

WHITE PAPER

Safety is Everyone's Job: Organizational Collaboration



Feel the Weight of Workplace Health and Safety on Your Shoulders?

Most organizations have one person responsible for workplace health and safety: the environmental health and safety (EHS) professional. Some EHS professionals came to the position accidentally, having been involved in an incident and took up the mantle, “volunteered” for it or there was no one else to fill the role. Others have specialized training, degrees or certifications in this field and purposefully sought out the role. All EHS professionals seem to have something in common; a passion for safety and genuine care for the health and well-being of everyone at their organization.

The nature of the position is solitary and often lonely as no one else at your organization has your job title or responsibilities. It can seem overwhelming and an uphill battle to be the only person at the organization responsible for and overseeing the health and safety of every individual who sets foot on the premises (or works remotely for your company). Even if you are a health and safety department with multiple EHS professionals, you can still feel like you’re on an island, separated from the rest of the organization and viewed as the ‘bad’ guy and avoided at all costs; uh-oh, the EHS department is here, we must be in trouble!

However, you are not alone. There are many other professionals and colleagues who are equally as responsible and involved in the health and safety of your organization; you have a partner in human resources professionals, training and development professionals, and every manager and supervisor you work with. You even have valuable collaborators in your IT (information technology) department, accounting and finance, security department, maintenance staff and depending on your organization, risk management.



Human Resources (HR) is a key partner in creating a comprehensive and effective health and safety system across the organization, they are involved in everything related to workers, full-time, part-time and contractors, and often have health and wellness initiatives as a part of their role. HR is typically responsible for onboarding and employee orientation, and the broader area of employee training and development usually falls under their realm, even if the organization is large enough for a dedicated training coordinator or training and development team. Unfortunately, HR is often involved either directly or indirectly whenever there is an incident. For example, when an employee is injured, HR will help transition the injured employee back to work, often with light duty work responsibilities. If an organization has multiple incidents, that can lead to high turnover, which also increases the workload for HR. If word gets out that a company has a bad safety record, that can complicate matters even further by making it more difficult to attract and retain reliable workers.

Another way EHS and HR are partners at an organization is the way they are often viewed negatively by workers and staff; if you're getting a visit from HR or EHS, you must be in trouble and/or something is wrong. In reality, both departments are very invested in health and safety, preferring prevention efforts over remediation and reactive measures.

Through informal discussions with EHS and HR professionals, one thing becomes clear: The biggest fear when it comes to workplace health and safety is that something will get missed... and then that "something" becomes a serious compliance issue, fine, or worse: an accident.



The biggest fear when it comes to workplace health and safety is that **something will get missed...and then that “something” becomes a serious compliance issue, fine, or worse: an accident.**

If this is your situation—if you are finding that you are responsible for the health and safety of your people 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 the five essential elements of workplace health and safety. These elements are covered in detail with examples of each one in the HSI white paper "[Five Essential Elements of Workplace Health and Safety](#)". They are:

The Five Essential Elements of Workplace Health and Safety



The second step in ensuring a comprehensive and effective health and safety system is to engage with other professionals at your organization to ensure that nothing is missed and make safety truly “everyone’s job”. This second important step is what we’ll focus on in this paper.

First Essential Element: Administrative Must-Haves

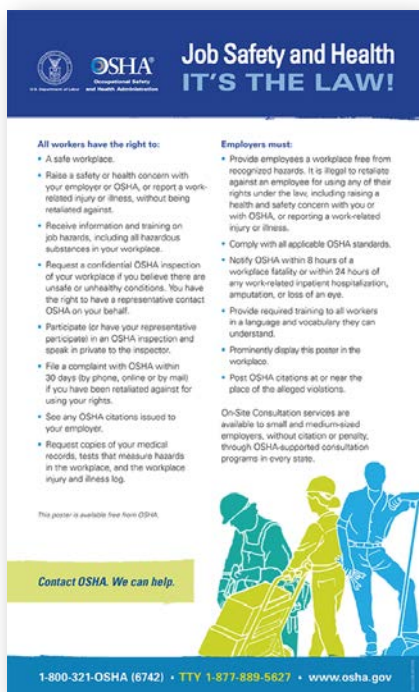


An administrative paper trail is critical for all health and safety measures, including all of the other essentials listed below.

