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WORKPLACE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF WORKPLACE SAFETY PROGRAMMING

WORKPLACE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACCIDENT PREVENTION

The cornerstone of any business activity – and especially workplace safety management activity and the prevention of accidents related to workplace environments and activities – is management. The success of workplace safety programming depends largely upon what top workplace management knows and thinks about safety, what they expect from their safety program, and how much time, money, staff resources, and the amount of their own personal involvement they will invest in it.

One of the primary responsibilities of business management, and those with technical control of workplace environments and activities, is some form of "production." Management and technical personnel (owners, engineers, designers, corporate executives, managers, supervisors, and other trained management or technical personnel) who control or influence the design or operation of workplace environments and activities, to various degrees, are ultimately responsible for the planning and control of the "assets of production." A natural related business management responsibility is to "protect and secure" the assets of production for future use. Assets of production typically include capital (facilities, equipment, production materials) and labor (workers). Business managers (employers) typically state that their employees and other workers who assist in the conduct of their business are their "greatest asset." For this and other reasons associated with the exercise of ordinary (prudent) care for the safety of others, the protection of the health and safety of employees and

others who may be exposed to workplace hazards is a primary function and responsibility of management and technical personnel having control over workplace and other business activities and the potential hazards to which employees and others may be exposed.

Compared to their employees and others who may be exposed to business related hazards, top management and technical personnel have a higher degree of access to relevant safety information concerning reasonably foreseeable hazards associated with their business: a higher degree of overall technical knowledge relative to workplace related hazards and accident prevention; the highest degree of control (if not exclusive control) over the safety features incorporated into workplace facilities and equipment; and the exclusive ability to dictate policy and enforce work practices relative to workplace safety. As these factors will have a profound effect on the risks and resulting injuries to which their employees and others will be exposed, reasonably prudent action on the part of top management and technical personnel must focus on the control of workplace related hazards and the establishment of the basic elements of workplace accident prevention programming.

Top management must budget sufficient funds to provide for (a) required workplace related safety activity that will be carried out by various management and supervisory personnel, (b) all necessary workplace safety supplies and equipment, and (c) the training of management, supervisors, and employees in regard to required safety policies, practices, and business related standards.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF WORKPLACE SAFETY PROGRAMMING

Basic elements of workplace safety programming typically include (a) the publication of a written statement of corporate (company) safety policy emphasizing top management's commitment to workplace safety and the prevention of accidents, (b) a written assignment of authority and responsibility related to workplace safety, (c) the development and conduct of workplace and job safety analysis activity designed to identify, evaluate, and prevent or control workplace related hazards, (d) the issuing of published safety standards regarding workplace facilities and equipment associated with the control of physical hazards, (e) the issuing of published safe work methods and procedures, (f) compliance with authoritative guidelines related to the control of reasonably foreseeable workplace hazards, (g) compliance with all local, state, federal and nationally recognized safety standards and regulations (subject to their faithfulness to the core principles of safety engineering and the cardinal rules of hazard control), (h) the establishment and conduct of a planned safety observation and inspection program regarding workplace related activities, facilities, and equipment, (i) the development and conduct of a management, supervisor, and worker training program related to workplace safety requirements, (j) emergency response planning regarding the sudden appearance or awareness of workplace related facility, equipment, or production hazards, (k) formal pro-active procedures for the investigation and analysis of actual and potential workplace accidents that have resulted or have a significant probability to result in serious personnel injury or property damage, and (l) the establishment of a formal means to periodically audit management performance and safety program content and effectiveness.

To be effective, and due to their importance compared to other management policies which are typically well documented, the basic elements of workplace safety programming should be in writing.