



Agreement on minimum requirements for Plant level Joint H&S Committees

1. Principles

- This agreement cannot replace any national legislation and/or local, national, regional or company level agreements if these are more favourable.
- Where already legal or contractual obligations exist, it belongs to the local social partners to decide where these are exceeding this agreement, where they are complimentary or where they should be adapted. The H&S committees can in no way replace existing legal or contractual H&S committees, but these can adopt points from this agreement where it exceeds what already exists.
- This agreement recognises the key role that trade unions can play in addressing health and safety issues and encourages union management partnerships to improve standards and participation in order to raise health and safety standards.
- People are the most important element in the success of any health and safety programme.
- While line management is ultimately accountable for providing a safe workplace, the communication between workers and management, active involvement of every employee and training are essential elements for achieving zero injuries.
- A safe and healthy working environment in the interest of both workers and management.
- Workers and management are in the best position to identify safety and health problems and develop solutions relatively quickly.
- We are committed to the health and safety of all employees, both on and off the job.
- All injuries, including occupational illnesses are preventable.
- We all have a key role to play in preventing injuries and illnesses.

2. Objective

To set a minimum requirement to all AM Plants on how to establish joint Management and Worker Health and Safety Committees at Plant level.

To facilitate the active involvement of workers as well as management in improving occupational safety and health at the workplace.

To promote the idea of real social dialogue between local management and the workers' representatives/trade unions on the prevention of safety risks and the protection of the workforce

3. Worker Rights and Responsibilities.

Workers have the right to bring concerns and complaints to the committee representatives without fear of reprisal, and to refuse work they believe is unduly hazardous until the hazard stops.

Workers have the responsibility to follow all safety rules and regulations.

Workers have the responsibility to report any unsafe act or situation to management or their H&S committee member without delay.

4. Purpose of Health & Safety committees

The main purpose having a Health & Safety (H&S) committee in a plant is to increase workers involvement in improving their working environment, to engage the management to take action on critical issues and in this way reduce the number of accidents and incidents.

H&S committees are widely recognised as being a valuable part of a company's safety organisation for securing active employee participation in accident prevention. The objective of an H&S committee should be:

- To bring management and workers together to review and take action on safety and health problems in the workplace
 - To ensure that workers are aware of the agreed safety and health policy
 - To train employees and to stimulate their interest in health and safety
 - To establish a means of communication so that workers can bring to light potential safety and health hazards or make suggestions for appropriate measures.
- In brief, the plant joint H&S committee should contribute to mutual understanding and good teamwork between management and employees to improve health and safety.
- Develop an efficient prevention policy with the intention to avoid accidents.

To pool health and safety knowledge and expertise available in the company and, in particular, trade unions and management.

5. Grievance procedure.

In the absence of an already existing Grievance procedure safety complaints should first be raised with local management or committee members. If no action is taken senior management should be informed, if still no action is taking then Committee Members or Representatives can seek to involve the Joint Global Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

6. Composition

The H&S committee shall include workers representatives as well as management, with at least 50% participation of workers. It shall have regularly scheduled meetings once every month. The results of the meetings shall be documented and made available for all employees.

Please note that local legislation might include additional requirements, which also need to be complied with. The worker representatives should be selected from the workforce by election or appointed by trade unions.

7. Tasks of an H&S committee

The Joint H&S Committee should, as a minimum:

- Follow up accident & incident reporting and ensure measures are taken to prevent recurrence
- Perform regular inspections of the work environment - at least once per month
- Identify the need for training of workers
- Ensure that the AM Standards on Health and Safety in the workplace are available to workers
- Be aware of trends in the wider company and industry.

8. Committee meetings

The committee should meet regularly, at least once a month, although provisions should be made for emergency meetings to deal with urgent matters. Management should provide suitable facilities for the meetings. Meetings should take place within normal working hours, and members can attend as part of their normal job. In addition members of the committee should be free to investigate complaints and potential hazards in a reasonable manner - the time used will be considered as normal part of their job.