Remember: If something is not documented, you should assume that it has not been done (and so will an auditor). There are specific documentation must-haves when it comes to health and safety in the workplace, including [signage](#), [OSHA 300 log and forms](#), and [safety data sheets \(SDSs\)](#).

Often when we think of administrative tasks like these, we think of the manager completing the report, the EHS professional summarizing logs into the OSHA 300A form or HR completing new hire paperwork. Fortunately for these professionals, paperwork and administrative tasks are everyone's job, just like safety. When safety specific administrative must-haves are integrated into existing systems and seen as a regular part of worker's job tasks, the easier it is for your organization to be compliant with regulations.

Let's review the basic administrative must-haves and how to enhance collaboration and integration into existing company processes:



Signage

Both EHS and HR have requirements for posted signage in break rooms and common areas where employees have easy access, (think EEOC, OSHA, etc.) This is a perfect opportunity to combine forces in distributing, posting, reviewing for updated versions and ensuring that all workers are aware of the information. Engaging managers and supervisors is how you take the understanding to the next level, ensuring employees have review the information and discussed it. Simply asking managers to review the signage, HR and safety related, during break times or daily briefings, goes a long way to a safer and healthier workplace.

OSHA 300 Logs

To ensure compliance with the OSHA log and forms, it's essential to distribute the work of entering recordable injuries and illnesses. While an EHS or HR professional may be the point person to generate and post the 300A forms at the end of each year, it is not best practice for the EHS or HR professional to be solely responsible for ensuring illnesses and injuries are entered on the log(s) daily.

Recall that employers must maintain individual logs for each physical address and logs must be kept up-to-date within 7-days of a recordable injury or illness occurring. Imagine if your workplace maintains tens or hundreds of logs. If only one individual at a central location is responsible for entries, the opportunity for delays in reporting, lack of reporting, illnesses or injuries not being addressed is significant. And, what happens if that one key person solely responsible for the logs and forms takes PTO or changes jobs? Best practice is to get more people involved.



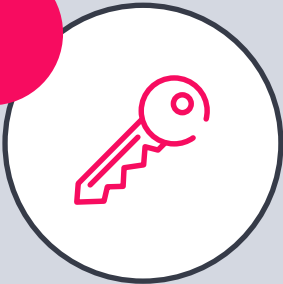
Employers who leverage an electronic incident management system can involve all employees in its use. For example, if an employee experiences an illness or injury, they can use the electronic system to initiate a report which can trigger an alert to their direct manager. The direct manager can follow-up with the employee, ensure they are cared for--if care is required. The manager can collect more information as to what happened, if other employees are at risk, if there is a hazard in need of immediate remediation — continually adding to on the case/event the employee electronically initiated. Eventually, the electronic case/ event is routed to the EHS or HR professional for further follow-up and assurance of accurate 300 log entry.



SDSs

Just like the OSHA log, SDSs need to be easily accessed by all employees throughout their regular workday, not just in case of an accident. Integrating your SDS inventory tool into an existing system, mobile accessible and easy to use, will greatly improve compliance with this important federal law. This is another example of the value of providing the why and educate managers and workers on the important of SDSs, how to access them, and when and how use them.

1



First Essential Element: Key Collaborators:

- Human Resources
- Managers/Supervisors
- Workers/Line Staff
- Environmental Manager
(if a different position than EHS Professional)
- Information Technology/Finance
(if technical solutions are needed)

Second Essential Element: Policies

Every organization has a policy and procedure or P&P binder, sometimes referred to as SOPs (standard operating procedures). These represent the dos and don'ts of how things are done at the organization, what's okay and not okay, communication and basic hierarchy.

