

Create a Safety and Health Recognition Plan

A GUIDE FOR MEDIUM AND LARGE BUSINESSES

Introduction

Workplaces thrive when workers are involved in creating and improving their own safety and health programs. A safety and health recognition program is a powerful way to show that safety is a core value at your company. By recognizing workers who report hazards, offer safety suggestions, or lead safety initiatives, you can build a stronger, more positive safety culture.

This guide provides a simple 5-step process to help you develop a recognition program that fits the scale and structure of your organization.

Who is this guide for?

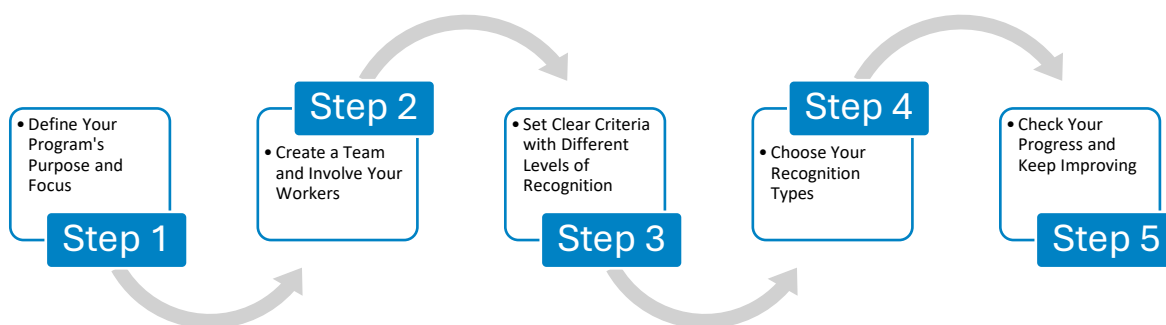
This guide is for medium and large-sized businesses with established safety programs. It is designed for organizations with multiple locations or a more complex company structure. OSHA has a separate safety and health recognition guide for small businesses.

Why a Recognition Program Is a Smart Investment

When workers feel appreciated, they are more likely to repeat positive safety actions. Highlighting safety accomplishments also inspires others to step up and find new ways to make the workplace safer. The benefits can be significant:

- **Build a stronger culture for safety:** A good program encourages everyone to make safety a part of their daily routine, leading to continuous improvement.
- **Boost your company's reputation:** A visible commitment to safety is viewed favorably by customers, investors, and the community.
- **Attract and keep great employees:** In a competitive job market, a safe and positive workplace is a major advantage for attracting and retaining top talent.
- **Improve the bottom line:** Effective safety programs deliver a real return on investment by reducing incident costs, lowering insurance premiums, and increasing productivity.

A 5- Step Process for Building Your Safety and Health Recognition Program



Step 1: Define Your Program's Purpose and Focus

A recognition program should be a planned, strategic effort. Start by getting your company's leaders on board by showing them how the program helps the business succeed.

- **Look at your current safety program:** Use data from your safety reporting system and other sources to find opportunities for improvement.
 - What proactive safety activities (leading indicators) are you already tracking?
 - Are there specific high-risk tasks or recurring injuries that the program could help address?
 - Do your workers feel comfortable speaking up about safety?
 - Use this information to design a program that targets specific goals. For example, if data shows a low rate of near-miss reporting at one facility, you can create rewards specifically for reporting "good catches" in that location.
- **Reward actions, not just a lack of accidents:** Avoid rewarding teams for simply having "zero injuries," as this can discourage workers from reporting incidents. Instead, reward the proactive actions that prevent accidents from happening in the first place. These are often called leading indicators. Examples include:
 - Reporting hazards and near-misses.
 - Completing safety inspections on time.
 - Actively participating in safety meetings and training.
- **Rotate your focus:** To keep the program fresh and engaging across the company, change the safety theme each quarter or year. This can be managed by a company-wide safety team.

Example: Rotating Safety Themes

- Q1: Hazard Spotting: Focus on increasing the number of "good catches" reported.
- Q2: Teamwork & Mentoring: Recognize employees who help their coworkers work safely.
- Q3: Safe Work Practices: Reward teams that show high compliance with critical safety rules, like lockout/tagout.
- Q4: Good Housekeeping: Focus on improving workplace organization to prevent slips, trips, and falls.

Step 2: Create a Team and Involve Workers

A clear structure is needed to keep the program consistent across the company while allowing for local flexibility.

