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Managing Workplace Safety Risks

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November 17, 2011
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What is Workplace Safety?
• Workplace safety is about protecting employees from work-related injury and illness.
  ➢ Thoughtful planning + diligence can prevent injuries and illnesses.
  ➢ When injuries and illness occur—despite prevention efforts—thoughtful planning can mitigate risks (reduce the cost/harm).

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Benefits of a Safe Workplace

- Protects employee well-being.
- Reduces the cost of health insurance benefits, workers’ compensation benefits and wages for temporary help.
- Enables resources to be spent as intended, on the nonprofit’s mission.

A Safe Workplace Saves Money

- Save the cost of:
  - Lost-work hours.
  - Time spent orienting temporary help.
  - Complaints due to reductions in program and product quality and timeliness.
  - Stress on employees who are picking up absent workers’ workloads, and
  - Suspending, curtailing or shutting down programs or services.

Framework

- Step 1: Consider the Context
  - Identify the type of workplace and determine what environmental issues impact workplace safety risks.

Framework

Step 2: Identify and Prioritize Workplace Safety Risks
- Determine where and what and how a worker is likely to become injured or ill before it occurs.
- Consider the likelihood and severity of harm and rank risks accordingly.

Workplace Hazard Analysis

Hazard Identification
- Current environment + anticipated changes in processes, environment, etc.
- Informal Job and Process analysis
- Inspections (and follow-up) – are you doing them?
- Hazard Reporting (is it effective and do employees participate without fear of reprisal?)
- Accident/Incident investigation (what happens?)
- Injury/Illnesses analysis

Framework

Step 3: Identify, Select and Implement Appropriate Risk Management Strategies
- Equipment use and maintenance
- Training, including task/program-specific training and general safety training
- Effective supervision
Hazard Prevention and Control

- Emergency planning and preparation
  - How are workers notified about an emergency?
  - Is there effective evacuation planning for employees with mobility challenges?
- Emergency equipment

Work Areas

- Analyze individual workstations and program areas for hazards—the potential for harm—slippery floors and other tripping hazards, a frayed electrical cord, the potential for repetitive motion injuries, the presence of toxic chemicals or mold.

Workplace Safety Programs

- **Purpose**: Reduce work-related injury and illness.
- **Content**: Any policy, procedure, training that protects workers from work-related injury and illness while on the job.
- **Concerns**: Promoting and rewarding safe practices at work, reducing injuries and illnesses at work, and eliminating fatalities at work.
I would guess SSA might think this is too intrusive and in terms of P&A staff asking employers.

Also I am not sure P&A staff would know what they would be looking for if they reviewed policies or procedures, though a total lack of any policies or procedures, should be a red flag.

Perhaps just limit to asking if there is a workplace safety program??

Kenneth Sshiotani, 12/11/2009
Key Prevention Elements

- administrative controls (policies)
- written procedures and safe work practices
- exposure-time limitations (temperature and ergonomic hazards)
- hazardous-materials use monitoring
- alarms, signs and warnings
- training

Keys to Effective Workplace Safety

(1) management commitment; and (2) employee participation.
For example:

- The employer is responsible for supplying appropriate safety equipment, but employees are responsible for wearing personal protective equipment at the appropriate time and place.
- The employer provides training to help workers carry out their assignments, but employees are responsible for attending this training, asking questions and telling supervisors if they do not understand what is being explained.

Workplace Culture and Safety

Signs of a “culture of safety” include:

- Safety is considered something that is the cleaning crew’s, building engineer’s or safety coordinator’s and everyone else’s job.
- People are rewarded in a tangible, visible way for promoting safety.
- Safety concerns are evident in the interactions among staff and volunteers.
- New personnel are briefed on safety procedures.
- Consequences for ignoring safety practices or engaging in unsafe behavior are enforced.
• Step 1: **Context** - What is the nature of the workplace? What special safety issues arise because of context?

• Step 2: **Hazard Analysis**: where and what and how are workers likely to become injured or ill?