2



For most organizations, HR is the owner of P&Ps and is responsible for new hires receiving a copy and completing an acknowledgment. However, that can mean safety policies aren't included and there could be a completely separate safety P&P manual. It's important to coordinate and work alongside HR in this second essential element, integrating safety specific P&Ps into the overall company P&P. Human resources professionals have experience in writing, updating and distributing P&Ps to the company, however they often lack the expertise of an EHS professional when it comes to revisions, updates or adding new safety specific P&Ps. When it comes to health and safety, there are specific laws regarding documentation and leveraging EHS and HR experiences, know-how and skills can make this process air-tight.

Human resources professionals often research employment laws and state specific laws as standard practice in policy and procedure creation, which means there may already be a legal expert, (insurance carrier or other entity) that your company consults with on a regular basis. Coordinating efforts with HR can save time and ensure nothing is missed.

2



Second Essential Element: Key Collaborators:

- Human Resources
- Legal Consultant/In-house Legal Department
- Insurance Carrier

Third Essential Element: Training

The two important first steps in meeting this element are:

1. Determining what training topics are required
2. Identifying best practices for delivering training that is meaningful, memorable and changes behavior.

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Safety Training Resources:

- [Five Essential Elements of Workplace Health and Safety](#)
- [The Four Types of Learning Culture](#)
- [From Novice to Expert: Turn Your Employees into High Performers](#)
- [HSI Safety Training Needs Assessment](#)
- [Writing Learning Objectives](#)

HSI has resources to help with both those steps and they are covered extensively in the white papers and resources in the spotlight box. For the purposes of this white paper and focus on improving collaboration, coordination and companywide involvement in safety, we'll focus on two important elements of training:

1. Integration of Safety Training into Existing Training Program
2. Engagement with Managers and Supervisors

Integration into Existing Training Program

Many organizations have a dedicated training and development professional (or even department) who works closely with HR on employee training initiatives, onboarding and ongoing training. In other organizations, this responsibility falls under HR. In either case, there is likely an existing onboarding program driven by HR, including ongoing training and development delivered online, live or both.

It is surprisingly common for organizations to have a completely separate safety training program that is managed and delivered by the EHS professional or EHS department, in addition to the 'corporate' or 'staff' training and development department. Both professionals/departments have valuable contributions about the content of safety training; how to effectively deliver training to all employees, tracking and reporting, topics that are required and needed, and logistics like scheduling, access, etc.

This is another opportunity for coordination and efficiency to integrate safety training into your company's current training programs. It is more and more common for even small companies to utilize a learning management system (LMS) to deliver employee training. Many LMS vendors include out of the box online courses on a variety of topics (safety, HR, employee development, soft skills, hard skills, manager skills), plus the ability to build your own and load them into the system. It can be as simple as adding additional courses or libraries that cover safety topic to your existing LMS contract.



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Manager and Supervisor Engagement

What we know about effective workforce training programs is that including how the information applies to your specific organization and workers' specific tasks makes it more effective, memorable, and used on the job. This is a great reason to involve managers, supervisors, and other coworkers to conduct training on a regular basis. When the only person delivering safety training is the EHS professional, it can be less effective and less personalized to the position, department, or location.

Direct managers and supervisors can provide the hands-on, workplace specific training follow-up to ensure retention and use of what was learned in general training sessions, whether online or in-person.

For example, employees might complete a training program on the fundamentals of forklift operation, followed up with a hands-on workshop with their immediate supervisor at their worksite, using the types and brands of forklifts used on a regular basis.

