

DIY Inspection Program

A “Do-It-Yourself” inspection program can be beneficial to any organization. It should involve everyone from top management to the front-line worker. The main benefit is it allows everyone in the company to be on the lookout for safety issues. A good self-inspection program can identify and correct or mitigate problems quickly before someone gets hurt.

Self-inspections occur at various times and are conducted by various people depending on the scope and purpose of the inspection.

Daily – The employee should inspect their work area, tools and equipment at the beginning of each workday. Maintenance personnel, supervisors and others whose duties take them into the production area should be constantly checking for unsafe actions and conditions. Where remedial action is needed, it should be reported and corrected as soon as possible.

Weekly – Department heads, plant managers and others who may not normally get into the production area should tour their area for the purposes of inspection and safety contacts with the employees.

Monthly – Planned and scheduled inspections should occur every month. It can involve the safety person, safety committee and others. The participation of top management in such inspections shows they are interested and involved in safety.

Establishing the Program

A planned monthly inspection usually involves the safety department and the safety committee. This type of inspection should cover all areas, including those areas where “no one ever goes.” Scheduling the inspections when maximum observations can be made with the least amount of work interruption is advisable.

The inspection team should be limited in size to approximately 2 to 4 members. They should represent operations, supervision and safety. The team should be under the direction of a responsible member of management who will provide the authority necessary to assure its effectiveness. Specific responsibilities should be assigned (i.e., who will take notes, be the spokesperson, follow up on recommendations, etc.).

Prior to conducting an inspection, consider the following:

1. Training of inexperienced team members.
2. Areas that should be covered include facility layout and operations flow; standards, regulations, costs hazard recognition of unsafe conditions and the purpose of the inspection.
3. Previous inspections should be reviewed to insure that previous recommendations have been completed.
4. Accident records for various areas or departments should be reviewed. Information concerning a particular accident will often reveal hazards which need to be corrected.
5. All necessary personal protective equipment should be provided and worn in areas where it is required.
6. A preplanned route should be developed. This will insure that all areas will be inspected completely and thoroughly. It also will eliminate backtracking, unnecessary interruptions of production processes and distractions.

Program Records

Accurate inspection records are important. They serve as evidence of the program, provide documentation of necessary corrective actions and provide a method of follow up to assure completion. One of the easiest methods to record an inspection is to use a checklist. These can be secured from a variety of sources or can be tailored to suit your individual requirements. Checklists have several advantages, but should be used only as an aid to the inspection process.

The use of checklists is especially helpful when periodic inspections are required for particular equipment like conveyors, hoists, cranes, fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems, scaffolding, ladders, etc., which should be inspected by qualified persons on a schedule designed to insure compliance.

Records of inspections and corrective actions should be maintained for review as appropriate for authorities having jurisdiction.

Instituting Corrective Actions

The results of an inspection should prompt actions to correct the problems. The following guidelines should be used:

1. Correct the cause of the problem whenever possible. If the authority needed is above the inspector's, ensure this is brought to the attention of someone who has the proper authority.
2. When an individual has the authority to correct or minimize a problem or hazard, do it immediately.
3. Conditions that cannot be corrected immediately should be conveyed to management in a written report. The conditions should be listed in the order of priority, including suggested solutions and compliance dates, if possible.
4. Management should advise the inspectors as to what actions are being planned from the suggestions, or the reasons why actions will not be taken.

Employees should be made aware of all unsafe acts and conditions observed during inspections. These can be discussed with the employees and their suggestions solicited to prevent recurrence.

Self-inspections are a necessary part of any safety program. They get employees involved in the loss control efforts, uncover unsafe conditions and practices, and increase morale when items are corrected.