• Step 3: **Appropriate Interventions**: consider training, equipment, task design, oversight, accessibility

• **Overall assessment**: is safety integrated into the culture of the workplace? Is there evidence that staff or volunteers face an unacceptable risk of injuries or illness?

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**Special Topics**

• Workplace Accessibility

• Workplace Bullying

• Workplace Violence

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**Workplace Accessibility**

• Accessibility is a vital part of workplace safety. Inaccessible workplaces are unsafe for workers with intellectual or physical disabilities.

• Is your workplace accessible with necessary adaptations and accommodations?
  - Are there accessible parking spaces available?
  - Is there a ramp or step-free entrance?
  - Are there accessible washrooms?
  - Are doorways of a sufficient width to comply with requirements to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair to freely enter and exit rooms?
  - Are table heights adjusted to accommodate individuals who use wheelchairs?
Workplace Bullying

Definition: repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators that takes one or more of the following forms:

- Verbal abuse.
- Offensive conduct or behaviors, including nonverbal, that are threatening, humiliating or intimidating.
- Work interference—sabotage—that prevents work from getting done.

Source: Workplace Bullying Institute

What You Need to Know...

- Bullying is not illegal
- 21 states have introduced legislation; none have passed laws
- Model legislation: “Healthy Workplace Bill” – would impose individual liability for behavior that harms a person’s physical or emotional health

Possible Risk Management Action Steps

- Develop a policy prohibiting workplace bullying
  - Defines bullying
  - Identifies person to whom complaints should be made
  - Investigation process
  - Consequences for violating the policy
- Educate and train employees
- Investigate complaints
Workplace Violence

- What is workplace violence?
  - Physical violence, and threats of violent (direct or indirect)
  - Behavior that causes concern for safety from violence due to its nature and severity (but NOT bullying)
  - Nexus to the workplace (on-site, off-site during work-relative activities, elsewhere with an impact on safety of the workplace)

(see definition at bottom of page 5 of the ASIS/SHRM Standard)

Resource

- ASIS/SHRM – American National Standard
  - Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention
  - "Threat Management" protocol
  - Practices to assist in managing post-incident issues

Possible Risk Management Action Steps

- Engage top management, all employees and key departments (e.g., HR, security, legal)
- Conduct a "risk" or "needs" assessment.
  - Do staff work at night? Alone?
  - Is the office/facility in a high crime area?
  - Do staff handle cash? Deal with the public? Serve patients/clients held against their will?
  - Is there a history of violence? What is the culture?
Possible Action Steps

• Evaluate physical security
   Entrances and exits
   Lighting and landscaping
   Floor plans that show escape routes?
   Emergency contacts
   Secure parking?
   Panic buttons?

Possible Action Steps

• Develop a workplace violence prevention policy
   “No Threats, No Violence”
   Defines unacceptable behavior
   Regulates/prohibits weapons on-site (to the extent permitted by local laws)
   Requires prompt reporting of suspected violations (with multiple avenues for reporting)
   Commitment to non-retaliation
   Indicates discipline for policy violations

Threat Management

• Warning Signs – inappropriate behaviors and communications often precede a violent incident
   Conduct—short of violence—may be disruptive and cause employees to be fearful
   “…no profile exists to identify likely perpetrators of workplace violence. No single act or one type of conduct can predict whether someone will commit violence.”
Threat Management

• Human resources and security should be alert to:
  • History of threats or violent acts (including criminal history)
  • Threats, bullying, aggressive outbursts, excessive displays of anger
  • Verbal abuse or harassment
  • Inability to handle criticism
  • Chronic, unsubstantiated complaints about persecution or injustice
  • Erratic, impulsive or bizarre behavior

Consider the context...

www.nonprofitrisk.org
Third Thursdays HR Webinar:
Top 10 HR Risks Facing Nonprofit Organizations

November 17, 2011

Resources

- Workplace Safety is No Accident: An Employer’s Online Toolkit
  - www.nonprofitrisk.org

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration
  - www.osha.gov

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Fall 2011 HR Series

December 15 — Background Checking: What You Need to Know

First Thursday HR Webinar: Top 10 HR Risks Facing Nonprofit Organizations

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Thank you!
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