When supervisors are engaged and involved in safety training, it becomes infused in the regular workday through on-the-spot corrective training when someone is observed performing a task incorrectly or the daily 'toolbox talks' that can be conducted by managers at shift changes, scheduled during a shift or as needed in response to an issue. Safety information and training become a part of the workday, coworkers start to help each other out and reinforce safe

behaviors, without it coming across as 'getting in trouble' with your supervisor or uncovered during an 'inspection'. One technique to increase engagement is not only rotate topics for safety talks but rotate employees in as the leader of the toolbox talk, researching the safety topic and presenting to their peers.

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regular workday.



Personalized, one-on-one intervention done immediately when a worker is observed performing a task incorrectly is more effective than reminders issued to the whole team in hopes that the individuals who need the information the most 'get it'. Corrective feedback is also less punitive and better received when done individually and not in front of the group; humiliation or making an example of someone has no place in encouraging a culture of safety.

3



Third Essential Element: Key Collaborators:

- Managers/Supervisors
- Training/Development
- Human Resources

Fourth Essential Element: Tracking Risk

Tracking risk is where the rubber meets the road when it comes to workplace health and safety. Traditionally, risk-tracking has been the specialty of EHS professionals, but it is important to involve managers, supervisors, and especially HR professionals, too. While most HR professionals will not be trained experts when it comes to spotting and remediating potential hazards, they can be a huge help when it comes to coordinating efforts with both internal and external partners.

4



Ideally, risk tracking involves many employees, not solely the EHS professional. HR is a good department to work with on increased engagement, whether it's creating a companywide initiative focused on risk identification or along with managers, helping to identify candidates, rising stars in your organization to help conduct risk assessments in their areas/locations.



Some examples of risk-tracking activities that require such coordination include the following:

Inspections and Reporting

Regular inspections help to identify hazards and having written checklists can make this task more accessible to others at the organization. Often this is a mental checklist for many health and EHS professionals, which means the first step is getting it in writing. HR and EHS should determine what needs to be on inspection checklists to ensure all regulations and mandates are met, OSHA, state, insurance carrier, company policies, etc. When both departments work together on this step, it helps ensure nothing is accidentally missed.

Next, EHS professionals should collaborate with managers and supervisors by reviewing checklists and the specific facilities and areas where they will be used for inclusion of other items. When it comes to safety, another set of eyes can only help, not hurt, and prevents errors of omission. An additional benefit of the collaborative creation of inspection checklists is better commitment and buy-in from others at your organization; a manager who is involved in the process is more likely to conduct hazard inspections in their section and encourage worker involvement.

So often the role of EHS professional is seen as the cop or external force coming in with “their” checklists, processes, and procedures. Shifting the ownership from EHS only to EHS, HR and leadership at all levels is an important step towards safety truly and practically being everyone’s jobs. When hazards are identified, HR should be involved in creation of a process for reporting them and integrating this important safety process into other ones at the organization.

It can be helpful to start with templates and third party created checklists. Some third parties, such as HSI, provide standard checklists for this purpose. For example, our Safety Management System (SMS) contains over 100 safety checklists, which are mapped to OSHA regulations, to identify hazards in the workplace. In addition, HSI produced a series of [Supervisor Safety Tip](#) videos to teach hazard-recognition skills, one topic at a time. These include topics such as how to inspect a fire extinguisher, how to check machine guarding, and so on.



Starting with templates and materials created by other can help shift what can sometimes be a less than cooperative dynamic and working relationship between the EHS professional and management.

Note, too, that contacting OSHA is also an option here. OSHA has a non-enforcement [On-Site Consultation Program](#), which can send a professional to help identify hazards that need to be abated without the inspection being considered an official audit.

Safety Alerts

Just like with employee training, it's very likely there is already a system in place managed by HR, but for employee communications/notifications, whether it's through email groups or an HR information system (HRIS). This is another area where partnering with HR will be a time-saver and improve your ability to deliver alerts. Your company's leadership and/or HR team is probably already communicating about benefits, timecards, scheduling and other company news, maybe through a regular newsletter. Either include safety alerts into this existing communication or work with HR on a safety specific newsletter or email communication that is integrated into existing systems.



