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Are Safety Programs Essential? You bet.

“Where are your safety glasses? I heard there might be an inspection today.” Have you heard or spoken these words to an employee lately? How about using machinery properly. Are you and/or your employees following proper protocol for machinery usage? There are countless stories of employees being injured (at times fatally) when a machine is rigged for better performance (by the workers’ or organization’s standards-not the manufacturer’s standards). Maybe you have witnessed a co-worker climb upon a chair or table to reach something - instead of using a ladder. Or maybe you have even watched or participated in dangerous horseplay during company time. Though some of the above examples may not seem extreme, all the above actions could be warning signs that your safety program might not be effective.

In the state of Indiana, the manufacturing industry accounts for the largest number of non-fatal injuries, including 110 amputations in 2009, according to [INdiana Labor Insider](#), a bi-monthly publication by the [Indiana Department of Labor](#) (IDOL). They also report that an effective workplace safety program does not just avoid violations and fines; it provides protection, creates a culture and builds a reputation. So can safety programs and education help to reduce these tragic incidents? **Only if they are effective.**

What does an effective safety program (one that provides protection, creates a culture and builds a reputation) look like? According to OSHA’s Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP), an exemplary safety program may display the following:

- Protect workers from all safety and health hazards that may exist at the workplace
- Work with OSHA to identify and implement best practices to protect workers
- Help develop an innovative safety and health management system that protect your workers
- Create a better working environment free of safety and health hazards
- Boost worker morale by involving workers in creating a culture that emphasizes a safe and healthful workplace
- Improve communication among workers and management
- Encourage safety in the community as workers may transfer safe and healthy work practices outside of the workplace
- Become a leader in your industry by providing a safe and healthy workplace for workers
- Attracts skillful workers looking to join a business that is at the forefront of its industry in providing a safe and healthy workplace for its workers

[Source: OSHA’s Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program \(SHARP\).](#)

The above may feel overwhelming, but the bottom line is - **no one wants to experience or witness a work place injury**. A safety program may not only decrease the occurrences of injuries, but can also bring other benefits to an organization. Employers who establish a safety program often receive lower work comp insurance premiums, improved worker retention and reduced amounts of lost workdays from injuries. All of which (according to OSHA) add revenue by reducing costs. Besides monetary benefits, employers can enjoy fulfilling a moral obligation, which is to provide employees with a safe and healthy workplace. As Lectric Law Library (voted best legal resource on the web by CNN) points out, this can remove the guilt often plaguing management after a devastating work injury. And, with [INReview's](#) most recent report showing that **94,800 non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses were reported in 2009**, it is apparent that safety programs are needed to protect workers.

In the end, employers choosing to implement safety programs, or modify a current plan can bring a wealth of rewards to employees and the community. No operation can run smoothly if safety obligations are not met. There are numerous federal, state and local laws that must be followed. Indiana organizations needing to learn more about Indiana safety requirements can access the [Indiana OSHA \(IOSHA\)](#) web page for full detail and resources.

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