An agenda should be prepared by the chairman and co-vice-chairman well in advance, be submitted to each individual member of the committee, and be posted on notice boards throughout the company for information.

Agenda items should include but should not be limited to:

- Follow-up on the decisions previously made and still outstanding.
- Discussion about any accidents or near-misses that have taken place since the previous meeting
- Discussion of the findings of the monthly joint inspection of aspects of the company's operations.

Additionally, all employees should be afforded the opportunity to have items placed on the agenda via a suggestion box, which would be sorted and reviewed by the chairman and vice-chairman prior to the preparation of every agenda.

9. Implementation time and approval criteria

All plants are expected to set up Joint H&S committees with immediate effect. Compliance will be monitored by the Joint Global Health and Safety Committee.

10. Duration of this agreement

This agreement will be valid for a period of 4 (four) years from date of signing. It shall be tacitly renewed for periods of 4 (four) years, unless terminated by one of the signatories by notification of the others, by registered letter, at least 6 (six) months before the end of the four year period. Throughout its duration this agreement may be revised by the Joint Global H&S Committee by means of addenda to adapt it, particularly if the perimeter of the group changes.

11. Further guidance

The attached annexure contains guidelines on the establishment of a Joint Health and Safety Committee.

12. Implementation of the agreement

The actual implementation of the agreement on health and safety committees has to be reached between the management and employee representatives/trade unions at site level, and should be done following local and/or national traditions and legislation.

Within this framework, once the agreement is signed, it is agreed that the commitments herein shall be implemented as follows;

- Each site will, where they do not exist, set up a Joint H&S committee as soon as practically possible
- Where H&S committees exist, they will investigate the elements of this agreement and the annexure and evaluate where, if any, they have to adapt their working method and/or structures to meet the requirements in this agreement.
- Each site will make an evaluation of this comparison and report to the Joint Global H&S Committee on what actions, if any, were undertaken
- Where adjustments are required an action plan to implement those will be developed.

13. General

The signatories agree that in case of any dispute in interpretation of this agreement the English text will be valid.

Signed on this day 3 June 2008 in London, Luxembourg, Pittsburgh USA and Washington DC

For and on behalf of ArcelorMittal

LN Mittal

For and on behalf of International Metalworkers Federation

M Mallentacchi

For and on behalf of European Metalworkers Federation

B Samyn

For and on behalf of United Steelworkers Union

L Girrard

Further guidance regarding Joint Health & Safety Committees

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide further guidance for the implementation of a Joint Health & Safety committee to plant management in all plants of the ArcelorMittal group. The content of this document is of general character, and should be used as a guideline.

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1. Legislated versus voluntary H&S committees

The establishment of a workplace joint H&S committee might be prompted by a legal requirement (eg South Africa) or voluntarily, by management and the interest of workers representatives and trade unions. Those waiting for national legislation to require companies to establish joint H&S committees will find that it is a general trend that all modern laws include such a requirement. The fact that it is very common in a number of countries to find joint H&S committees at some - primarily major - workplaces can be credited to active trade unions and employers with an understanding of the inter relationship between good working conditions, worker participation and motivation, and increased productivity and quality.

The importance, however, of the establishment of workplace joint H&S committees cannot be underestimated. It gives official recognition to the committees and provides the general framework for their functions - in other words, establish the basic requirements. It would then be left to the initiative of trade unions representatives and management of the Unit - and ultimately the individual workplaces - to develop the concept to tailor it to their needs.

Seen from an organisational perspective it is noted that committees established as a response to a legal requirement are formed through a top-down approach while committees established voluntarily are a result of a bottom-up approach. The ideal situation is one where the two approaches are used to complement each other.

2. Terms of Reference

When management and workers at a workplace establish a joint H&S committee - with or without the support of a provision in the national legislation - an agreement, at least reflecting the minimum requirements as set out above, must be developed and signed by the involved parties. Where the workers are represented by one or more trade unions, the union(s) should also be signatory (-ries) to the agreement.

