

Construction
OS&H

Workers'
perspectives

Getting
Management to
Make
Improvements
Part 1



The three sections of the workers' perspectives

The Trade Union Approach to Health and Safety
Organising for a Healthy and Safe Workplace
Getting Management to Make Improvements

Reminder of the aims

1. Identify the main health and safety problems in our workplaces
2. Develop a Trade Union approach to occupational safety and health
3. Investigate hazards at work
4. Build workers' involvement, awareness, and support on occupational safety and health
5. Develop Trade Union organisation to ensure that employers eliminate or control risks
6. Develop confidence, knowledge and skills

Which will:

- Lead to practical action in the workplace
- Improve health and safety conditions for workers

Union Health and Safety Representatives' Role

As we have already seen, the most important job of the health and safety representative is to take up workplace health, safety and welfare problems, on behalf of the workers and Union members.

Each problem that the safety representative tackles will be different. However, the method of approach will be similar.

Taking up OS&H problems

AIMS:

Identify key steps to take when taking up problems on safety

Develop a systematic approach

TASK:

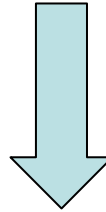
In your small group discuss a health and safety problem

Make a checklist of all the steps that you would take to try to resolve the problem

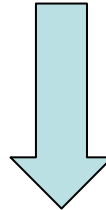
Taking up OS&H problems

Use the approach of

Problem



Information



Plan

Problem: What are the Facts?

Talk to people, check the workplace, equipment and the systems of working for the presence of risk factors.

Find out as much as you can:

Talk to workers to find out if anyone else has a similar problem

Obtain information from management. Does the employer recognise the problem? If so, have they done enough? If not, what will happen when the Union raises it?

Obtain information from maintenance workers and maintenance records

Use information from suppliers

Study accident records

Use official information and legal standards

Problem: What are the causes?

Management often put problems down to workers' carelessness & apathy

The real problem may be:

- Defective equipment
- Poor systems of work
- Inadequate training
- Poor supervision
- The employer wanting the job done quickly, irrespective of OS&H

Problem: What are the causes?

One-off or broader problems?

Does the problem raise broader issues?

For example:

- Is just one vehicle faulty, or is the whole system of maintenance inadequate?
- Is a single chemical a problem, or do we need to look at the whole procedure for introducing new chemicals, getting information, training, storage and use?

Investigation

The safety representative must look in detail at a whole range of matters.

The different ways of investigating include asking:

- What do workers and Trade Union members want? They may have ideas about what should be done and their support will be vital if management does not respond
- What does my Union say? Unions have developed policies on safety issues. Check what your Union's policies say
- What does the employer's safety policy say? It may say, for example, that vehicles should be maintained on a regular basis, and should not be used if they are not roadworthy
- What does the agreement (CBA) say? There may be agreements about safe working practices; management responsibilities; procedures for handling safety problems. Union representatives should ensure that management stick to agreements
- What does the law say? There are National laws, ILO Conventions and Standards laid down for safe working. Check what they say

Plan

Before you raise an issue with management:

You must work out what the workers and members want, and try to pursue those objectives with the broadest support possible.

This will depend upon:

What results you want to achieve

Trade Union strength

Take stock

From the information that you have gathered draw conclusions about:

The degree of risk

The location of risk

What has been done so far?

Deciding on action

What needs to be done next?

- Check on what is already being done
- Raise the issue with the employer
- Meet a more senior manager, if the initial response is not favourable
- Put the matter in writing
- Use the grievance procedure if necessary
- Make sure that agreed improvements are made
- Keep workers and Union members informed of progress on the problem, win their support, and use it to put pressure on the employer
- Keep other Union officials informed and involved

Negotiating in a safety committee

AIMS:

Practise negotiating skills

Use a safety committee productively

TASK:

The main group will be divided into two ‘Role-play Safety Committees’ comprising management and Union reps

The Union side will decide on priority risks they would like to discuss with management

When they have notified management, adequate time will be given for both sides to prepare, and then a negotiation will take place

The Chairperson from each Union side, will report back to the other half of the group after the negotiation