

The Secret to Effective Safety Committees

The Third R: Rotating Membership

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The secret to making a safety committee successful, in the U.S. or Canada, is to follow the four R's. The first R is representation and rightsizing; the second R is responsibilities. Now, let's discuss the third R: Rotation of committee members.



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The Importance of Rotation

Rotation means replacing committee members on a regular basis. Giving other employees a chance to serve on a committee is important because it maximizes participation in committee functions. The greater the number of participants, the higher the level of awareness and responsibility throughout the organization.

Rotation is very important. In my experience working with committees, I have found that the companies that rotate committee membership are the ones that realize the greatest improvement in safety performance.

Striking the Right Balance

On the other hand, while rotating membership is beneficial, you don't want to overdo the amount of turnover. There needs to be some experienced and trained members on the committee at all times. In other words, there needs to be a balance between fresh blood and veteran leadership.

An effective approach is to have the most senior member of the committee rotate off every six months. *Example :* Under this system a committee of seven members would have the following mix of seniority at the start of each membership cycle:

- Member 1: 0 months;
- Member 2: 6 months;
- Member 3: 12 months;
- Member 4: 18 months;
- Member 5: 24 months;
- Member 6: 30 months; and
- Member 7: 36 months.

This system ensures a perpetual mix of experience and fresh ideas.

Editor's Note: Next week, in the final article of the series, Gary discusses the fourth R of committee success: Results.