



UNIT-1 Workplace Health and Safety Experience

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- Understand the employer's responsibility to display due diligence for organizational health and safety
- Know and understand the three rights of workers

Unit 1

Workplace Health and Safety Experience

Due Diligence

What is your experience with health and safety at work?

Have you, or someone you know, ever had an accident at work?

- What happened?
- How did you/they handle it?

Most Health and Safety legislation holds the employer responsible for preventing occupational injuries and illness and creating a healthy and safe workplace. This includes insuring workers are aware of their health and safety legal rights and obligations.

So, who is the employer?

The word “employer” indicates any employee who supervises and/or provides direction to worker(s). By this definition every “boss” is an employer! That means they all have employer responsibilities within the organization.

What is Due Diligence?

Due diligence refers to the actions an employer takes to reasonably and practically prevent injury in the workplace.

Worker Rights

Three Rights of Workers

Many jurisdictions include workers' rights in their legislation. Even for those that do not, the concept of workers' rights can be important at an organizational level to ensure the health and safety of workers.

Workers' health and safety rights can be summarized in three rights:

- The right to know about workplace hazards and what to do about them.
- The right to participate in resolving workplace health and safety problems.
- The right to refuse work that they believe is unsafe.

The right to know

Employers must tell workers about any health and safety hazards that they may encounter in their work and show them how to work safely. Through orientation, training, and work instructions, workers learn about hazards and controls for those hazards. This information needs to include chemical or hazardous materials that may be used, handled, or stored on the worksite. Additionally, the employer must ensure proper supervision of workers to stay healthy and safe.

The right to participate

Workers should be encouraged to participate in efforts to provide a healthy and safe work environment. Their participation could be as simple as asking questions when they don't understand something or giving feedback on health and safety issues, to becoming a member of the Health and Safety Committee (more on this later in the course).

Can you think of any other ways a supervisor can support the workers' rights to participate in health and safety?

The right to refuse

The third right of workers is the right to refuse to do work that they have reason to believe is unsafe for them or another worker. Most jurisdictions outline a process for work refusal that includes a number of steps. These steps include:

- Worker informs supervisor of a health or safety concern
- Supervisor must look into the worker's concerns
- With the employer, health and safety representatives and consultants (if necessary), do everything possible to address the concerns.
- If unable to resolve the concern bring in an outside Health and Safety inspector to investigate.

Note: Workers must never be punished for exercising their right to refuse unsafe work.

The Internal Responsibility System

At the core of health and safety is the realization that all persons in the workplace have a responsibility for health and safety. When all workers are aware of hazards and can contribute to improving safety and health, there are fewer accidents. This is referred to as the Internal Responsibility System (IRS).

Further Reading:

- ✓ Agnew Judy L., *A Supervisor's Guide to (Safety) Leadership: Preventing Injury in the Workplace*, Performance Management Publications, 2016.
- ✓ Agnew Judy L. and Aubrey C. Daniels, *Safe by Accident? Take the Luck Out of Safety*, Performance Management Publications, 2011.