



CHECKLIST

Five Essential Elements of **Workplace Health and Safety**



If you are responsible for the health and safety of the people at your organization but are worried there is some key element you are missing—we have you covered. To start, you need to ensure that your system covers these five essential elements.

We've created this checklist as a companion piece to the more extensive whitepaper, [Five Essential Elements of Workplace Health and Safety](#), to help you ensure nothing falls through the cracks.

Review the questions pertaining to each of the five elements in this checklist and ask yourself “How does my workplace measure up?” If your organization is doing it well, if an inspection would result in this question being answered a resounding “yes!”, then pat yourself on the back. For any box that you do not check, think of it as your list of priorities to work on, and an opportunity to engage with other professionals to make a change to improve workplace safety.



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First Essential Element: Administrative Must-Haves

The administrative “paper trail” is critical for any health and safety program not just because of mandates from OSHA. This principle should guide your initiatives: if it isn’t documented, it hasn’t been done. Auditors will assume this, so should you.

Questions

Is the required OSHA signage posted around your worksite? At every location?

Are you keeping an OSHA 300 Log?

Is every recordable incident entered onto the log within 7 days of occurrence?

Do you have a separate log for every location?

Do you complete your 300A summary annually?

Is it signed and posted for employees to view from Feb 1 to Apr 30 every year?

Do you have current, up-to-date and easily accessible safety data sheets (SDS)?

Are SDSs at every location/facility?

Do you have a designated person responsible for obtaining and maintaining SDSs?

Have you confirmed there are no barriers to access for all employees?

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Second Essential Element: Policies

Written policies and procedures (P&P), or SOPs (standard operating procedures) are different from a paper trail or documentation. These serve as the rules that not only govern how people are expected to behave at work, but how the company will safeguard employees and outline the processes to do just that. It's imperative to have updated and comprehensive P&Ps not just for a safe workplace but to be compliant with OSHA and other safety regulations.

Questions

Does your organization's P&P manual include safety specific policies?

Do you have a process in place for regular review and update of safety policies?

Do employees read and sign acknowledgements for safety policies upon hire and at regular intervals?

Have you consulted the appropriate OSHA Code of Regulations books 1910 or 1926 to review laws relevant to your specific worksite/industry?

Do human resource professionals include environmental health and safety (EHS) professionals when policies are updated or added to the P&P binder?

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Third Essential Element: Training

OSHA laws often include mandatory training requirements, and these are just as specific as laws regarding policies and written programs. It's important to ensure that you're not only training employees on the right topics but that the methods you deliver training are going to enhance understanding, retention, and use of the information provided.

Questions

Do you have a current list of training topics?

Are these organized by job title (who needs what)?

Have you identified which training topics are completed upon hire vs. recurring (e.g., quarterly, annually)?

Have you confirmed that there is no 'training' at your workplace that consists of reading and acknowledging a policy or procedure document? *Note: if this is occurring at any level within your organization, this doesn't qualify as safety training and the practice should be stopped and replaced with real training as outlined in the whitepaper.*

Has your organization conducted a training needs assessment?

Do you know which federal/OSHA laws pertain to your workplace?

Do you know which state/local laws pertain to your workplace?

Does your training include an element that tests knowledge or verifies understanding?

Is there a skills verification or practical application component of the training program or are trainings didactic and informational only?

Third Element Questions cont'd:

Do you have a system in place for retraining or identifying additional training needs? (For example, training as an intervention after an incident or near-miss)

Do you have proper documentation that captures training delivery? Does it include more than just training topics but include: date delivered, employees who attended participated, and the content of the training?

Is there a process in place to review and update your company's training program on a regular basis? E.g., identify additional training needs, regulations, and/or industry best practices, or simply to respond to changes in the business.

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Fourth Essential Element: Tracking Risk

Tracking risk is where the rubber meets the road in workplace safety. Tracking risk allows your safety program to evolve to meet the immediate needs of your organization and identify potential hazards and accidents before they happen. This element can convert your safety program from reactive to proactive, saving time, money and more importantly, health of your colleagues.

Questions

Are hazard inspections conducted regularly at your organization?

Do you know the frequency? Is there a schedule?

Do you have an inspection checklist?

Is it reviewed regularly? Confirm the schedule of review.

Who conducts inspections?

Confirm that people in addition to the EHS professional are conducting inspections.

Is there a process in place to train others at your organization on hazard identification?

Is there a current process in place to send safety alerts?

Do you conduct health assessments?

Do you know which health assessments are required by your organization?

Does your organization conduct infectious disease tracking?

Fourth Element Questions cont'd:

Do you have record keeping in place for health assessments and infectious disease tracking?

Does the record keeping system take into account that this information can be considered employee health data and therefore needs to be managed and stored differently than other inspection/risk tracking data?

Is there a remediation process in place when hazards are detected?

What record keeping is done on remediation efforts?

Does your organization have a safety committee?

Does this committee have well-defined roles and tasks?

Do they meet regularly?

Is follow-up done on safety committee recommendations?

If you have employees working from home (WFH), are there policies in place to evaluate and mitigate risk in a WFH environment?

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Fifth Essential Element: Reinforcing Behaviors

This final element brings it all together and is about ensuring workers follow policies and procedures, are provided feedback and corrective actions, and any needed retraining is effective. Similar to any other policy at work, like showing up on time or using the timecard system, policies regarding safety must include consequences for noncompliance and intervention efforts.

Questions

Is there process in place to identify when workers aren't complying with safety policies and procedures?

Do managers and supervisors communicate with safety professionals about worker safety issues?

Do you regularly provide retraining to employees when safety policies and procedures aren't followed?

Is there a documentation process in place to record observations about workplace safety practices and interventions?

Is there an employee feedback system that rewards safe behaviors?

Congratulations...

...on completing this checklist for your workplace! This is a great first step. Remember, any box left unchecked represents an area for improvement. Think of this as a list of priorities to work on to improve workplace safety.

For additional assistance and information, please review the white paper this checklist is built from; [Five Essential Elements of Workplace Health and Safety](#).

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