The Employer's Guide to Hiring a Safety Professional

Use this guide to assist you in hiring a competent professional to manage safety and health risks in your organization.

From the American Society of Safety Engineers – America's oldest and largest professional safety organization.

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Tips from ASSE

When evaluating a candidate's work experience, focus on the aggregate amount of time devoted to safety engineering or management and the performance of the core functions of the safety position (or other sub-disciplines of the safety practice). Some jobs with "safety" in the title actually have minimal safety-related responsibilities.

If you are considering hiring or promoting a safety professional, ensure that you are fully leveraging the position to benefit your organization. Consider, for example, whether the current reporting structure allows the safety professional to work effectively with:

- Human Resources – on organizational culture or climate issues, return-to-work programs, and training, to change employee behaviors, influence managers, share tools and technology, improve legal and regulatory compliance, and boost employee morale.
- Operations, Planning, Design, or Engineering – to ensure that, to the extent possible, safety risks are designed out of proposed process, plant or equipment changes, or are considered in acquisitions or expansion plans.
- Corporate Social Responsibility or Sustainability – to ensure that safety and health considerations are integrated into the organization's sustainability program.
- Environmental Protection – on handling and storing hazardous materials, indoor air quality issues, training, and regulatory compliance.

Ask candidates to provide writing samples in the technical subject area of the position to demonstrate their competence in this area.

Determine if the candidates have recently completed safety-related continuing education courses to stay current on emerging issues and new developments. Look for courses that qualify for continuing education credits from accredited certification organizations.

Beware of safety "certifications" from unaccredited organizations that can be obtained without regard for the education, training, knowledge level, or experience of the applicant.

- Safety certifications should be from organizations accredited by the National Commission of Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the Council of Engineering and Scientific Specialty Boards (CESB), or a nationally recognized accrediting body which uses certification criteria equal to or greater than that of the NCCA or CESB.

Competency

ASSE recommends that you look for the following qualifications when evaluating the competency of safety professionals. By requiring these qualifications, you will be ensuring that you will be hiring or promoting safety professionals with the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to perform the core functions of the position. There are five separate sets of suggested qualifications depending on what level of safety position you are looking to fill. In addition, a safety-related interview guide is appended.

Entry Level

Education:

4-year degree or 2-year degree in safety from an accredited* college or university

Preferred disciplines:

Occupational safety and health, environmental safety and health, safety or environmental management, and safety or environmental science.

For more information on SH&E College and University programs, please visit:

www.asse.org/professionalaffairs_new/directory/.

***These should be **regionally** accredited universities, with preference for candidates from programs accredited by ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) or ATMAE (the Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering). For more information on accreditation, please visit the Council of Higher Education Accreditation's website at www.chea.org.

Work Experience:

Previous internship experience recommended

Some entry level responsibilities include:

Coordinating and performing training (in all SH&E areas); managing safety data sheets; writing SH&E programs for approval by upper levels; conducting walk-through inspections; participating in accident investigation and/or emergency response; understanding metrics & KPIs; understanding recordkeeping, life safety, and other applicable regulations.

Entry level skills and competencies include:

A basic knowledge of industrial hygiene (IH) and engineering principles, understanding of the theory behind machine guarding and Lockout/Tagout electrical safety, knowledge of regulatory compliance laws, and computer skills.

Demonstrates effective communication skills, capable of managing multiple projects, has strong training and interpersonal skills. Exhibits positivity, passion, integrity, and responsibility.

Certification:**

None required. Preference for candidates with a GSP or are seeking an accredited certification.

A **GSP** (Graduate Safety Practitioner) is a temporary designation given to graduates from ABET-accredited programs who are on the way to getting a CSP. This certification is awarded by BCSP – for more information, please visit www.bcsp.com.

****Certification** should be from a professional safety organization accredited by the National Commission of Certifying Agencies (NCCA) or the Council of Engineering and Scientific Specialty Boards (CESB), or a nationally recognized accrediting body which uses certification criteria equal to or greater than that of the NCCA or CESB. Certification is an independent third-party indicator of achievement.

Safety Practitioner/Technician Technologist

Education:

4-year degree or 2-year degree in safety from an accredited college or university*

Work Experience:

3 years of relevant work experience in the safety profession or one of its specialties

Certification:

OHST, CLCS, or CHST

or

GSP, ASP

Preferred disciplines:

Occupational safety and health, environmental safety and health, safety or environmental management, and safety or environmental science.

