1. The twin goals of a union safety and health program are to improve working conditions and to build the union. They are equally important, in fact, you can’t do either one well unless you do both.

2. Management has different goals; even cooperative management. They may genuinely care about safety itself, but are probably more concerned about productivity, budgets, and workers compensation costs. Not to mention that building the union is never one of management’s goals!

3. What you do with management on safety and health is a form of collective bargaining. Even if you don’t see it that way, they do. Know your rights under PEF/NYS Contract Article 18 and the Taylor Law.

4. Strategy and organization are more important than technical information. Safety and Health isn’t a technical issue. Technical knowledge helps, but there are plenty of places to get technical information such as bringing in a PEF H&S Staff or consultant to address a specific item at your committee meeting.

5. Every division and worksite should have a safety and health committee. Article 18 provides for a joint committee to be established at the statewide, agency, and local levels.

6. Even if you have a joint committee, you still need a union committee. The union committee can be the union reps on the joint committee, or a larger group.

7. Be sure the committee meets at least quarterly, as required by Article 18. Most importantly, have the union committee meet separately prior to the joint committee meeting. You can’t present a united front to management if your own team hasn’t come to agreement on all issues. If there are multiple bargaining units at the site, then collaboration among the unions is critical.
8. The union members of the joint committee should meet by themselves as often, if not more, than they meet with management. You need separate meetings to set union priorities and plan strategy. Can you imagine what would happen if your bargaining committee met only with the State, and never by themselves, at contract time?

9. The union has the right to appoint their own representatives to the committee. You should never, ever, allow management to appoint your safety and health representatives, to veto the union’s choices, or dismiss your reps from their union positions. Never. Ever.

10. Union safety reps should think of themselves as organizers, promoting safety and health in a way that builds the loyalty and commitment of your membership. That means involving the membership whenever you can. And it means good communication with your membership, both written and by word of mouth.

11. “Behavior” contributes to some accidents, but hazards cause all of them. It is far easier to fix hazards than to change human nature.

12. Safety programs that focus on behavior tell our members that they are the problem. In fact, our members and their union are the solution.

13. The best way to identify hazards is for union safety and health reps to talk to workers about his or her job, and how to make it safer and easier. It is even better to enlist that member to push for improvements.

14. What is the best way to build the union through safety and health? See #13, above.

15. You are not alone. You have a lot of resources through PEF. Every agency has a statewide Health and Safety Chairperson, and PEF Health & Safety is available for help by phone, fax, e-mail or conventional mail.

This factsheet was modified from one developed by the USW International Health, Safety and Environment Department, www.usw.org.

Upon request, PEF Occupational Health & Safety Department will provide other factsheets, standards, regulations, and other resources. Contact us at healthandsafety@pef.org or 518-785-1900, ext. 254 or 1-800-342-4306, ext. 254.

Produced by the New York State Public Employees Federation

Wayne Spence
President

Kay Alison Wilkie
Secretary-Treasurer
TEN STEPS
TO CREATE A
HEALTH & SAFETY ACTION PLAN

There are as many different approaches to creating strategic action plans as there are health and safety issues to plan for. This factsheet offers information to assist in developing workplace safety and health action plans. Ten essential elements included in a successful plan are:

1. Choose an Issue

Choose an issue. Decide what health and safety problems or issues you and your members want addressed. Use the “Checklist for Choosing an Issue” factsheet to help identify and select an issue.

2. Gather Information

Collect relevant information. Decide what information you need concerning the problems or issues you want to address. Use the “Gathering Information” factsheet for suggested resources.

3. Determine the Solution

Choose a strategy to implement. Decide what solution you want to achieve. This is the overall goal or objective that you are seeking to accomplish.

List your short-term goals or objectives that you could seek along the way to winning your overall goal.

4. Make Sure You Have SMART Goals

Evaluate your objectives to make sure they are SMART:

- Specific: specify a key result to be accomplished
- Measurable: so you can know whether or not you have succeeded
- Assignable: specify who will do what
- Realistic: but still represents a change and a challenge
- Timely: specify any deadlines or amount of time needed to complete

5. Establish an Action Plan

Plot a roadmap for achieving your long-term goal. Don’t forget to include a specific plan on achieving any short-term goals or objectives along the way.

Elements of an action plan include:

- What – List all the different things that need to be done (e.g. gather information, communicate with/involve etc.).
When – Develop a timetable with specific dates for achieving each task, and for the action plan as a whole. Make sure your timetables are reasonable!

Who – Assign someone to be responsible for each particular task, including keeping a record of activities and reporting back on progress. Remember to involve rank-and-file members whenever and wherever possible.

How – Identify resources that might be needed, and from whom or where resources could be obtained (resources include money, time, people materials, and etc.)

6. Identify Obstacles

Identify potential obstacles, and develop a specific action plan for preventing them. Also prepare for overcoming obstacles that cannot be prevented.

7. Identify Allies

Identify potential allies and develop a specific action plan for contacting and involving them. These allies could include AFL-CIO Area Labor Federations, Labor Councils, other unions or community groups.

8. Communicate with the Members!

Communicate with the members throughout the entire crisis/investigation. Let them know what the Union is doing. Broadcast victories along the way, and get feedback on any obstacles.

9. Meet, Review & Modify

Meet regularly to review progress and modify plans as needed. Members should be prepared to report on the status of each task.

10. Evaluate the Plan

At the end of the allotted time for your strategic plan, evaluate successes, strengths and weaknesses of the plan. Establish a system for long term follow-up to prevent future incidents. Incorporate what was learned into future strategic planning activities.

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Funded in part by a NYS Department of Labor Hazard Abatement Board Occupational Health Training and Education Grant

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A good issue is one that matches most of these criteria. Using the checklist below, rate your issue on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the least and 5 the strongest) to compare issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WILL THE ISSUE</th>
<th>ISSUE 1</th>
<th>ISSUE 2</th>
<th>ISSUE 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Result in a Real Improvement in People's Work Situation</td>
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<td>2. Give Workers a Sense of Their Own Power</td>
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<td>3. Inspire the Members</td>
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<td>4. Be Worth the Effort</td>
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<td>5. Build the Union</td>
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<td>6. Be Widely Felt</td>
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<td>7. Be Deeply Felt</td>
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<td>8. Be Easy to Understand</td>
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<td>9. Send a Message to Management</td>
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<td>10. Have a Clear Time Frame that Works for You</td>
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<td>11. Be Non-Divisive</td>
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<td>12. Build Leadership</td>
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<td>13. Set the Stage for the Next Campaign</td>
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<td>14. Win Community Support</td>
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<td>15. Build Labor Solidarity</td>
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<td>16. Be Consistent with Your Values and Vision</td>
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Adapted From: Organizing for Social Change by NP, 7st Academy