

# Reed College Safety Committee Handbook

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## Table of Contents

<b>1.0 Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 School policy	3
<b>2.0 Roles and Responsibilities of Positions</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Management	3
2.2 Supervisors	3
2.3 Safety Committee	3
2.4 Employees/Student Workers	4
<b>3.0 How to be an effective Safety Committee member</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Why should I serve on the committee?	4
3.2 What training do I need?	4
3.3 Where can I find out more about workplace health and safety?	5
3.4 What is the time commitment?	5
3.5 What are OR-OSHA's Safety Committee rules?	5
3.6 What makes an effective Safety Committee member?	5
<b>4.0 Guidelines to help you conduct committee business</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Identify and Assess Workplace Hazards	7
4.2 Understanding Types of Hazards	9
4.3 Determine the cause(s) of an accident or incident.	10
4.4 Document hazards at the Safety Committee meetings	10
4.5 Understand control strategies.	10
<b>Appendix 1: Sample Meeting Agenda</b>	<b>12</b>



## 1.0 Introduction

Reed College is committed to provide a healthy and safe workplace for all. Its Safety Committee brings workers and managers together in a non-adversarial atmosphere to achieve this goal. Developing a committee requires workers and managers who are dedicated to finding alternatives to conditions and practices that cause accidents, illnesses, and injuries. Fewer accidents, illnesses, and injuries means increased job satisfaction, productivity, lower workers' compensation claims costs, and insurance rates.

### 1.1 School policy

It is the policy of Reed College to ensure a safe, healthful workplace for all its employees. Losses from injuries, accidents, and occupational illness are costly but are preventable. In order to have an effective health and safety program, Reed College involves all its employees in the effort to eliminate hazards.

## 2.0 Roles and Responsibilities of Positions

### 2.1 Management

Management is accountable for preventing workplace injuries and illnesses. Management will consider all employee suggestions for achieving a safer, healthier workplace. In addition, management must consider the committee's recommendations and respond to committee requests within a reasonable time. Management will also keep informed about workplace safety and health issues and regularly review the school's safety and health program.

### 2.2 Supervisors

Supervisors have the responsibility to train and supervise workers in safe work practices. Supervisors must enforce workplace rules and work to eliminate hazardous conditions.

### 2.3 Safety Committee

The Safety Committee includes management and employee representatives who recommend safety and health improvements in the workplace. Committee members have the authority to and are responsible for identifying hazards and unsafe work practices, removing obstacles to accident prevention, and helping the school to evaluate the overall safety and health program.

The following positions at the College serve as ex officio members. These members (or a representative) serve on the committee as long as they hold their position:

- Biology Operations Manager
- Chemistry Lab and Department Manager
- Community Safety Operations Manager



- Environmental Health and Safety Staff
- Human Resources Assistant Director
- Reactor Operations Manager

In addition to the ex officio members, the Director of Human Resources appoints other members to the Safety Committee. These members can include individuals representing:

- Faculty
- Building Services
- Community Safety
- Maintenance
- Residence Life
- Athletics, Fitness, & Outdoor Programs
- Student Senate
- Other department offices

## 2.4 Employees/Student Workers

All employees/student workers are expected to participate in health and safety program activities including the following:

- Attend and follow guidelines from employer-provided safety training;
- Report hazards, unsafe work practices, and accidents immediately to your supervisor;
- Cooperate with safety committee representatives during inspections;
- Wear required personal protective equipment;
- Participate in and support health and safety program goals.

## 3.0 How to be an effective Safety Committee member

### 3.1 Why should I serve on the committee?

Serving on the Safety Committee gives employees an opportunity to play an important role in keeping our workplace free of hazards. By participating in a cooperative forum between management, supervisors, and other employees, all interested employees can contribute their best ideas to identify and control the causes of accidents and injuries. Committee members receive education, training, and hands-on experience in recognizing workplace hazards and unsafe work practices, investigating accidents, and effectively responding in emergency situations. Often serving on a Safety Committee may enhance an employee's ability to take on greater responsibilities in the workplace.

