

Workplace Safety



Q's & A's for Vermont Small Business Employers



Vermont Department of Labor



You are always responsible for your employees safety and health.

Not only is it required, it makes good business sense.

Establishing a safe and healthy working environment requires every employer—large and small—and every employee to make safety and health a top priority. The entire work force must recognize that employee safety and health is central to their mission and key to the profitability and longevity of the company.

The Vermont Department of Labor's job is to provide leadership and encouragement to employees and employers to take that responsibility seriously.

Simply put, protecting people on the job is in everyone's best interest—Vermont's economy, communities, employees and families. Safety and health adds value to businesses, workplaces and lives.

An effective safety and health program can save \$4 to \$6 for every \$1 invested. It's the right thing to do, and doing it right pays off in lower costs, increased productivity, and higher employee morale. As an employer, you have a duty to protect your employees from injury and illness on the job. Accidents and injuries are more expensive than many realize. Costs mount up quickly. Substantial savings in workers' compensation and lost workdays are possible when injuries and illnesses decline.

How can I reduce employee injuries and illnesses?

The moment you hire your first employee VOSHA standards apply. Compliance with VOSHA rules is essential.

Compliance along with an effective voluntary safety and health program can help reduce your costs and injuries and illnesses. An organized, carefully crafted plan that systematically focuses on workplace hazards and employee training is critical. Buy-in from every manager and employee is essential. Everyone has to work at safety and health.

How do I develop this program?

Each safety and health program should be tailored to fit the company: to blend with its unique operations and

culture, and to help employers maintain a system that continually addresses workplace hazards. There are five elements that every effective program should have: management leadership and employee participation; job hazard analysis; hazard prevention and control; safety and health training and education; and program evaluation. A great resource for safety program development is: "Developing An Effective Safety & Health Program – Tips for Small Business Owners and Managers" available from the VT Dept. of Labor at: 802-828-6991 or on-line at: www.labor.vermont.gov under Forms & Publications.

What do you mean by management leadership and employee participation?

Employers and employees must work together to make safety and health a priority. Employer and employee involvement and communication on workplace safety and health issues are essential.

For example, this partnership can be achieved when you:

- Post the company's written safety and health policy for all to see
- Involve employees in policymaking on safety and health issues
- Take an active part in safety activities
- Hold meetings that focus on employee safety and health
- Abide by all safety and health rules
- Show your commitment by investing time, effort, and money in your safety and health program
- Institute an accountability system where all personnel are held accountable for not following your work rules

How do I prevent and control hazards at my worksite?

The next part of a good safety and health program is continual review of work environment and work practices to control or prevent workplace hazards.

This can be done when you:

- Regularly and thoroughly maintain equipment
- Establish a work order system to ensure hazards are corrected
- Ensure that hazard correction procedures are in place
- Ensure that employees know how to use and maintain personal protective equipment
- Ensure that all employees understand and follow safe work procedures

What is a job hazard analysis and how often do I have to do it?

A job hazard analysis means that you and your employees analyze all worksite conditions to identify and eliminate existing or potential hazards. There should be a

current hazard analysis for all jobs and processes that all employees know and understand.

To implement job hazard analysis it is helpful to:

- Become aware of hazards in your industry
- Create safety teams
- Encourage employees to report workplace hazards
- Examine history of worksite conditions
- Have an adequate system for reporting hazards
- Have trained personnel conduct inspections of the worksite and correct hazards
- Routinely conduct walkthroughs or safety and health audits
- Ensure that any changes in process or new high-hazard facilities are reviewed by a competent person

What are some recommendations to implement safety and health training at your business?

- Allow only properly authorized and instructed employees to do any job
- Ensure employees are performing job duties safely
- Hold emergency preparedness drills for employees
- Pay particular attention to employees learning new operations to make sure they have the proper job skills and awareness of hazards
- Train supervisors and managers to recognize hazards and understand their responsibilities
- Encourage all employees to report any hazardous conditions to their supervisors or team leaders

What Are My Legal Requirements for Reporting a Workplace Injury?

An employer must promptly report all work injuries that result in either an absence from work or require medical attention. Employers must educate employees to report all injuries. It is essential for

employees to understand how, when, and to whom they should report a workplace injury. An employer should also train one or more personnel to oversee workers' compensation and injury reporting to ensure timely, accurate and informed action with regard to an injury claim. Delayed reporting is a significant factor in claim disputes, litigation and unnecessary costs. "First Report of Injury" forms are available from the Workers' Compensation Division of the VT Dept. of Labor at: 802-828-2286 or on the web at: www.labor.vermont.gov under Forms & Publications.



Vermont Safety Resources:

Vermont Department of Labor (802-828-2288) www.labor.vermont.gov

Safety Training Information at: www.labor.vermont.gov under Workplace Safety

Mandatory Workplace Posters: www.labor.vermont.gov under Forms & Publications

E-mail List Serve for safety training notifications: www.labor.vermont.gov under Workplace Safety

Have an Occupational Safety and Health question? E-mail wpsafety@labor.state.vt.us

VOSHA

The VOSHA Compliance Assistance Specialist (CAS) will provide advice and assistance to businesses, particularly small business employers, local labor affiliates and other stakeholders to help achieve VOSHA's compliance assistance goals through effective outreach, training, education, and information sharing. The CAS will provide expert level advice and training on regulations and VOSHA programs.

Project WorkSAFE – Business Assistance

Project WorkSAFE is the Vermont Department of Labor's occupational safety and health consultation program. The program offers FREE on-site safety and health assistance to help Vermont employers recognize and correct safety and health problems in their workplaces. This includes training and interpretation of current and proposed VOSHA standards.

For more information please call 1-888-SAFE YES.

Partnership in Safety

Free safety and health half-day training seminars, held quarterly in Waterbury at the Green Mountain Coffee Roasters facility. These free seminars are a result of a partnership with the Vermont Small Business Development Center, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Foundation, and Project WorkSAFE. Training information located on the Vermont Department of Labor website at www.labor.vermont.gov.

Vermont Small Business Development Center

OSHA is working closely with the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Small Business Development Centers program to provide information on OSHA and its many programs available to small business owners. There is at least one center in every state—a total of 1,000 nationwide—that provides services to small businesses. The Vermont Small Business Development Center has regional business counselors and also offers regulatory assistance at: 1-800-464-7232 or on the web at: www.vtsbdc.org

The Vermont Department of Labor offers a wide range of services including: a statewide network of Resource Centers, information and assistance in job training and job searches for all Vermonters, administration of the state's unemployment insurance program, the state's workplace safety programs, the state's workers' compensation program and other public awareness programs. If you would like more information about one of these programs, or about the Vermont Department of Labor, please contact us at 802-828-4000 or visit us on the web at www.labor.vermont.gov