This agreement should describe the rules and regulations of the committee and determine what roles and functions should be undertaken by the committee and by the individual members.

3. Size and structure of the joint H&S committee

Once it has been decided to establish a joint H&S committee at the workplace the question of the size of this committee arises. Some guidance can normally be found in the legislation even though one would most often find quite vague formulations, such as "appropriate size" or "reasonable size". A frequent formulation is the following: "A committee shall consist of, a) at least four persons, for a workplace where fewer than fifty persons are regularly employed; or b) at least six persons or such greater number of people as may be prescribed, for a workplace where fifty or more persons are regularly employed."

Some pieces of legislation state that the committee should "... be consulted on any occupational safety and health matter with relation to the workplace...". This sentence indicates the very important point that all departments or sections of a workplace should be represented in order for the committee to live up to the intention behind this formulation.

It seems difficult to establish firm guidelines regarding the recommended size of the committee. The important point - as illustrated above - is to ensure that all sections and/or production lines and/or departments and/or locations are represented. It is also important to include representatives from different shifts and to ensure that at least one or more safety representatives is present at all times.

In larger workplaces, with several business places and/or with very independent sections, it may be feasible to establish a system with sub-committees. The Corporate Health and Safety function should be consulted on guidelines on the composition of H&S committees in small, medium and large plants as well as other sites in ArcelorMittal.

The number of committee members will depend on the size of the workplace. But there should never be fewer than two worker representatives. The term of office should be long enough for members to gain some experience in health and safety while allowing other workers an opportunity to learn how the committee functions. A good practice might be to arrange rotating terms of office, so that a committee would never be completely made up of inexperienced members.

4. Composition of the joint H&S committee

The committee should have representation from the various levels of the organisation, i.e. workers, supervisors, middle management and top management. At the same time representation of all sections or departments would be desirable.

Management should appoint staff members with direct responsibility for departmental operations, making sure that all levels of management (foremen, supervisors, etc.) are represented in the committee. Such diversity in the representation of management would guarantee the presence in the committee of the necessary knowledge and expertise to provide accurate information to the committee on company policy, production needs, and on technical matters in relation to premises, processes, plant, machinery and equipment. Special attention should be given to the fact that the level of management commitment to safety and health issues is reflected in the level of managers appointed to the committee.

Worker representatives should be elected by their fellow workers or appointed by the trade unions but not selected or appointed by management. The company should provide the practical arrangement for the first election after the establishment of the committee. If the workplace is unionised / where trade unions are present it would be natural to involve the respective trade union(s) in this process. The committee itself should arrange the following elections.

Unless stated otherwise in the legal framework it is recommended that, all members of the committee should serve in terms of duration of four years. Re-appointment of management representatives and re-election of worker representatives is possible. Good practise will be to elect alternates who will complete the rest of a committee member's term in case of him/her being unable to fulfil the term by reason of:

- No longer being in the employ of the company.
- Being promoted to Management
- Personal reasons
- No longer a member of the union who elected or appointed him/her

The membership of the joint H&S committee should be regarded as a part of the individual's normal function in the company. Thus, members should not suffer any loss of pay because of attendance of meetings or at agreed activities related to safety and health, as outlined below.

Where a medical practitioner, occupational health nurse and workplace safety officer are employed, they should serve on the committee as observers. The medical doctor most frequently used by the company may attend meetings from time to time, or only parts thereof, to give advice on specific problems or to answer the committee's questions. A similar arrangement may be feasible where a plant is a member of a group medical service or occupational health service. In all cases country legislation on the protection of personal information must be adhered to at all times. Doctor/patient confidentiality must be respected at all times.

5. Chairmanship etc. of the committee

The most senior management representative should chair the committee and the worker representatives elect amongst themselves the vice-chairman.