For more information on SH&E College and University programs, please visit:

www.asse.org/professionalaffairs_new/directory/

Look for experiences involving a hands-on approach to SH&E issues, such as:

Maintained recordkeeping systems; conducted training in all SH&E topics; conducted inspections and audits; recognized hazards; participated in and lead emergency responses; addressed employee SH&E concerns; implemented SH&E measures, programs, and procedures; maintained metrics and KPIs; prepared technical reports; performed sampling and monitoring; issued hot work permits and confined space permits.

Similar to a GSP, an **ASP** (Associate Safety Professional) is on track for becoming a CSP.

The **OHST** (Occupational Health and Safety Technologist) and **CLCS** (Certified Loss Control Specialist) are certifications awarded to those who have an appropriate level of technical skills and knowledge in occupational health or safety.

*These should be **regionally** accredited universities, with preference for candidates from programs accredited by ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) or ATMAE (the Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering). For more information on accreditation, please visit the Council of Higher Education Accreditation's website at www.chea.org.

Relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies include:

Thorough knowledge of applicable government regulations, computer skills.

Demonstrates effective communication skills, capable of managing multiple projects, has strong training and interpersonal skills. Exhibits positivity, passion, integrity, and responsibility.

The **CHST** (Construction Health and Safety Technician) must have satisfied requirements for a combination of education or training and experience in safety, health, and construction.

These certifications are all awarded by **BCSP**. For more information, please visit www.bcsp.org/ataglance.

Manager/Senior Technical Specialist

Education:

4-year degree in safety from an accredited* college or university

Work Experience:

5-7 years of relevant work experience

Certification/Licensure:

CSP, CIH, CFPS, or CHMM

or

Professional Engineer

Preferred Disciplines:

Occupational safety and health, environmental safety and health, safety or environmental management, and safety or environmental science, or engineering.

For more information on SH&E College and University programs, please visit :

www.asse.org/professionalaffairs_new/directory/.

Look for these types of experiences, skills, and knowledge:

Worked with senior management to ensure organization's SH&E compliance; designed and implemented SH&E programs; managed SH&E programs at a facility or multiple facilities; conducted site inspections and audits; facilitated regulatory visits; managed emergency response incidents; implemented corrective actions; conducted or lead training in applicable SH&E areas; evaluated programs, issued recommendations, and implemented changes; interacted with Senior Management as necessary; liaised with all other functional First Line management and supervision; created and managed budget for SH&E activities; participated in tactical planning and support of corporate SH&E initiatives; worked with HR to manage Workers' Compensation Claims and Return to Work programs.

Relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies include:

A thorough knowledge of applicable government regulations, safety compliance, and industrial hygiene.

Candidates should also possess business acumen, strong analytical skills, strategic thinking abilities, an understanding of organizational behavior, communication skills, the ability to influence, the ability to work on a team, as well as passion, drive, and the ability to self-start.

A **CSP** (Certified Safety Professional) is certified in the comprehensive practice of safety. This certification is awarded by BCSP – for more information, please visit: www.bcsp.org/ataglance.

The **CIH** (Certified Industrial Hygienist) has emphasis on evaluating and controlling physical, chemical, ergonomic, and biological hazards. Please see: www.abih.org/certified/index.html.

The **CFPS** (Certified Fire Protection Specialist) has responsibilities regarding the application of technologies in fire safety, fire protection, prevention, and suppression. For more information, please visit: www.nfpa.org.

The **CHMM** (Certified Hazardous Materials Manager) is involved in environmental protection, waste management, dangerous goods transportation, safety, and materials handling. For more information, please visit: www.ihmm.org.

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Director/Senior Level

Education:

Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited* college or university. Master's degree and knowledge of finance preferred.

Preferred Disciplines:

Occupational safety and health, environmental safety and health, safety or environmental management, safety or environmental science, or engineering.

For more information on SH&E College and University programs, please visit :

www.asse.org/professionalaffairs_new/directory.

***These should be **regionally** accredited universities, with preference for candidates from programs accredited by ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) or ATMAE (the Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering). For more information on accreditation, please visit the Council of Higher Education Accreditation's website at www.chea.org.

