

## General Information on Performing Workplace Inspections

### Who should be on the inspection team?

Health and safety committee members are obvious choices of personnel to carry out formal inspections, especially if they have received training or certification.

Other criteria for selecting the inspection team are:

- knowledge of regulations and procedures
- knowledge of potential hazards
- experience with work procedures involved

Engineers, maintenance personnel, occupational hygienists, health and safety professionals, supervisors or managers may be a part of the inspection team or they may be called upon to help with certain aspects of the inspection, or to help explain equipment or processes.

Large workplaces may have more than one inspection team. The various teams can have separate areas to inspect.

### How are inspections actually done?

Discuss the planned inspection route before undertaking the inspection. Review where inspection team members are going and what they are looking for. For example, during the inspection, "huddle" before going into noisy areas. This eliminates the need for arm waving, shouting and other unsatisfactory methods of communication.

For inspections, wear personal protective equipment (PPE) where required. If you do not have PPE and cannot get any, do not enter the area. List this as a deficiency during the inspection. Re-inspect the area when PPE is provided.

### Observation

Look for deviations from accepted work practices. Use statements such as, "a worker was observed operating a machine without a guard." Do not use information derived from inspections for disciplinary measures.

Some common poor work practices include:

- using machinery or tools without authority
- operating at unsafe speeds or in other violation of safe work practice
- removing guards or other safety devices, or rendering them ineffective
- using defective tools or equipment or using tools or equipment in unsafe ways
- using hands or body instead of tools or push sticks

## Safety in Numbers – Workplace Inspections

- overloading, crowding, or failing to balance materials or handling materials in other unsafe ways, including improper lifting
- repairing or adjusting equipment that is in motion, under pressure, or electrically charged
- failing to use or maintain, or improperly using, personal protective equipment or safety devices
- creating unsafe, unsanitary, or unhealthy conditions by improper personal hygiene, by using compressed air for cleaning clothes, by poor housekeeping, or by smoking in unauthorized areas
- standing or working under suspended loads, scaffolds, shafts, or open hatches

When conducting inspections, follow these basic principles:

- Draw attention to the presence of any immediate danger--other items can await the final report.
- Shut down and "lock out" any hazardous items that cannot be brought to a safe operating standard until repaired.
- Do not operate equipment. Ask the operator for a demonstration. If the operator of any piece of equipment does not know what dangers may be present, this is cause for concern. Never ignore any item because you do not have knowledge to make an accurate judgement of safety.
- Look up, down, around and inside. Be methodical and thorough. Do not spoil the inspection with a "once-over-lightly" approach.
- Clearly describe each hazard and its exact location in your rough notes. Allow "on-the-spot" recording of all findings before they are forgotten. Record what you have or have not examined in case the inspection is interrupted.
- Ask questions, but do not unnecessarily disrupt work activities. This may interfere with efficient assessment of the job function and may also create a potentially hazardous situation.
- Consider the static (stop position) and dynamic (in motion) conditions of the item you are inspecting. If a machine is shut down, consider postponing the inspection until it is functioning again.
- Discuss as a group, "Can any problem, hazard or accident generate from this situation when looking at the equipment, the process or the environment?" Determine what corrections or controls are appropriate.
- Do not try to detect all hazards simply by relying on your senses or by looking at them during the inspection. You may have to monitor equipment to measure the levels of exposure to chemicals, noise, radiation or biological agents.
- Take a photograph if you are unable to clearly describe or sketch a particular situation.