

Ownership, Responsibility, and Accountability

Ownership

Determining who has ownership in a safety and health management system should be fairly straightforward. Everyone who works at the company should own at least part of the system. Everyone has a responsibility to contribute, either by assignment, by design or inherently to the system. And those who have assigned or designed responsibility should be accountable to the management or staff of the company for safety performance in their areas of responsibility. However, the system is “owned” by everyone who contributes to it. As a machine operator, I would “own” the safe use of my machine. As a machine shop supervisor, I would “own” the safe use of all my machines, the training of my machine operators and the activities and maintenance of the safe workplace for my machine shop area. As a company owner or manager, I would “own” all the safety related work practices that occur at my company or facility.

Responsibility

Determining who is responsible for the system may be a bit more intricate and involved than “owning” the system. By being responsible, that means that you are charged with ensuring that work activities proceed safely and that the safety and health of employees (either yourself, your co-workers or your underlings) is not jeopardized. You are obliged to assure that the workplace activities under your control are safe. You have readily assumed the obligation and duty to make these assurances and you can be depended upon and relied upon to carry out those duties.

Accountability

Accountability, like ownership, is fairly straight forward. Accountability means that you will be judged on how well or effectively you carried out the duties you were responsible for. An accounting or explanation of the actions taken (or not taken) will need to be made to management or supervision. This is your credibility stake in the process.

Putting It All Together

The easiest way to put the whole system (ownership, responsibility and accountability) together is to create a strategic plan, that establishes generalized goals for the management system, and assigns responsible people (who have the authority and accountability) to implement the actions needed to achieve the goals. The OSHA website has an excellent outline tool to use for a general safety and health management system strategic plan. It is reproduced here, for your benefit. The document is available on the OSHA website at the following address:

http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/safetyhealth/mod4_tools_plan.html

Example Strategic Plan XYZ Company

Our vision for safety and health is: (write your vision statement below ...)

In order to reach this vision we will implement the following goals using a partnership approach with labor which involves front line workers through a variety of means to include committees and task groups and individual empowerment. The responsible parties listed for each goal below will develop operational plans for the completion of the goal within the time period listed.

Goal 1: Build "buy-in" for the needed changes by building an alliance or partnership between management and union (the "hook"). Identify one key top management official and union official to champion the change and to hold their respective organizations accountable (union-management pair concept).

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 2: Initial training of Management-Supervisory staff, Union Leadership, and safety and health committee members, and a representative number of hourly employees. This may include both safety and health training and any needed management, team building, or communication training, etc.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 3: Establish a steering committee comprised of management, union, and safety staff. The purpose of this group is to facilitate and support the change processes. This will provide overall guidance and direction and, avoid duplication of efforts.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 4: Develop site safety vision, key policies, and operation plans.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 5: Align organization through establishing shared vision of safety and health goals and objectives vs. production.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 6: Define specific roles and responsibilities for safety and health at all levels of the organization.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 7: Develop a system of accountability for all levels of the organization.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 8: Develop measures and an ongoing measurement and feedback system.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 9: Develop policies for recognition, rewards, incentives, and ceremonies.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 10: Awareness training for all employees and kick-off.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 11: Implement process changes via involvement of management, union and employees using a "Plan To Act" process (TQM).

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 12: Continually measure performance.

Responsible person: Completion date:

Goal 13: Communicate results and celebrate successes.

Responsible person: Completion date: