

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

- Review the opportunities workers have (or will have) to participate in the safety and health program.
- Make sure you've built in time and resources for workers to use these opportunities.

Give workers the time and resources they need to participate

Make it clear that it's appropriate to use normal work hours to contribute to program activities. Workers might not want to take part if they fear being warned or punished for taking time away from work.

For example:

- Schedule safety meetings during work time. Make sure supplies (such as paper, pens, a white board, and markers) are available.
- Invite workers to go on "safety rounds" with managers or participate in incident investigations during work hours.
- Have an "open door" policy when it comes to safety and health. This means any worker can come to you at any time—including during their normal working hours—to discuss a safety issue or question.

Recognize workers who raise safety and health concerns, offer suggestions, or identify ways to improve things. Thank them and hold them up as examples (with their permission). This will show your commitment and encourage further participation.

Look at the opportunities you came up with in Worksheet 1WP_1c. Specify how workers will have the time and resources they need for them.

How Workers Can Participate
Example: Online poll for suggestions

Time and/or Resources Provided
Example: Make company computers readily available (for example, in break rooms) so workers can access the online poll during their shifts.

Case Study: Encouraging Worker Participation

Al Varga owns a five-person book publishing company. Orders usually increase leading up to the December holidays, putting the business under pressure. Al went into the warehouse one morning to check inventory and was approached by Eileen, one of the warehouse workers. She asked him to look at how some of the workers were stepping on the lower shelves to reach the upper shelves. Al asked Eileen to meet with him during her shift so he could understand why workers were doing this. Eileen explained that there weren't enough portable ladders available, causing some people to take an unsafe shortcut.

That afternoon Al called an all-hands meeting. He raised the issue and told workers that he was getting more portable ladders. He said that, until that time, everyone should always use the ones available instead of stepping on shelves, even if it meant working more slowly. He thanked Eileen and said she would receive a bonus for pointing out the hazard before someone got hurt.