Work Experience:

8-10 years relevant experience

Look for these types of experiences, skills, and knowledge:

Directed SH&E function at multiple facilities regionally and corporate-wide; conducted due diligence projects (Mergers, Acquisitions, Divestitures); managed subordinates (Sr. Manager, Manager); monitored regulatory arena for new/changing regulations and rulemaking; communicated with all business units pertaining to SH&E; conducted comprehensive audits; liaised among business units, divisions, regions, and global colleagues; issued SH&E directives and corporate standards; compiled metrics and KPIs for all business units; provided recommendations to Executive Management; appropriated budgetary resources; acted as a consultant to business units; provided support for business units during regulatory inquiries; liaised between Executive Management and business units; conducted global, regional, and divisional SH&E conferences; oversaw Workers' Compensation process.

Relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies include:

Comprehensive knowledge of applicable regulations, including all Appropriate Inquiries environmental regulations; understands international regulations and certifications; has a strategic approach and support of SH&E for all business units; understands financial implications, P&L, bottom line, ROI, and Payback.

Candidates should also possess business acumen, strong analytical skills, strategic thinking abilities, an understanding of organizational behavior, communication skills, the ability to influence and work on a team, as well as passion, drive, and the ability to self-start.

Certification/ Licensure:

CSP, CIH, CFPS, or CHMM

or

Professional Engineer

A **CSP** (Certified Safety Professional) is certified in the comprehensive practice of safety. This certification is awarded by BCSP – for more information, please visit: www.bcsp.org/ ataglance.

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The **CHMM** (Certified Hazardous Materials Manager) is involved in environmental protection, waste management, dangerous goods transportation, safety, and materials handling. For more information, please visit: www.ihmm.org/.

Executive

VP/SVP/EVP

Education:

Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited* college or university. Master's degree preferred, as well as knowledge of finance.

Preferred Disciplines:

Occupational safety and health, environmental safety and health, safety or environmental management, safety or environmental science, or engineering.

For more information on SH&E College and University programs, please visit:

www.asse.org/ professionalaffairs _new/directory.

***These should be **regionally** accredited universities, with preference for candidates from programs accredited by ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) or ATMAE (the Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering). For more information on accreditation, please visit the Council of Higher Education Accreditation's website at www.chea.org.

Work Experience:

10+ years

Look for these types of experiences, skills, and knowledge:

Oversaw SH&E function at multiple facilities corporate-wide; performed duties relevant to a C-Level Suite position; conducted activities related to Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, and/or Stockholder Inquiries; liaised between governmental agencies and Executive Management; liaised between SH&E functions globally and executive management; liaised with Board of Directors (BoD); liaised with industry groups; conducted global, regional, and divisional SH&E conferences; appropriated resources and support from Executive Management for the broader SH&E function; interacted with Executive Management for all other functional roles to establish common goals; issued specific SH&E direction and directives; managed subordinates (Sr. Director, Director); experienced in shaping and pursuing strategic vision, goals, and objectives.

Relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies include:

Has comprehensive knowledge of applicable regulations; understands international regulations and certifications.

Candidates should also possess business acumen, strong analytical skills, strategic thinking abilities, an understanding of organizational behavior, communication skills, the ability to influence and work on a team, as well as passion, drive, and the ability to self-start.

Certification/Licensure:

CSP, CIH, CFPS, or CHMM

or

Professional Engineer

A **CSP** (Certified Safety Professional) is certified in the comprehensive practice of safety. This certification is awarded by BCSP – for more information, please visit: www.bcsp.org/ ataglance.

The **CIH** (Certified Industrial Hygienist) has emphasis on evaluating and controlling physical, chemical, ergonomic, and biological hazards. Please see: www.abih.org/certified/ index.html.

The **CFPS** (Certified Fire Protection Specialist) has responsibilities regarding the application of technologies in fire safety, fire protection, prevention, and suppression. For more information, please visit: www.nfpa.org.

The **CHMM** (Certified Hazardous Materials Manager) is involved in environmental protection, waste management, dangerous goods transportation, safety, and materials handling. For more information, please visit: www.ihmm.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the general obligations for employers under the Occupational Safety and Health Act?

- In addition to specific OSHA safety and health standards, Section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act (the "General Duty Clause") requires employers to "furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees." Section 5(a)(2) requires employers to "comply with occupational safety and health standards promulgated under this Act."

Are employers required to hire safety professionals?

