or committee member for inspections. Seeing the workplace with “new eyes” may bring forth hazards not previously known or had been overlooked.
- ✓ Record any unsafe actions or conditions that you observe (lack of guarding on machines, improper use of personal protective equipment, etc.). Consider tasks that the worker may also perform that you did not observe.
- ✓ Address serious hazards or unsafe work practices immediately; this is a legal obligation.
- ✓ Ensure less serious hazards are assigned to someone to resolve each one.
- ✓ Ensure the safety and health committee review inspection reports and processes during regularly scheduled meetings.
- ✓ Follow up on any actions that will take time to complete (for example, purchasing new equipment).
- ✓ Communicate inspection findings to workers. Examples include toolbox talks or posting on the bulletin board.

Demonstrate

Review Inspection Program with workers involved with inspections. Must ensure inspections are conducted based on frequency of the schedule.

Review inspection checklist with workers while performing a walkthrough of the workplace, equipment, or process.

Contact S2SA for templates and additional resources. These include safety checklists, equipment inspections, inspection policy guide, and more.

Discussion

How often should a workplace inspection be conducted?

What tools or equipment are pre-use inspections required for in the workplace? If the tool or equipment is defective, what is the process to effectively remove from service?

DID YOU KNOW?

Members of a committee must inspect the workplace, processes, and procedures at least once before every scheduled meeting and at minimum quarterly (90 days).

