How much time and effort did you put into your business plan, mission statement, and financial strategy? Probably quite a bit. The same amount of care and concern should go into creating a solid safety program at your business. A safe workplace helps reduce accidents and improves employee satisfaction, which ultimately saves you money.

When it comes to developing a safety program, companies should include some key components, says Jill Hoffmann, senior loss control consultant at Hortica®. Let’s cover some of those components here.

**Management commitment and employee involvement**
Stressing safety at work starts at the top and involves every member of your company’s workforce. Develop a policy stating the importance of safety and health at your workplace, reinforcing management’s commitment to safety.

Distribute responsibility assignments regarding safety and health within the organization, detailing how managers, supervisors, and employees will be held accountable for enforcing and following safety rules.

Keeping safety at the forefront doesn’t end at implementation. Conduct an annual review of the program’s goals and objectives with management and employees.

**Worksite analysis**
Conduct regular site inspections at your business to identify and correct hazardous conditions. When hazards are identified, outline steps to have them addressed. When an accident or near-miss incident does take place, investigate to find the root cause. Then analyze trending claims to develop action plans.

Hoffmann recommends performing workplace inspections at least once a month. The inspections should include all areas of the facility and grounds, housekeeping, electricity, lighting, heating and ventilation, machinery, personnel, chemicals/pesticides, fire prevention, maintenance, PPE, transportation, first aid program, and evacuation plan. Try to alternate employees to assist with inspections, as they will provide a fresh perspective and help prevent hazards from being overlooked.

**Identifying hazards**
A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause harm or injury to an employee, customer, or visitor, or cause property damage, including:
- **Safety hazards**: Spills, inadequate machine guarding, electrical hazards, equipment/machinery safety and maintenance, etc.
- **Biological hazards**: Blood-borne pathogens, insect bites, mold, etc.
- **Physical/environmental hazards**: Heat/cold stress, noise exposure, sun exposure, etc.
- **Ergonomic hazards**: Repetitive motion, awkward movements/posture, frequent lifting, etc.
- **Chemical hazards**: Unlabeled chemical containers, chemical vapors, carbon monoxide, etc.
- **Workplace organizational hazards**: Sexual harassment, workplace violence, work demands, etc.

Ensure hazardous or potentially hazardous conditions are identified and corrected. Once hazards are identified, prioritize them and quickly address and correct situations that pose an immediate danger to life or health and/or pose a high risk of severe damage or loss to property.

**Safety and health training and education**
Educate employees on potential hazards to prevent injury and illness. Train supervisors and managers so their responsibilities are understood.

While there is no federal OSHA requirement regarding the frequency of general safety training, some topics do have an OSHA-specific timeframe for refresher training, such as fire extinguisher training and forklift operator training. Some state OSHA plans have more stringent requirements than the federal OSHA requirements. It’s important, however, to complete regular in-house safety training to maintain your safety culture and continue to improve on safety measures.

Follow the suggestions provided above, and remember the most important element—if you need help, ask a Hortica agent. For further information on how to protect your business, please see other materials in the Resources section of the Hortica website.