The role of the chairman is to ensure full participation of all members to the meeting and to strive for consensus on matters discussed.

6. Committee meetings

The committee should meet regularly, at least once a month, although provisions should be made for emergency meetings to deal with urgent matters. Management should provide suitable facilities for the meetings. Meetings should take place within normal working hours, and members should - as indicated above - be allowed time off with normal pay to attend.

An agenda should be prepared by the chairman and vice-chairman well in advance, be submitted to each individual member of the committee, and be posted on notice boards throughout the company for information. Agenda items should include:

- Follow-up on the decisions previously made and still outstanding. Another standing item should be a discussion about any accidents or near-misses that have taken place since the previous meeting.
- Discussion of the findings of the monthly joint inspection of aspects of the company's operations.

Additionally, all employees should be afforded the opportunity to have items placed on the agenda via a suggestion box which would be sorted and reviewed by the chairman and vice-chairman prior to the preparation of every agenda.

The meetings should - like most other meetings - be kept within the agreed time-frame and should take place in an informal atmosphere. Members should be encouraged to state their views without fear of reprisals. Care should be taken that the meetings of the committee do not degenerate into a "talk-shop"; neither should it become a forum for airing general grievances on matters unrelated to safety and health such as wages, promotion, vacation, personalities, etc. Members of the committee should always remember that the committee is not a forum for bargaining: the health, safety and lives of fellow workers are not negotiable.

Minutes from committee meetings should always be taken. It is not too important who takes the minutes as they - according to the model described here - are subjected to approval by representatives from both the company and the workers in the form of the Chairman and the co-vice-chairman. In line with the concept of the committee, the minutes themselves do not have to be lengthy and rather than concentrating on who stated what, they should reflect:

- a) what was the issue;
- b) what action was recommended;
- c) who is recommended to be responsible for the implementation of the action;
- d) what is the recommended time-frame for the implementation.
- e) any budgetary implications

The minutes should be read and approved by the members of the committee before the meeting is closed. The minutes are brought to the next meeting in a written format for approval by the committee, after which it must be signed by the Chairman and Vice chairman.

7. Tasks to be undertaken by the joint H&S committee

Committees in several countries in the world are given extensive authority by national legislation, e.g. to control investments in occupational safety and health measures, to stop production in specified situations, to implement training and education programmes without further approval, etc. Many committees are responsible for their own budget - an element which adds significantly to the effectiveness and implementation powers of the committee. All matters within or about the company related to occupational safety and health are issues that should be dealt with by the committee. It is recommended that the joint H&S Committee adopt procedures on the working methods of the committee.

The first task for a newly established committee would be to develop an education programme for itself - which includes training expertise provided by trade unions and management.

Further tasks may be defined in national legislation but this would never be an exhaustive listing. Neither is the following listing of tasks that should be undertaken by the committee; - it is intended to serve as inspiration and further development. The tasks mentioned hereunder are not in any order of priority.

a) Develop both a long-term and a short-term plan of action

This is necessary to ensure maximum effect of any investment in improved working conditions as unlimited resources is not normally available in the real life scenario. The plans should constantly be updated and should include recommendations to the management and the workers on the establishment, maintenance and monitoring of programmes, measures and procedures to ensure and enhance the safety and health of workers.

b) Personal protective equipment

Based on a thorough assessment of all work processes and all jobs, including information provided by suppliers of chemicals, machinery, tools, etc., the committee should develop guidelines on the use of personal protective equipment. The guidelines should include recommended type(s) and how frequently they should be replaced.

c) Reporting, recording and investigation of accidents and near-misses

The committee should develop practices for the reporting, investigation and recording of accidents. All reports should be placed on the agenda of the following meeting of the committee. The committee should develop practices regarding the investigation of accidents. To this end, the committee may wish to appoint, for instance, two members who should investigate all accidents immediately after occurrence. The recording of all accidents and incidents is important to the development of accident prevention programmes. All significant incidents, including fatalities must be conveyed to the committee without delay.