- There are currently no specific standards regarding the hiring of safety professionals. However, OSHA standards, preambles to final rules (background to final rules), directives (instructions for compliance officers), and standard interpretations (official letters of interpretation of the standards) in many instances require employers to use a "competent person."The definition of "competent person" will vary according to the type of hazard presented. However, a "competent person" is typically capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions which present hazards to employees, the public, or the surrounding community, and is capable of and authorized to design and implement appropriate control measures. For a complete list of the OSHA "competent person" requirements, see www.osha.gov/SLTC/competentperson/.

Are there licensing or registration requirements for safety professionals?

- There are no licensing requirements for practicing safety professionals. However, a number of states have registration requirements for safety professionals working as loss control representatives for the insurance industry.

There are numerous safety and health-related certifications. Which ones should I look for when hiring safety professionals?

- ASSE recognizes safety and health-related certifications from safety-related certifying organizations which have been established to improve the practice and educational standards of the safety profession by certifying individuals who meet their education, experience, and examination requirements. These organizations must have existed for at least five years and also be accredited by the National Commission of Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the Council of Engineering and Scientific Specialty Boards (CESB), or a nationally-recognized accrediting body which uses certification criteria equal to or greater than that of the NCCA or CESB. Certifications such as GSP, ASP, OHST, CLCS, CHST, and CSP are all awarded by the Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP).

Is there a specific number identified for an appropriate ratio of safety professionals to employees?

- Ratios in safety and health staffing models help determine adequate staffing levels for safety professionals based on the types of risks present in an organization. There are a variety of methodologies available for determining appropriate staffing model ratios. Several are identified on the ASSE Business of Safety Committee website:
- www.asse.org//professionalaffairs-new/bosc/she-staffing-issues.php.

Is there any data showing that it makes financial sense to hire full-time safety professionals?

- Several studies have demonstrated that the hiring of safety professionals is a solid investment for business and industry: www.asse.org/professionalaffairs-new/bosc/.

Where can I find information on the salary ranges for safety professionals?

- Salary information can be obtained from:
  - Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP): bcsp.org/Salary_Survey
  - U.S. Department of Labor: online.onetcenter.org/find/quick?s=safety
  - The National Safety Council: www.ehscareers.com/Images/2009_Salary_Survey.pdf

Does ASSE have any data regarding the most effective reporting structure for the safety professional position?

- ASSE has collected information on reporting structures and has asked members about the pluses and minuses of various reporting relationships. This information may be found at: www.asse.org/practicespecialties/bosc/docs/SH-E%20Reporting%20Relationships%20Article.pdf.

Where can I find additional information on safety professionals?

- The Department of Labor's online O*NET tool has detailed descriptions of the tasks, knowledge, skills, abilities, work activities, and employment trends for safety professionals. The relevant job categories to search are "industrial safety and health engineers," "occupational health and safety specialists," and "occupational health and safety technicians." Please see online.onetcenter.org/find/quick?s=safety for more information.

Interview Guide

The following questions were developed to assist hiring managers in the interview process. The questions are designed to test the depth of the candidate's experience, analytical abilities, business acumen, and understanding of organizational behavior within the context of the practice of safety. This Interview Guide should be viewed as a resource for questions to *supplement* an interview, rather than as a complete, scripted interview. The questions selected for the interview should be based on the responsibilities of the particular job.

Practitioner/Technician/Manager Level

Training

Q: How do you verify that safety training given to employees was effective?

A: Some ways are to observe employees to verify that they are following the correct procedures, question employees on certain aspects of the training, ask employees for feedback on ways to improve the training, and review near-miss incidents (incidents that if repeated could result in an injury or illness).

Q: What are some important factors to consider when designing or developing safety training?

A: The training should be developed with the target audience in mind (e.g., education and skill level, language comprehension). To the extent possible, safety training should be woven into the employees' required job-related training. The design of the training should account for ongoing refresher training rather than being a onetime event.

Inspections and audits

Q: In performing safety inspections, what did you do when you found an employee violating a corporate safety policy?

