

Writing effective safety and health policies, procedures, and rules

Safety policies

Safety policies communicate company philosophy and provide general safety guidelines. They offer vision and inspiration and highlight what is believed, valued, and expected. Review when employees are hired and discuss regularly throughout the year.

Examples include:

- Safety policy statement
- Employee responsibility and accountability
- Hazard assessment and correction
- Return to work
- Discipline
- Drug- and alcohol-free workplace

Creating a safe and healthy work environment is a requirement for Oregon employers; it's also a best practice among top-performing businesses. Formalizing your expectations, including step-by-step instructions for job tasks, shows employees that you care as much about their safety and health as you do production, quality, profitability, and customer service.

It's also important to involve employees in the development of policies as collaboration increases buy-in and creates stronger policies. Get feedback from employees about existing safety policies. Employees typically have a thorough understanding about job tasks, work environment, hazards, controls, etc., so their opinions add value.

Having well-written policies and rules protects you and your employees and provides your company with the flexibility to manage your business needs. This handout can help you get started. You should also consult with legal counsel or a human resources professional as you draft policies, procedures, and rules.

Show how to work safely

Safety procedures cover specific activities and steps taken to maintain safety. Some are task-specific; others are general descriptions regarding policies. To be effective, safety procedures should be in writing and communicated to employees through training.

Hands-on training is critical: show employees how to do a procedure, then ask them to demonstrate their understanding by doing it themselves. Here are some examples of safety procedures:

- How to report a hazard
- Step-by-step lockout/tagout procedure
- Personal protective equipment – use, cleaning, and storage
- Hazard communication/chemical use
- Emergency plan

Follow the rules

Safety rules describe what to do or avoid when working safely. Keep in mind:

- No single list of safety rules works for every business.
- Develop safety rules based on standard industry practices and accident experience.
- Don't rely solely on generic lists or examples.
- All rules must be completely and clearly communicated to everyone.
- All rules must be consistently enforced.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations when creating rules for equipment.



- Use Oregon OSHA's *Rules for all Workplaces* as a guide (bit.ly/43i2oHS)

Implementing policies, procedures, and rules

- Inform employees well in advance of any changes and explain why the new rules, procedures, or policies are being put in place.
- Provide training so expectations are very clear to employees. Make sure the training is short and easy-to-understand. It's also good to repeat the training periodically to remind employees of what's expected.
- Observe workers and work processes to ensure policies, procedures, and rules are being followed. It's also a good place to recognize employees for doing a good job and to acknowledge improvements.
- Hold employees accountable for following the policies, procedures, and rules, but be fair and consistent with both recognition and discipline.
- Gather feedback on policies, procedures, and rules to identify any gaps so they can be updated when necessary.

Having good written policies, procedures, and rules helps employees work safely and conveys management's commitment to worker health and well-being. These best practices are an important part of an effective overall safety program.

Learn more

Find additional resources for managing your safety program here:

- SAIF's be a leader materials (saif.com/bealeader)
- SAIF's information on filing and managing claims (saif.com/filing)
- SAIF's information on return-to-work (saif.com/rtwprograms)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) information on drug-free workplace programs (samhsa.gov/workplace/toolkit)