d) Inspections, audits and Job Safety Analysis

The committee, or the committee members appointed to perform the task, should carry out regular safety inspections at the workplace. Each work area should be visited at least once a month. Over time, these inspections should cover all shifts. The reports of the inspections provide valuable basic information on the practical situation and additionally serve to identify situations that may be sources of danger or hazard to the workers, and should be placed on the agenda of the following meeting of the committee. In addition, the committee should perform a comprehensive, in-depth audit of the overall workplace safety program at least once a year. This audit should be linked to a program of job safety analysis, focusing on the hazards, processes, procedures, equipment and protective devices applicable to every job or task. Special attention should be given to the risks associated with abnormal situations, such as equipment failures and process upsets. To be effective, job safety analysis should involve workers actually assigned to that job. This program of inspections, audits and job safety analysis will also:

- reinforce the link between the committee and the shop-floor workers,
- stimulate interest in the committee's activities,
- emphasise the part played by the workers themselves in the company's safety and health programmes and;
- help to increase the prestige of committee membership.
- Encourage trade unions to play a more active role

e) Training and education programmes

The committee should develop training and education programmes on occupational safety and health for the entire organisation. Such programmes should ensure that workers are aware of all relevant information, e.g. material safety data sheets, operation manuals, emergency procedures, proper use of collective prevention measures and of personal protective equipment.

f) Introduction of new employees

The committee should develop occupational safety and health introduction programmes for new employees. These programmes should, inter alia, ensure that no new colleague commence working before she or he is made aware of the company safety policy and practices, the rules and regulations, potential hazards in the workplace, the use of personal protective equipment.

g) Information gathering

First of all, the committee should obtain copies of national legislation, regulations and recommendations regarding occupational safety and health. This information can normally be obtained from the employer, the trade union or the labour department.

h) New Technology and the Management of Change.

The company should not make significant change to technology, including equipment, materials, processes or procedures, unless the safety of the change has been thoroughly evaluated by competent engineers, and discussed by the committee.

The committee should also obtain information from the employer concerning:

- the identification of potential or existing hazards of materials, processes or equipment;
- safety and health experience and work practices and standards in similar or other industries of which the employer has knowledge; and
- the conducting or taking of tests of any equipment, machine, device, article, material, chemical, physical agent or biological agent in or about a workplace for the purpose of occupational safety and health.

Furthermore, the committee should be consulted about, and have designated representatives present at the beginning of testing referred to earlier, conducted in or about the workplace if the designated representatives believe their presence is required to ensure that valid testing procedures are used or to ensure that the test results are valid.

The committee should have the right - by agreement - to seek advice from external experts and to report matters to the authorities. The committee should develop and maintain a register of chemicals and chemical products in the workplace.

i) Respond to problems and improvement ideas raised by employees

The committee should respond quickly to any problems brought to the attention of any member of the committee. Workers should be allowed - e.g. via the use of the suggestion box - to raise matters anonymously, as well as through their health and safety representatives. No employee should be penalised or victimised in any way for raising a safety concern of any nature.

j) Develop safety manuals

The committee should ensure that safety manuals or checklists are developed covering specific parts of, or specialised environments in the company. It is recommended that rather than developing one company safety manual which may tend to be quite voluminous, it may choose to develop safety manuals for each operational area of the company, e.g. the laboratory, the mechanical workshop, the cafeteria, the office, etc. Apart from being more user-friendly in size, such manuals would also be concise and specific.

k) First aid

The committee should establish systems to ensure that first aid kits are conveniently located in the various departments of the company and that they are adequately stocked and maintained. First aiders should be trained. The committee should ensure that emergency response structures are in place and adequately tested.

l) The workplace and the surrounding environment

All workplaces exist and function as a part of a community and many of the pollutants and hazards, originally identified as occupational hazards, have an effect far beyond the workplace. The rising number of major industrial accidents, and their local and global impact, provides dramatic evidence that what happens within the plant deeply affects the safety, health and welfare of the local population and general environment.