A: The immediate focus is on stopping the employee's behavior that violates the safety policy to protect the employee from potential harm. Next, the candidate should talk about coaching the employee who violated the policy. The candidate should demonstrate that he or she has interacted with employees while performing inspections, rather than simply "writing up" employees. You may want to ask the candidate to discuss ways in which he or she coaches employees, focusing on his or her experience in influencing employee behavior. Finally, the candidate should mention an analysis of the breakdown in the process that lead to the non-compliant behavior (inadequate training, managers had ignored the behavior in the past, etc.) and follow-up steps that were taken to ensure that the non-compliant behavior is not repeated (department meeting, retraining, etc.).

Q: How did you use the information collected during safety audits?

A: This question will give you some insight into the candidate's critical thinking capabilities. The candidate should discuss how he or she analyzed the information to look for trends, breakdowns in processes, or other deficiencies in the safety program. He or she should be able to give examples of instances where the

candidate's analysis led to modifications of the safety program (new training, additional inspections, increased involvement by managers, etc.). The candidate should also discuss how he or she communicated the findings to management or employees. (E.g., *"I used the information as a way to interact with employees to keep safety in the front of their minds." "I would celebrate our successes with them and ask for their input on ways to improve our performance."*)

Problem solving

Q: How would you respond to a report from an employee that one of his coworkers only wears required head protection when you are in the area?

A: Several issues come into play here. The first is that you want to ensure that the non-compliant behavior is corrected immediately so that the employee is not at risk. Secondly, you should verify that other employees are following required safe work practices, even beyond the issue of the head protection. Finally, you want to be sensitive to the fact that the employee who informed you of the non-compliant behavior may be ostracized by his or her coworkers if the details of the report were made public. One approach is to have group or department meetings to reiterate rules and enforcement policies (including a discussion of the wearing of head protection), increase awareness, identify gaps in training, and to remind employees of their safety-related responsibilities.

Metrics

Q: How do you calculate an organization's incidence rates using the OSHA 300 Log?

A: Some examples:

- From the Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses (Log), OSHA's Form 300—you can count the number of OSHA recordable cases for the year, or
- From your Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses (Summary), OSHA's Form 300A—you can add the number of recordable cases entered in Column H (cases with days away from work) + Column I (cases with job transfer or restriction) + Column J (other recordable cases), or
- An incidence rate of injuries and illnesses may be computed from the following formula:

  (Number of injuries and illnesses X 200,000 hours) / Employee hours worked = Incidence rate

  The "200,000 hours" in the formula represents the equivalent of 100 employees working 40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year, and provides the standard base for the incidence rates.

Q: Give some examples of leading indicators used to measure safety performance.

A: Some common leading indicators are # of inspections or audits completed, # of safety audit recommendations closed out on time, # of employees trained or training units/hours completed, # of safety committee meetings held, and results of employee perception surveys of the organization's commitment to safety.

Accident investigations

Q: I have been told that an accident investigation does not end when an employee admits that the accident in question was caused by his or her failure to follow a corporate safety rule. Do you agree with that statement? If so, why?

A: The objective of an accident investigation is to identify root causes, not to primarily set blame. You want to avoid the trap of laying sole blame on the injured employee. Even if injured workers openly blame themselves for making a mistake or not following prescribed procedures, the accident investigator must not be satisfied that all contributing causes have been identified. The error made by the employee may not be even the most important contributing cause. For example, you must consider the following:

- The employee who has not followed prescribed procedures may have been encouraged directly or indirectly by a supervisor or production quotas to "cut corners."
- The prescribed procedures may not be practical, or even safe, in the eyes of the employee(s).
- Sometimes where elaborate and difficult procedures are required, engineering redesign might be a better answer.

In such cases, management errors – not employee error – may be the most important contributing causes.[1]

Communication, awareness and motivation

Q: How do you keep your employees involved in your safety program?

A: Some possible answers include:

- keeping employees involved in regular communications (e.g., safety or toolbox talks, one-on-one coaching, involvement in corporate or department safety committees or teams)
- getting input from employees on decisions related to the safety program (e.g., how to develop training)
- including them in regular safety activities (e.g., have them perform safety inspections or conduct safety training)
- making sure they are regularly reminded of the importance of safety and the role that they play in maintaining a safe workplace.

Q: How do you gain support for your safety program from managers?

A: Some possible answers include:

- educating them on the impact of accidents on:
    - production – for example:
        - training replacement workers is costly and involves a learning curve

[1] Answer taken from the OSHA website: www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/safetyhealth/mod4_factsheets_accinvest.html.