- **Ask workers for their input:** Gather feedback from employees at all locations. You could:
 - Send out anonymous surveys to ask what types of recognition are most meaningful to them.
 - Hold small group discussions (focus groups) to get more detailed feedback.
 - Ask key questions during safety meetings:
 - *What has a coworker done recently that made you or your team feel safer?*
 - *What kind of recognition would you find most motivating?*
 - *Where and when should we present safety awards (e.g., at our annual conference, in team meetings)?*

- **Allow workers to nominate each other:** Don't rely only on managers for nominations. A peer-to-peer system allows coworkers to recognize each other for positive safety actions that leaders might not see. This builds teamwork and encourages everyone to look for the good in one another.

Step 3: Set Clear with Different Levels of Recognition

A multi-level program ensures that all types of contributions are recognized, from a single employee to a whole facility. Establishing clear, specific, and action-based criteria is essential to make sure recognition is earned fairly and aligns with your safety goals.

- **Tier 1 - Individual Recognition:** To encourage personal accountability and proactive, safety-conscious behavior in every employee.
 - What to Recognize:
 - Submitting a high-quality "good catch," near-miss, or hazard report that leads to a safety improvement.
 - Proposing an innovative idea to improve the safety of a process or procedure.
 - Actively participating in safety meetings and completing all safety training on time.
 - Serving as a safety mentor to new employees or coaching peers on safe work practices.
 - Consistently demonstrating exemplary safe behaviors, such as proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- **Tier 2 - Team Recognition:** To encourage teamwork and shared accountability for safety.
 - What to Recognize:
 - Achieving 100% completion of a team-based safety training module.
 - Working together to identify and resolve a significant safety hazard in the work area.
 - Maintaining excellent housekeeping and organization in a shared workspace for a set period.
 - Winning a site-level safety competition or challenge (e.g., most hazards identified in a month).
- **Tier 3 - Site or Department -Level Award:** To recognize significant safety milestones and sustained high performance at the facility level.
 - What to Recognize:
 - Achieving a specific, data-driven goal, such as a significant reduction in the site's Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR).

Level up! Consider Creating a Two-Part Program Team

- **Company-Wide Safety Council:** A central team made up of senior leaders, safety professionals, and employee representatives from different locations. This team sets the main goals, manages the budget, and oversees the company-wide awards.
- **Local Safety Committees:** A team at each facility made up of local managers, supervisors, and frontline workers. This team runs the program at their site, adapts activities to fit the local culture, and reports their progress to the company-wide council.

- Successfully passing a major internal or external safety audit with minimal or zero non-conformance findings.
 - Meeting or exceeding leading indicator targets for the year (e.g., number of safety observations submitted, on-time closure rate for corrective actions).
 - Demonstrating a strong positive culture for safety based on employee perception survey results.
- **Tier 4 - Company -Wide Excellence Award:** To celebrate the highest level of safety achievement and foster healthy competition and knowledge-sharing between sites.
 - What to Recognize:
 - The site with the best overall safety performance across the corporation, measured by a balanced scorecard of leading and lagging indicators.
 - The site or team that developed an innovative safety program or solution that was successfully adopted by other locations.
 - An individual who has demonstrated sustained, long-term leadership in promoting a culture for safety across the organization

Step 4: Choose Your Recognition Types

How you recognize achievements is just as important as what you recognize. The goal is to make workers feel genuinely valued. Make sure you offer different types of recognition for every level. There are many ways to recognize workers, and the best programs use a mix of options. See Appendix A for some examples.

Recognition must be visible and timely to have an impact. Use your company's communication tools to share and celebrate safety wins.

- **Be Visible:** Share the good news where everyone can see it.
 - Post on the company intranet, on digital message boards, and in company newsletters.
 - Recognize winners at large events like town halls or annual conferences.
- **Be Timely:** Recognize positive actions as soon as possible. If you wait too long, recognition loses its impact. Use your safety and HR software to create workflows that flag employees for recognition right away.
- **Be Specific:** Vague praise is not as effective. Make sure everyone understands exactly what action you are recognizing so the person feels truly valued and their coworkers can learn from their example.

 Too Generic	Certificate: Recognized for being a great team player.
 Good Example	Certificate: Recognized for stepping in to help a coworker safely guide a load after spotting a blind spot hazard. Companywide email: This month, Pat Jones from our Houston facility is being recognized for spotting and replacing a worn guard on the shear press, effectively preventing a potential hand injury. Thank you, Pat, for your proactive approach and for keeping our team safe.

- **Be fresh.** Set a rhythm (e.g., weekly shout-out, monthly award) but don't let it go stale. Consider refreshing your delivery approach every few months. For example:
 - Rotate the messenger – have someone new announce an award or recognition.
 - Highlight a different department or crew.
 - Include team-based success stories rather than only focusing on individual accomplishments.

Step 5: Check Your Progress and Keep Improving

A formal review process is essential to keep your program effective, ensure it's fair, and show its value to company leaders.