In addition to the highly publicised catastrophes, there is an even bigger environmental problem, which might be called the silent disaster in which everyday leaks, spillages and “normal emissions” find their way into the environment with considerably greater collective impact than any of the single event disasters. In fact the quiet and often unseen daily accumulation of pollutants from leaks, spills and normal operation procedures have much more severe impact on the environment than any single disaster that may hit the headlines.

The workplace committee should, on the basis of a thorough investigation of the actual situation, discuss to what extent the workplace can minimise its negative environmental impact on the surrounding environment. The committee might also want to suggest policies and practice regarding the disposal of solid waste, effluent or aerial emissions. Furthermore, the committee might want to establish systems to deal with a potential uncontrolled emission, i.e. emergency procedures, early warning systems, community information, evacuation plans, etc.

Where the committee deems it necessary the services of experts may be commissioned.

8. Company Safety Policy

The company's safety policy can be considered the constitution of the joint H&S committee. Consequently, once established according to an agreement, one of the first tasks for the joint H&S committee is to develop a Company Safety Policy if not already in existence. The Company Safety Policy - and along with it, all practices - should be in accordance with national legislation, recognised practices, international standards and collective agreements, and as a minimum, should live up to the provisions stated in those instruments.

Furthermore, the Policy should reflect the specifics of Company history and tradition, specific Company issues and interests and - very importantly - the company-trade union relationship both in its written (e.g. in collective agreements) and its verbal form. Once consensus is reached in the committee on a draft policy it should be forwarded to the President and/or the Managing Director for endorsement before it is finally adopted by the committee itself. The document is a very important one as it states the level of commitment to safety and health on the side of the company and - along with the agreement on the role and functions of the joint H&S committee - is the working basis for the committee.

Introductory Statement

The written policy statement generally starts with a clear, simple expression of the company's concern for and attitude about employee safety and health. Examples of introductions to policy statements include:

- Accident prevention is a primary job for management, and management is responsible for establishing safe and healthy working conditions.
- We will always place a high priority on safe operations and the safety of employees.
- People are our most important resource and their safety is one of our principal responsibilities.
- The company will, at all times, and at every level of management, attempt to provide and maintain a safe working environment for all employees. All safety programmes shall have the objective of preventing accidents.
- This company considers no phase of operation or administration more important than safety and health. We will provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, and establish and insist on safe work methods and practices at all times.
- The company has to check scrupulously that also subcontractors respect all existing health and safety regulations.

Goal/purpose

An effective safety and health programme will have a stated purpose or a set of goals. These goals are included in the written policy statement so that both management and workers are reminded of the purpose and value of the safety and health programme. Incorporated into the policy could be such statements as:

- The company has established our safety and health programme to eliminate work injuries to its employees. The company expects the programme to improve operations and reduce personal losses.
- Safety shall be an integral part of all operations, including planning, development, production, administration, sales, and transportation.
- We want to make our safety efforts so successful that we make elimination of accidents and injuries not just a goal, but a way of life.
- We aim to resolve safety and health problems through prevention.
- It is the goal of the company to involve both management and employees in safety planning, development and implementation.

Objectives

Also included in the policy statement can be positive steps that should be taken to implement the company's safety and health programme. Further details of this programme should be included in the action plan which would be developed by the committee once the policy is endorsed and adopted. Objectives to be considered might include:

- Working consistently to:
 - maintain and promote a safe and healthy working conditions;
 - adhere to proper operating practices and procedures designed to prevent injury and illness;
 - observe national and company safety and health regulations.