Another professional/department to work closely with on safety programs and safety alerts is security. If your business employs security professionals, there are likely existing safety communications and other safety related procedures in place for the security personnel. Connecting with these professionals can strengthen an existing system in place and save you time developing and implementing something new that could include some redundancies.

Health Assessments and Infectious Disease Tracking

The partnership between EHS and HR is more important than ever when addressing this area of tracking, especially when it pertains to employee health data and privacy. Without consulting HR, employee policies and relevant privacy laws, an EHS professional could end up spending time on policies and procedures that are either redundant or aren't in line with your company's employee privacy policies.

Remediation

Remediation often involves a safety committee and recommendations to the company, as well as remediation workflows.

Most employers have safety committees who are responsible for reviewing inspection information, triage of remediation activities and reporting findings to the appropriate member of the management team. The membership of the safety committee can and should be diverse and inclusive, another opportunity for buy-in and collaboration, including representatives of both management and labor, from different departments locations companywide. It's more effective when leadership views the safety committee as integrated into the company vs. a separate body issuing directives for others to follow, and results in better follow through on recommendations.

Working with HR on remediation workflows and action items is an important element of this process; HR already has policies in place regarding remediation in other areas that impact employees, folding safety remediation into those existing policies can ensure they are carried out appropriately.



Note: *some states have legislation regarding safety committees and membership requirements, other organizations might need to review labor union agreements about safety committee membership inclusion. Be sure to check your specific situation to ensure your safety committee(s) are both inclusive and compliant with any applicable laws, regulations, and agreements.*

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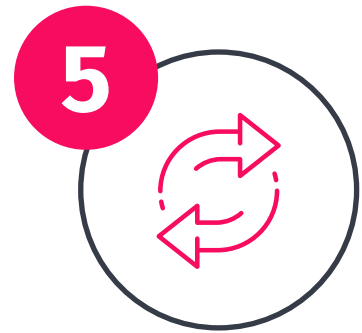


Fourth Essential Element: Key Collaborators:

- Managers/Supervisors
- Employees/Workers/Line-Staff
- Human Resources
- Maintenance
- Security Personnel

Fifth Essential Element: Reinforcing Behaviors

Reinforcing behaviors is accomplished through well-defined expectations, feedback and retraining, when needed. At times there will be enforcement activities involved, especially when repeated attempts at compliance with safety policies are met without success.



Since HR already has existing policies regarding employee behavior, which typically include expectations and consequences, you can easily add safety specific policies that follow the same pattern of reinforcement. Policies that govern workplace behaviors like showing up on time and using the timecard system, should include policies about use of PPE and what the consequences are of not showing up prepared to work safely. Many HR policies specific to employee behavior already cover safety topics, such as the drug and alcohol policy, and therefore overlap the job of the EHS professional.

Observation is an important factor in this element however EHS or HR professionals can't be everywhere at all times ensuring that workers are following the rules and engaging in safe behavior throughout their shift. However, direct supervisors are more involved and present, able to provide immediate feedback and retraining when needed. Reinforcing safe behaviors is more effective when done immediately, in the moment, by whomever is observing the unsafe behavior, typically a supervisor. When safety is everyone's job, direct, specific and corrective feedback delivered in the moment, when its most needed, naturally starts to happen.

Record-keeping is another key aspect of this element and at times might include disciplinary actions. In these instances, it's important for EHS professionals to coordinate with

HR and the direct manager to note any disciplinary measures applied. Some of this information will need to live in the employee's file that isn't always accessible by the EHS professional, which makes HR a key partner in this fifth element. Human resources is just as invested in keeping these types of records to prevent future headaches.



What About Work from Home?