### 3.2 What training do I need?

Safety Committee members must understand the purpose of the Safety Committee, how to apply OR-OSHA's Safety Committee rules, and how to conduct Safety Committee meetings and inspections. They must also have training in hazard identification and the principles of accident



investigation. Representatives should know whom to contact for information or for help on workplace safety and health matters. Two sources are our workers' compensation insurance carrier and OR-OSHA. OR-OSHA's Public Education Section offers no-cost safety committee workshops on hazard identification and accident investigation. The OR-OSHA website also offers on-line training courses at: [www.orosha.org](http://www.orosha.org) under Education > Online Courses > Hazard Identification Control; Safety Meetings and Committees.

### 3.3 Where can I find out more about workplace health and safety?

Oregon OSHA has many online training opportunities, workshops, and publications available at <http://www.orosha.org/>

Q&A fact sheets covering a wide range of workplace health and safety topics can also be found at <http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/prevention/effectiv.html>

### 3.4 What is the time commitment?

Safety Committee members attend monthly meetings and conduct quarterly building inspections. If someone resigns, their replacement can fill the remaining term of the original member. Terms of members are staggered so that some experienced members are always serving on the Safety Committee. Safety Committee members, excluding ex officio members, may resign at any time from the Committee by submitting a letter of resignation to the Committee Chair and the Director of Human Resources.

### 3.5 What are OR-OSHA's Safety Committee rules?

Oregon's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has specific safety committee rules in Division 1: The General Administrative Rules: 437-001-0765. The OR-OSHA Resource Center will send you a physical copy of these rules, or you can download them from their website, [www.orosha.org](http://www.orosha.org) under Rules. These are the most basic rules that our committee will use and follow. In addition, you can find the general safety and health rules in Division 2. Other types of employment such as construction, agricultural, maritime, and forest activities have more job-specific health and safety standards that are found in different Divisions of the code.

### 3.6 What makes an effective Safety Committee member?

**Commitment to the goal of maintaining a safe and healthful workplace.** Whether you volunteer, are elected by your peers, or are asked to serve as a management representative, be prepared to demonstrate your commitment to safety and health in our workplace. Safety Committee members act as intermediaries between the workforce and management in matters concerning workplace health and safety. Part of your job will be to listen to employees' concerns and to report these concerns along with possible solutions to the committee. Be sure to take a positive attitude when following safety procedures and set a good example with your own work practices. Attend committee meetings and follow through on any assigned tasks.



**Be accountable.** Accountability links responsibility to consequences. Each member shares the responsibility for accomplishing the goal of creating and maintaining a safe and healthful workplace. The Safety Committee also monitors how management holds employees accountable for working safely and for recommending ways to strengthen personal accountability. Specifically, committee members must:

- Identify workplace hazards and unsafe work practices;
- Review reports of accidents and “near misses;”
- Keep accurate records of committee activities;
- Evaluate the committee’s strengths and weaknesses.

**Involve other employees in meeting health and safety goals.** To be effective, the Safety Committee needs the cooperation of everyone in our workplace. As a Safety Committee member, you involve other Reed College employees by:

- Encouraging employees to report hazards or other concerns;
- Acting on employee suggestions and recognizing their contributions to a safer workplace;
- Promoting the committee’s goals and accomplishments.

**Participate in quarterly building inspections.** Each Safety Committee member performs routine safety inspections, as assigned by the Environmental Health and Safety staff.

**Ensure accident investigation.** By Oregon law, the committee must have a procedure for investigating all workplace accidents, illnesses, and deaths and ensure that management does so. At Reed College, EHS staff conduct our accident investigations. The committee carefully reviews accident reports to help management identify the root causes of accidents and to determine how to control them. Confidentiality must be carefully maintained during these discussions.

**Keep good records.** Accurate, well-organized records document the committee’s accomplishments and can provide information about what areas need to be improved. OR-OSHA requires the following documents for the Safety Committee’s file. The EHS Staff keeps the following on file:

- Accurate minutes of each Safety Committee meeting;
- Copies of committee reports, evaluations, inspections, and recommendations;
- Management’s response to committee recommendations and inspections;
- Employee-initiated safety suggestions and concerns.

