The Key to Effective Safety Committees: Structure, Objectives, and Stages

Introduction
Safety committees play a crucial role in an organization's overall wellbeing. They have a significant impact on the organizational culture, environment, and financial health. However, participating in a safety committee may not seem particularly appealing to many employees. In this article, we will explore the essential elements of a safety committee, its objectives, and the stages of development and deterioration. We will also discuss how to achieve and maintain an effective safety committee.

Elements of a Safety Committee
a. *Culture*
    A thriving safety culture is one of the foundations of an effective safety committee. It is crucial to promote a proactive and positive approach to safety, where every employee feels responsible for contributing to a safe working environment.
b. *Environment*
    A safe working environment requires continuous assessment and improvement. The safety committee should ensure that necessary precautions and protocols are in place, and that employees have access to appropriate safety equipment and training.
c. *Bottom Line*
    An effective safety committee can lead to significant financial benefits for the organization. By preventing accidents and incidents, the committee helps reduce expenses related to workers' compensation, insurance premiums, and legal fees.

The Objective of the Safety Committee
The primary goal of a safety committee is to create and maintain a safe working environment for all employees. This includes identifying potential hazards, developing strategies to mitigate risks, and fostering a culture of safety throughout the organization.

Five Stages of Safety Committee Development and Deterioration
a. *Forming*
    Establishing the committee and defining its purpose and objectives.
b. *Storming*
    Navigating conflicts and differing perspectives to create a cohesive and functional team.
c. *Norming*
    Developing a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
d. *Performing*
    The committee operates effectively and consistently achieves its goals.
e. *Deteriorating*
    A decline in performance, engagement, or focus, leading to a less effective committee.

Keeping the "Effective" in Safety Committee

To maintain an effective safety committee, it is crucial to:

a. *Review*
   Regularly review and update the committee's objectives and strategies.
b. *Communication, Trust & Collaboration*
   Foster open communication, trust, and collaboration among committee members.
c. *Training & Development*
   Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for committee members.
d. *Continuing Improvement*
   Celebrate successes and learn from failures to continuously improve the committee's performance.
e. *Encouragement*
   Encourage employee engagement and involvement in the committee's activities.

Summary

An effective safety committee plays a vital role in fostering a safe working environment and positively impacting an organization's culture and bottom line. To achieve and maintain an effective committee, it is essential to focus on the key elements, set clear objectives, navigate through the stages of development and deterioration, and continuously strive for improvement. By doing so, organizations can ensure that their safety committees remain relevant, proactive, and beneficial for all employees.

For further assistance with this and other Loss Control topics, please feel free to contact Jeremy Wade, Risk Control Manager at Jeremy.wade@sedgwick.com.