- **Use your tools to track progress:** Use your company's safety and HR system to create real-time feedback.
 - Local managers can see their team's engagement and top safety performers.
 - Company leaders can see a global overview of the program and how safety activities are helping to reduce injuries and costs.
- **Review your program regularly:** You should conduct a formal review or audit of the program periodically. check-ins with workers, supervisors, and managers to confirm the recognition program is effective and meets its intended goals.
 - What to look at: Review the program's rules, processes, and performance data.
 - How to get feedback: Use confidential surveys, small group discussions, and one-on-one interviews to get honest feedback from employees at all levels about the program's fairness and what's working.
 - What to do with the feedback: Use the findings to create a plan for improvement. If the review shows that some teams feel left out, adjust the program to ensure everyone has a chance to be recognized.
- **Demonstrate the program's value:** The review is a powerful tool to show company leaders the program's return on investment (ROI). By linking program activities to lower incident rates and cost savings, you can make a strong case for its ongoing value and resources.

Safety and Health Recognition Program Planning Worksheet

Use this worksheet to help develop your enterprise-wide safety and health recognition program.

Prepared by:

Date:

1. **Program Goal:** What is the main goal of your recognition program? How will it help your company's overall safety efforts?
2. **What to Recognize:** What specific proactive safety activities will you recognize (e.g., reporting hazards, mentoring coworkers, participating in safety improvement efforts)?
3. **Worker Involvement:** How will you involve workers from all levels and locations in designing and implementing the program (e.g. surveys, focus, groups, committees)?
4. **Program Promotion:** How will you promote and advertise the recognition program across all sites?
5. **Types of Recognition:** How will you recognize workers' accomplishments (e.g., shout-outs at meetings, presentations at conferences, certificates, gift cards, team lunches)?
6. **Recognition Schedule:** What is the schedule for giving recognition (e.g. weekly, monthly, semi-annually)?
7. **Nomination Process:** Describe your nomination process. Who (e.g., supervisors, peers) can nominate a worker for recognition? How will nominations be submitted and to whom?
8. **Selection Process:** What process will you use to evaluate and select recipients? Who will be involved in the decision-making?
9. **Selection Criteria:** What criteria will you use to evaluate and select recipients?
10. **Announcing Recognition:** How will you announce, deliver, and publicize recognition?
11. **Measuring Success:** How will you determine if your program is successful? How will you track your progress and make improvements?

Appendix A: Recognition Examples by Level

Here are a few examples of types of recognition you could offer. Be creative! Think about what will resonate with your workforce and industry and reflects your organizational values.

For Individuals and Peers

- Verbal: A quick, sincere "thank you" or a "shoutout" during a team meeting.
- Written: A personalized thank-you note from a manager or a "Safety Spotlight" feature on the company intranet.
- Tangible: Small-value gift cards, points in a company-wide recognition platform, or company-branded "swag".

For Teams

- Verbal:
 - A sincere, on-the-spot "thank you" and public praise from a direct supervisor during a daily huddle or toolbox talk.
 - A visit from a senior site leader (e.g., Plant Manager, Director) to the team's work area to personally thank them for their contribution.
 - A formal "shout-out" and description of the team's achievement during a site-wide "all-hands" meeting or town hall.
- Written Recognition:
 - A "Safety Spotlight" article featuring the team's success on the company intranet or in a corporate newsletter.
 - A formal letter of commendation from a Vice President or other senior leader, which can be framed and displayed in the team's work area.
 - A digital "Safety Champions" badge awarded to each team member's profile in the company's HR or recognition platform.
- Tangible Recognition:
 - A team lunch, breakfast, or catered BBQ.
 - Upgraded tools or new equipment for the team's work area.
 - Company-branded apparel (e.g., jackets, polo shirts) for all team members.
 - A fun team-building event or outing, such as tickets to a local sporting event.
 - A donation to a charity of the team's choice.

For Site and Corporate-Wide Recipients

- Verbal Recognition:
 - A formal announcement and praise from the CEO during a company-wide town hall, annual conference, or a pre-recorded video message sent to all employees.
 - A special visit from a corporate executive to the site to personally address and congratulate the employees.
 - A mention of the site's safety achievement in an external communication, such as an investor relations call, to connect safety performance to overall business success.
- Written Recognition:
 - A feature story highlighting the achievement in the company's annual reporting.
 - A press release distributed to media outlets to celebrate the accomplishment.
 - A permanent plaque or large banner displayed prominently at the entrance.
 - A formal letter of commendation from the company's Board of Directors.

- Tangible Recognition:
 - A large, traveling "CEO's Safety Award" trophy that the site gets to display for the year.
 - Site-wide improvements, with the specific use decided by the site's employees (e.g., renovating the breakroom, adding new amenities, improving the parking lot).
 - A site-wide celebration, such as a family day, for all employees at that location.