**Set practical goals for the committee.** Because the scope of the Reed College Safety Committee is broad, we need to narrow the focus, set goals, and specify what the committee will do. Starting with a written policy that states why the committee was established and what it intends to accomplish, the committee, through its representatives, should set specific short-term goals that promote the success of its overarching objectives.



**Regularly evaluate your effectiveness.** Self-evaluation answers the questions: “Are we effective? Have we met our stated goals? If not, why not?” An effective Safety Committee is required to evaluate its own strengths and weaknesses at least once a year, and set new goals based on their findings. The evaluation should accomplish the following:

- Identify the committee’s achievements over the previous 12 months;
- Review essential activities;
- Set goals for the next 12 months.

**Make meetings count.** Participate in regular meetings. Each representative must help the committee accomplish its goals. This includes making a commitment to attend monthly meetings and participate in committee activities, including inspections.

**Ground rules keep meetings orderly and efficient.** All representatives should understand these guidelines and the chairperson should enforce them. During meetings remember to:

- Actively engage in discussions;
- Keep the discussion focused on agenda topics;
- Listen to others and let them finish before responding;
- Cooperate to achieve effective solutions;
- Make decisions;
- Start and finish the meeting on time.

**Use a written agenda.** The written agenda outlines the meeting’s discussion topics. The chairperson should understand the agenda topics and keep the discussion focused on them. Allow enough time for accident reports, committee reports, evaluations, recommendations, and reports on management’s response to past committee recommendations. (See a sample meeting agenda, page 14)

**Meeting minutes.** Meeting minutes are posted to the Safety Committee page on the EHS website at [reed.edu/ehs/health-safety-committee/index.html](https://www.reed.edu/ehs/health-safety-committee/index.html).

## 4.0 Guidelines to help you conduct committee business

### 4.1 Identify and Assess Workplace Hazards

Hazard identification serves as a proactive approach to health and safety, whether mandated by specific regulations or not. A hazard is an unsafe condition or practice that could cause an injury or illness to an employee. Most hazards are preventable. Hazards are identified and rated by:

- Knowing workplace health and safety standards;
- Inspecting the workplace to assess risks;
- Setting priorities;
- Determining the underlying causes of accidents and incidents;



- Understanding control strategies;
- Documenting the hazards at monthly Safety Committee meetings.

**Assess workplace risks and set priorities based on probability and severity.**

**Risk** has been defined as hazard multiplied by exposure. **Risk = Hazard x Exposure**

**Exposure** relates to being within a zone of danger either to a mechanical, physical danger or within an environment containing toxic or deleterious substances. Risk assessment looks at both the probability of an accident or injury happening and the predictable severity of the resulting injury or illness.

**Probability**, the likelihood that an event will happen, depends on:

**Probability factors**, such as:

- Frequency of exposure to risk
- Level of training and competency of employee
- Physical proximity to possible danger
- Number of employees exposed to the risk
- Presence of adverse environmental factors (weather, noise, for example)
- Duration of exposure to risk

**Probability Ratings:**

- Low (unlikely)
- Medium (likely)
- High (very likely)

**Severity**, predicts the degree of injury or illness caused by the risk, depends on:

**Severity factors**, such as:

- The distance of a fall (>10 ft. may cause death)
- The type of equipment used and how it affects an employee
- The toxicity, flammability, or reactivity of products used
- The level of noise, degree of heat or cold, measure of forces