- Ensuring that no employee is assigned to a job without necessary training - both in the job tasks themselves and in safety and health.
- Establishing and requiring a safety and health programme that emphasises the integration of safety and health measures into each job task so that safety and health and job performance become inseparable.
- Requiring safety orientation for new and transferred employees, timely and appropriate training, a well-functioning joint H&S committee, a self-inspection programme, proper mechanical guards (adherence to national as well as international safety standards), and a personal protective equipment programme. - Providing safety and fire inspection to identify potential hazards of operation, then developing necessary protective measures.
- Establishing registration of accidents and near-misses and maintain good practices of record-keeping.
- Conducting accident investigation to determine the cause of accidents and the action required to prevent recurrences.
- Developing safety and health publicity and promotion to maintain interest and participation, both on and off the job.

Responsibilities

The company safety and health action plan will describe in detail the specific assignment of responsibilities, duties, and delegation of authority. The policy statement may summarise these responsibilities e.g.:

- The joint H&S committee is responsible for developing an effective safety and health programme to be endorsed by management.
- The supervisors in cooperation with relevant members of the committee are responsible for maintaining safe and healthy working conditions and practices in the areas under their jurisdiction.
- Department heads and supervisors in cooperation with relevant members of the committee are responsible for preventing accidents in their departments.
- Supervisors will be accountable for the safety and health of all employees working under their supervision.
- Each level of management must reflect an interest in company safety and health objectives and set a good example by complying with company safety and health rules. Management interest must be vocal, visible and continuous, from top management to departmental supervisors and foremen.
- Management representatives who have been assigned safety and health responsibilities will be held accountable for meeting those responsibilities.

Employee Participation

- Companies should acknowledge the vital role of their employees in the operation of a successful safety and health programme by summarising their roles and contributions in the policy statement. The following are some examples.
- All employees, including management, are expected to follow safe working practices, obey rules and regulations, and to work in a way that maintains the high safety standards developed and sanctioned by the joint H&S committee and endorsed by the company.
- All employees are expected to give full support to safety and health programmes and activities.

- Every employee must observe established safety and health regulations and practices, including the use of personal protective equipment.
- All employees are expected to take an active interest and participate in the safety and health programme, and abide by the rules and regulations of this company.
- All employees have the right to training and information regarding any occupational hazards and the measures in place to prevent them.
- All employees should report unsafe conditions to their immediate supervisor.
- All employees should record accidents and near misses in the accident book
- All employees that raise serious safety concerns will be protected from losing their jobs or being victimised.

9. Evaluation of the functioning of the committee

A natural part of the work of a joint H&S committee is, from time to time, to assess its own effectiveness and ability to perform the duties assigned to it. Getting feedback from other employees will assist the committee to improve its activities and methods of functioning. The committee can obtain this feedback in a number of ways, e.g. through group discussions in a training course, by written evaluation, informal conversation, etc.

Issues of interest in the assessment would include, but not be limited to:

Level of management support

Without the support of top management, it is difficult for the committee to make effective and positive changes in the workplace. Management should provide information when it is requested, and - even more important - when it is required but not explicitly requested by the committee. Meeting facilities and educational leave for committee members should be provided. Management must respond in a timely and appropriate manner to suggestions forwarded to them.

Responding to problems

It is important for the committee to respond and resolve problems in a timely manner. Does the committee prioritise the problems and respond to them quickly?

Employee confidence in the committee

(a) It is critically important that workers on the shop floor level have confidence in the committee and believe that it is useful and effective in responding to their needs. It is up to the committee to build and maintain this confidence. What do the workers know about the issues dealt with by the committee?

(b) The records of the committee's activities should be available to workers. These records should include minutes of the committee meetings, its recommendations, actions the committee has taken and reasons why the actions were not taken or recommendations were not implemented.

The evaluation exercise should also include an internal discussion on what has been achieved, what have been the successes and failures and how to proceed.

It is suggested that an evaluation, as described above, is done once a year, possibly as a part of the programme for the annual retreat. After the evaluation process, the committee may find it useful to produce a small report containing the conclusions and make the report available for the workplace generally.