        - employee morale suffers when an accident occurs, thereby creating a negative impact on production
    - corporate profits – for example:
        - the direct and indirect costs of accidents
        - the impact on the reputation of the corporation
- clearly defining their roles and responsibilities with regard to safety (i.e., positioning them as leaders of the safety program)
- including them in decisions relating to the safety program
- regularly communicating with them on safety performance

Business acumen

Q: How do you integrate safety into the day-to-day operations of your business?

A: The important point here is that safety should be viewed as an integral part of day-to-day operations rather than a separate program managed by the safety department. It is not enough to simply develop a safety program – a well thought-out implementation strategy is critical. The safety department should work closely with the various business groups or departments to ensure that safety is woven into regular job-related inspections, training, and metrics.

Q: How would you make a case for your organization to invest in safety equipment that, though not required by law, you believe will reduce accidents?

A: The candidate should discuss how to calculate and prepare a return-on-investment analysis. This would include a discussion of the cost of the new safety equipment, the anticipated savings from investing in the equipment, how the anticipated savings were determined (e.g., from looking at the experience of other companies), and how the company should determine if the investment is a wise one from a business perspective.

Legal requirements:

Q: What is the OSHA general duty clause?

A: Pursuant to the "Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970", Section 5:

> "Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees."

Q: Where would you look to find the federal OSHA regulations?

A: In the Code of Federal Regulations, 29CFR 1910 (for general industry), 29 CFR 1926 (for the construction industry), and 29 CFR 1915, 1917, and 1918 (for maritime).

Q: What is the hazard communication standard?

A: An OSHA regulation (29 CFR 1910.1200). The purpose of this regulation is to ensure that the hazards of all chemicals produced or imported are evaluated, and that information concerning their hazards is transmitted to employers and employees. This transmittal of information is to be accomplished by means of comprehensive hazard communication programs, which are to include container labeling and other forms of warning, material safety data sheets, and employee training.

Q: Which work-related injuries and illnesses must be recorded on the OSHA 300 Log?

A: Work-related injuries and illnesses that must be reported include those that result in: death, loss of consciousness, days away from work, restricted work activity or job transfer, or medical treatment beyond first aid. (This is the basic answer; technically there are other requirements such as any work-related case involving cancer, chronic irreversible disease, a fractured or cracked bone, or a punctured eardrum.)

Q: When must you post the OSHA 300 Summary Work-related Injuries and Illnesses?

A: You must post the Summary only - not the Log - by February 1 of the year following the year covered by the form and keep it posted until April 30 of that year.

Q: How long must you keep the OSHA 300 Log and Summary on file?

A: You must keep the OSHA 300 Log and Summary for 5 years following the year to which they pertain.

Q: Do you have to send the OSHA 300 Log and Summary forms to OSHA at the end of the year?

A: No. You do not have to send the completed forms to OSHA unless specifically asked to do so.

Director/Executive Levels

Strategic thinking

Q: What are the keys to successfully managing safety at multiple facilities?

A: In developing a multi-site program, the objectives are to identify any unique hazards, risks, or potential barriers associated with particular locations (based on work processes, operations, equipment, facility layout or location, skill set of employees, potential language or cultural barriers, etc.); to involve local employees in the program design; and to the extent possible, take a systems approach to managing safety. Once the program is in place, some key activities are to build relationships with local management, set clear expectations, set goals and objectives, share best practices, communicate regularly, use technology where possible, regularly audit, and report location-specific safety metrics to relevant business managers.

Organizational synergism

Q: How do you deal with a situation in which the only apparent "relationship" between the safety professionals and other staff functions (human resources, law) seems to be when they are forced to the table together as a result of a particular incident, accident, regulatory compliance initiative, or budgetary crisis?

A: Building meaningful relationships requires these functions to work together to analyze processes to identify leveraging opportunities, to coordinate strategic planning efforts, and to develop shared goals and objectives. Strategic planning between these functions can sometimes be fragmented. This issue-by-issue approach to working together results in missed opportunities to change employee behaviors, influence managers, share tools and technology, improve legal and regulatory compliance, boost employee morale, and ultimately, reduce the organization's costs.

Q: What role do safety professionals play in corporate social responsibility and sustainability?

