

Encourage Workers to Participate in the Program

When you set up a safety and health program, your workers can be your most valuable asset.

- Workers often know the most about workplace hazards.
- Workers may be able to recommend simple, effective solutions.

When workers are consulted, they will feel valued and involved. But you might need to encourage them to offer their ideas. You can take several steps to create an environment where workers are comfortable speaking up and contributing their ideas:

1. Include worker participation in your safety and health policy (Worksheet 1WP_1a).
2. Inform workers of their rights under the OSH Act of 1970 (Worksheet 1WP_1b).
3. Give workers opportunities to participate in the program (Worksheet 1WP_1c).
4. Give workers the time and resources they need to participate (Worksheet 1WP_1d).

To-Do

- Identify ways to get workers involved.
- Make sure you promptly act on all concerns and suggestions you receive.

Give workers opportunities to participate in the program

As you go through each element of your program, assess how workers are involved, figure out workers' needs and expectations, and find ways to encourage participation.

Some of the ways you can get workers involved are:

- Start a safety and health advisory committee.
- Hold worker roundtable meetings.
- Have safety "office hours" with the manager or owner during normal working hours.
- Put out a suggestion box (either an actual box that's easy to access or a digital "box" such as an online poll that workers can fill out anonymously).
- Include workers when you set goals for your program (Management Leadership Worksheet 1ML_2a).

Set Up a Process to Follow Through

Too often leaders set up ways for people to give suggestions and feedback and then never follow up. This can make people doubt how sincere leaders are and discourage participation.

If you set up a suggestion box, advisory committee, safety office hours, or other ways for workers to participate, make sure to **promptly follow through** and act on what you learn.

For example, set up a process for what happens when you get a suggestion. You could:

1. Compile all suggestions and bring them up during all-hands meetings.
2. Acknowledge how much you value getting reports of hazards and ideas for fixing them.
3. Discuss what you think can and can't be done (and why) and get worker input.
4. Follow up later by reporting what action was taken and the results.

Brainstorm new opportunities for participation

Gather your team of "safety champions" to take an honest look at how you encourage workers to give feedback about safety and health. Ask yourself:

- Can workers point out safety and health concerns and give suggestions?
- How easy or hard is it for workers to do this?
- Can workers provide input anonymously?
- What happens after you receive concerns or suggestions? Do you follow up, and if so, how?

Considering these questions and anything else you learn from looking at current participation, write down new ways to provide opportunities for workers to participate in the program.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____