

Your Safety and Health Program

Starting the Journey

Every organization is different, and there are many paths to improving safety and health. Where should you begin?

You can choose your starting point by asking: *What's motivating us to improve safety and health at this moment?* Your answer might help you choose the best path forward. Below are some common motivations for improving safety and health. Each situation points to a program element to help you get started.

1. Management has directed the organization to improve safety and health.

→ Start with **Management Leadership**

Capture and communicate management's commitment. **Start by writing a safety and health policy** that sets goals for your program. After that, you'll identify the resources needed to start and run your program. These might include staff time, expertise, and financial support.

2. Your injury and illness rates are high, or a serious incident has occurred.

→ Start with **Program Evaluation**

Organizations often use injury and illness rates as the main indicator of safety. However, these rates don't always give a complete picture of the risks that workers face. Consider starting with **an evaluation of your program**. What program elements do you already have in place? How well are they working? An evaluation can engage workers and help leaders think about choices for long-term improvement. It also sets a baseline for measuring progress.

3. People have raised concerns about worker safety and health.

→ Start with **Worker Participation**

Concerns can come from different sources. An inspector from OSHA or your insurance carrier could point out problems. People inside your organization could raise questions as well. When you receive information about safety and health concerns, **get workers involved at the start**. Workers know the most about workplace hazards through their day-to-day activities. They can help identify hazards and the right controls to improve safety and health performance.



4. Your workers face safety and health risks from activities your company doesn't manage.

→ Start with **Communication and Coordination for Host Employers, Contractors, and Staffing Agencies**

If you have a multi-employer worksite, you need to focus on communication and coordination. Your workers need to understand the risks involved with their own tasks. But they also need to understand the hazards associated with **work conducted by others on your worksite**. It's important to communicate these hazards so everyone can take the proper precautions.

5. Workers keep having incidents and near misses.

→ Start with **Hazard Identification and Assessment**

Incidents might result from exposure to chemical, biological, or physical hazards, or to hazardous situations, such as working at height, that you haven't identified or controlled. In addition, work activities can change, introducing new hazards. It's important to routinely engage workers to **identify hazards**. That way, you can determine whether existing controls are adequate or new ones are needed.

6. People aren't sure how to carry out their roles and responsibilities.

→ Start with **Education and Training**

Everyone in your organization has a role and responsibility for meeting your safety and health goals. They need **education and training to carry out these roles**. An example would be specific training for workers and supervisors on recognizing the hazards and controls in the workplace.

7. Workers have identified hazards, but the controls aren't effective.

→ Start with **Hazard Prevention and Control**

Determine why existing controls aren't preventing injuries, illnesses, and incidents. It could be the result of inadequate assessment of hazards, lack of resources to implement controls, lack of training, or improper use of controls. Also, remember that new or changing hazards and risks require additional controls. Be sure to evaluate the effectiveness of existing controls *and* your plan for new controls.

8. Remember—no matter where you begin, you'll address every element of your safety and health program along your journey. Also remember that all the elements of a safety and health program work together to deliver results. Keep the other elements in mind as you decide where to start and as you work on each element of your program.