The short answer is, yes, **OSHA requirements, and thus these five elements, still apply for employees working at home.** EHS professionals must still move forward with safety initiatives, even if some or all the workforce is not physically on-site. However, you might not have as much direct contact with WFH employees, which means engaging the help of direct supervisors, HR and even IT (information technology department staff). Engaging these partners is essential in injury prevention and reviewing safety of the WFH environment. With the right guidance and information from EHS professionals, direct supervisors and IT staff can be important allies in assessing risk in WFH scenarios.

5



Fifth Essential Element: Key Collaborators:

- Managers/Supervisors
- Training/Development
- Human Resources
- IT (Information Technology)

Still Have Questions?

The best way to build a comprehensive health and safety system, based on these five elements, is through collaboration: health and safety, human resources, and training and development working as a team and engaging managers and supervisors at all levels. When people are involved early on in the process, asked for their feedback and input, they are more committed to the outcome and willing to help implement change. When new policies and procedures are handed down or thrust upon employees, there is a natural resistance and distrust, which further complicates the success of companywide safety initiatives. It can be more work in the initial stages, but the long-term benefits and time saved when individuals are invested in and committed to safety far outweigh the initial challenges.

Finally, whether you have a close working relationship with HR and/or training and development professionals, the work of EHS is easier if you are using technology to implement and manage these five elements. It may sound odd to say that IT and finance are partners in safety, but they

can be just as important as partnering with HR, managers, and workers. Technology solutions can streamline processes, improve the quality of data and reporting, improve compliance and be a key factor in prevention efforts through trend analysis.

Your organization likely already uses an HR information system (HRIS) for time-tracking, benefits and payroll, an accounting system, customer management software, or a purchasing software system. Technologies such as [learning management systems \(LMS\)](#), [Safety Data Sheet \(SDS\) platforms](#), and [safety management systems \(SMS\)](#) are invaluable for moving safety beyond clipboards and Excel sheets. A comprehensive solution with single sign-on for you and your staff can elevate your health and safety plan to the same level as other systems across your organization.

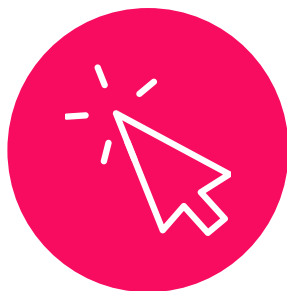
There are many EHS professionals who describe their job as being on an island, the only one with the responsibility to ensure workplace health and safety companywide. HR professionals can also feel like the rule enforcing parent that employees feel like should be avoided at all costs. These responsibilities and the isolation of these roles can be less onerous when you engage with each other and other cross-functional workgroups such as training, operations, maintenance, and others. Creating a coordinated effort to address these five elements is easier on EHS and HR professionals, and creates a better, more comprehensive safety system with companywide communication and involvement.



Creating a coordinated effort to address these five elements **creates a better, more comprehensive safety system.**

With the technological tools available, it's easier than ever to connect and communicate with supervisors and workers, improving engagement and compliance. The job of the EHS professional is massive and overwhelming at times, however you are not alone, engaging with other departments and colleagues and using technology to achieve these five elements can truly make safety everyone's job at your organization.

Contact us if you have any questions or feedback regarding transforming workplace safety at your organization.



About HSI

HSI is your single-source partner for EHS, Compliance, and Professional Development solutions. HSI provides integrated e-learning content, training solutions, and cloud-based software designed to enable your business to improve safety, operations, and employee development. Across all industries, HSI helps safety managers, and technical employees, human resources, first responders, and operational leaders train and develop their workforce, keep workers safe, and meet regulatory and operational compliance requirements. HSI's focus is on training, software, and services for safety and compliance, workforce development, industrial skills, and emergency care. HSI is a unique partner that offers a suite of cloud-based software solutions including learning management, safety management, chemical SDS management, and more, integrated with content and training so businesses can not only monitor and manage multiple workflows in one system, but train employees via one partner.

For more information, visit [hsi.com](https://www.hsi.com)