A: Mounting evidence suggests that incorporating the principles of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development into organizational decision-making processes has fundamentally changed the way business is being conducted. Driven in large part by consumer and investor demand, organizations' business strategies now commonly consider the impact of corporate activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, and other stakeholders. This has led to new approaches to problem solving, redefined corporate priorities, reallocated budgets, and redesigned staffing responsibilities. These changes have significant ramifications for safety management. Occupational safety and health is generally categorized as part of an organization's commitment to social responsibility. Several key safety indicators are included as part of the leading global sustainability indices. Safety professionals must drive safety sustainability efforts by ensuring that their organizations recognize that the safety, health, and well-being of workers, customers, and neighboring communities are among the primary considerations in any business practices, operations or development. Safety professionals also need a good working knowledge of environmental issues related to sustainability, key sustainability metrics, and the key drivers of sustainability.

Organizational culture

Q: What steps would you take if you were told by several employees that safety is an afterthought in the current culture of the organization?

A: One of the first steps is to get a better understanding of the situation by measuring organizational culture or climate through employee assessments or surveys that incorporate safety concerns. If you verify problems with the safety program through these assessment tools, an immediate plan of action should be developed to help reset the culture. The plan should include: gaining support and involvement of the entire senior management team, a detailed analysis of the current safety program (including audits), discussions with employees pinpointing lapses in the safety program or asking for their input on how to improve it, employee and management training or re-training, and a communication and awareness program to keep safety front of mind for employees.

Understanding business

Q: What is the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and how might it affect the organization's safety program?

A: The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 "generally was designed to protect investors by ensuring corporate responsibility, public disclosure, and improving the quality and transparency of financial reporting and auditing" (29 CFR 1980). The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has responsibility for investigating complaints and enforcing the whistleblower provisions of Sarbanes-Oxley related to workplace safety and health regulations. The whistleblower provisions would apply if it is alleged that an employer retaliates against an employee by taking unfavorable personnel action because the employee engaged in protected activity. Such activities could include any related to workplace safety and health, commercial motor carrier safety, pipeline safety, air carrier safety, nuclear safety, the environment, asbestos in schools, corporate fraud, SEC rules or regulations, railroad carrier safety or security, or public transportation agency safety.

Influencing

Q: What approaches have you used to get senior management involved in supporting safety?

A: The candidate's response should include such initiatives as:

- getting key safety leading and lagging indicators integrated into corporate scorecards or dashboards and ensuring that the senior team understands and reacts to these metrics
- educating senior management on the negative impacts of a poor safety record on the organization, such as:
    - poor reputation (from a social responsibility and sustainability perspective, with regard to the investment community, customers, and potential employees)
    - decreased productivity, increased costs, and decline in employee morale
- ensuring that they understand their roles in the safety program and they visibly demonstrate support for safety by regularly discussing it in meetings with their direct reports and staff, on field visits, in training, and in communications

For the Executive level, the candidate may comment about the importance of a corporate board of directors having oversight of safety. This has been recognized as an important step in ensuring that safety has support from the highest levels of the organization.

Analytical skills

Q: With regard to low probability/high impact events, how do you overcome complacency by senior management and the "let's deal with the issue later" mentality?

A: The key is to convince senior management that there are cost-effective ways to mitigate low probability/high impact events. These events present real risks and should be incorporated into the

organization's safety program. Senior managers should be educated on the typical causes of low probability/high impact events (from the accident/incident history from the organization, from within their industry, or from other industries that perform similar tasks) and ways to address these deficiencies. Analyzing low probability/high impact events will allow senior managers to better understand the need for the development of new processes and controls and the importance of their involvement in oversight and management of the program.

Q: In a recent survey, senior corporate financial decision makers indicated that more/better safety training was their most preferred safety-related intervention. How would you respond to this statement?

A: The most important safety intervention will depend on the situation at hand. Safety training plays an important role, but the candidate should mention that training alone will not prevent accidents. From a technical standpoint, the candidate should mention the OSHA Hierarchy of Controls in evaluating how to determine the best safety intervention. The Hierarchy is used to identify the best methods for eliminating or controlling hazards.

The Hierarchy is as follows:

- engineering – directly eliminating a hazard (the most effective control)
- administrative – limiting exposure to hazards (training is an example of an administrative control)
- work practices – hazard control programs, rules, policies, safe work practices, etc.
- personal protective equipment – to protect the employee from the exposure

From a perspective that looks at the overall success of the program, the candidate should discuss the need for management involvement, employee participation, and the development of an occupational safety and health management system.

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