



# Loss Control Insight

Recognizing Barrier to Implementing Workplace Safety Program

## ***Top management support***

Unless the board and management make a visible commitment to institutionalizing workplace-safety practices, the nonprofit will remain at status quo. Top management support means changing the reward structure and imposing difficult consequences for those employees and volunteers who do not engage in safety practices. Management's modeling the desired behavior is essential for a workplace safety program to become a success.

## ***Lack of understanding/appreciation***

People at all levels of the organization need to understand why safety is a crucial issue and how to actively and effectively participate in the safety program. It can be difficult to convey that knowledge and appreciation to an entire organization. Training is one way of beginning the process. Another way is to identify the amount of time and money that accidents/injuries are costing the organization—money that could be spent for more effectively.

## ***Time***

Implementing a workplace safety program is an investment of time and energy that is well spent. Time, however, can act as a barrier to designing and delivering a quality program. Because time is always at a premium, senior management commitment and priorities need to be set to allow the rest of the organization to invest the necessary amount of time and energy to design and maintain an effective program.

## ***Communication***

Lack of clarity about the issues surrounding safety and the consequences of accidents and injuries to the nonprofit's overall well-being are often barriers to workplace safety. The organization needs to clearly and consistently communicate performance expectations about safety. Spell out the nonprofit's goals and objectives in terms of reducing the cost and frequency of accidents and injuries.

## ***Organizational structure***

The nonprofit's organizational structure and location of offices can present a barrier to an effective workplace safety program. If offices and workplaces are located in multiple sites, it may be difficult to ensure a standard approach to workplace safety. A highly decentralized organization also presents challenges in carrying out safety goals.

## ***Recommendations***

Although it is helpful to identify potential barriers to implementing an effective workplace safety program, it is more important to identify ways to overcome those barriers. Management support for workplace-safety strategies often come about because of a bench marking: a standard or point of reference by which others may be measured or judged. “Benchmarking” is a private-sector tool that can also be a valuable nonprofit-sector tool. It can be used to illustrate how each department compares too others.

Establishing a bench mark is a valuable way to leverage the natural internal competition that exists within any organization. Internal competition to “measure up” can be the catalyst for change within the organization. Publicizing how much accidents and injuries are costing the nonprofit can underscore the serious nature of safety. For example, stating: The money we paid in claims this year would have funded our dream project, makes the consequences of the actions tangible. Comparing departmental cost of accidents/injuries such as reflected in insurance premiums experience can be used to spur a change in behavior.

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By linking performance reviews and financial incentives with safety goals and objectives, employees and managers can observe senior management’s commitment to change. Safety can also be a conduit that shows the link between efficiency and employee or volunteer morale. Emphasis on safety shows employees and volunteers that the organization cares about their well-being, and can open the door to better management/employee/volunteer relations. Management also achieves the same objectives by linking safety to mission and demonstrating how commitment to safety is commitment to the nonprofit’s mission.