**Severity ratings:**

- Other than Serious
- Serious Harm
- Death





## 4.2 Understanding Types of Hazards

Types of Hazards	Description	Examples of Injuries
Mechanical	Pinch-points, rotating parts, impact, pressure, acceleration	Bruises, fractures, abrasions, crushed/amputated limbs
Vibration/Noise	Loud booms, high-pitched sounds, shaking parts	Adverse physical and psychological effects, hearing loss, ringing in the ears
Fall	Fall-to-surface, fall-to-below	Bruises, contusions, broken bones, death
Ergonomic	Lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, twisting, repetitive motion	Stiffness, swelling, fatigue, tissue injury, strains, carpal tunnel syndrome
Toxins	Poisons, harmful or irritating products or substances	Damage to tissues and organs
Biological	Air-borne or blood-borne pathogens	Respiratory afflictions, GI and other "plumbing "(systemic) distress
Chemical reactions	Dispersion of materials or heat. Struck-by, contact-with, exposure.	Chemical burns, dermatitis, cuts from broken glass.
Temperature	Extremes can cause trauma or illness	Heat stress, heat stroke, heat rash, hypothermia, frostbite
Electrical	Inadequate insulation, exposed conductors, static discharge, ground-fault	Contact-with, burns, electrocution
Flammability	Fuels and oxidizers present in gaseous form	Burns, blisters, charring
Explosives	Can cause large releases of gas, heat, noise, pressure	Burns, hearing loss, dismemberment
Radiation	Ionizing/Non-ionizing	Cancer, burns, radiation sickness, hair loss, sterility, mutation



**Involve other employees in safety assessments.** Encourage concerned employees to help the committee by reporting workplace hazards and unsafe practices and to suggest ways to remedy them. Focus on hazards rather than rule violations. Ask employees who are familiar with the various work areas about hazards and unsafe conditions.

- Be concerned and listen carefully.
- Take notes: What is the hazard? Where is the hazard? How could the hazard cause an accident and what could be the result? Who could be affected by the hazard?
- Organize your notes and summarize the important information in a report to the Safety Committee.

### 4.3 Determine the cause(s) of an accident or incident.

**Surface causes** produce the injury or incident. They include:

- Unsafe conditions (account for a small percentage of all workplace accidents).
- Unsafe behaviors (account for most workplace accidents).
- Organizational causes that do not enable safe work practices. For example, “requiring” lockout, but not providing supplies, or the use of a 25-lb. hand grinder for 35 hours a week.
- Other factors, sometimes called “uncontrollable acts.”

**Root causes**, on the other hand, include the underlying, direct causes of accidents or injuries, such as:

- System design defects that result from
  - Inadequate policies, plans, programs, procedures;
  - Inadequate resources (e.g., money, time, personnel);
- System implementation defects that result from
  - Failure to accomplish appropriate policies, plans, programs, procedures;
  - Failure to use adequate resources (money, time, personnel).

### 4.4 Document hazards at the Safety Committee meetings

The Safety Committee receives information about workplace hazards from quarterly inspections, concerned employees, and management. The committee can then use this information to help create a safer, healthier workplace. This discussion should take place during a Safety Committee meeting so the minutes document the options, report concerns to management, and recommend ways to control or eliminate the hazard.

### 4.5 Understand control strategies.

- **Elimination completely removes the hazard** – this strategy is the most effective and protective control. By completely getting rid of the danger, such as changing a process or product, the risk of illness or injury is reduced.
- **Substitution** – replaces the hazard with something safer. For example, a non-toxic (or less toxic) chemical could be substituted for a hazardous one.



- **Engineering Controls** – focus on the source of the hazard. Eliminate or reduce the severity of the hazard through redesign, enclosure, guarding, ventilation, etc.
- **Management (Administrative) Controls** – focus on “managing” the hazard. Reduce the duration or frequency of exposure through training and modification of work schedules, rotations, and assignments.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – focuses on individual protection. Used as a last resort, only. Equipment provides a barrier between the worker and the hazard. Its effectiveness depends on proper fit and an understanding of the limits of protection. This strategy does not directly impact the hazard.



## Appendix 1: Sample Meeting Agenda

Safety Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Month Year

Member Names	Department	Attended	Absent

Visitors:

Meeting called to order at:

Introductions

Old Business:

- Review previous recommendations
- Follow-up on inspections

Building Inspections

- Summary of findings by type of hazard

Accident Investigations:

- Discussion of surface and root causes
- Recommendations to Management

New Business/Announcements:

- Hazards/Safety Issues
  - Discussion of problem
  - Recommendations to Management
- Suggestions and concerns

Date of Next Meeting

Meeting adjourned at .

Ongoing committee responsibilities:

- Representation for your building, department, and/or discipline
- Submission of agenda items
- Review of safety issues from the prior month
  - Discuss resolution and responses to future incidents to improve prevention outcomes
- Mandatory building inspections
- Identified priorities and discussion items for the upcoming year.

