



# MANAGEMENT: SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

## INTRODUCTION

No matter the industry, when you are a supervisor, you have certain legal obligations that you must complete in order to make sure the employees that work under you are safe to the best of your abilities. In this lesson, we will cover the responsibilities that you as a supervisor have. These include areas of knowledge, training, inspections, investigations of accidents, encouragement and motivation of employees, discipline, and recordkeeping.

## KNOWLEDGE

One of the things that a supervisor brings to the teams that they work with is knowledge. As a supervisor, you should be knowledgeable about:

- Local, state, and federal laws regarding safety and health;
- Company safety and health policies and protocols;
- The location of all safety compliance documentation such as programs, forms, safety data sheets (SDS), etc. Additionally, if you have been designated as the responsible person or program administrator you may have further responsibilities relating to said compliance documentation. This includes making sure that documents are kept up-to-date with any changing regulations;
- Operating procedures for all tools, equipment, and so on;
- All tasks that each employee under you performs;
- Emergency procedures. This includes knowing the location of all available first aid kits, fire extinguishers, emergency kits, and any other items that will be vital should an emergency occur in your area or worksite.
- Disciplinary actions that may be imposed on employees who do not follow policies and procedures;
- And recordkeeping requirements.

## TRAINING

Supervisors are responsible for making sure that all new and current employees receive proper training.

### Construction

Construction site supervisors are required to conduct safety trainings, otherwise known as toolbox or tailgate meetings, at least once every 10 business days.

### General Industry

Supervisors of general industry business should conduct safety trainings on a monthly basis. Additionally, supervisors should assure that important topics such as ladders, fall protection, and so on are trained on at least once a year.

Trainings can vary in length and topic. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Hazards associated with the task the employee is to perform;
- How to recognize and report hazards;
- The selection, care, and storage of personal protective equipment (PPE);
- How to conduct inspection of tools, equipment, and machines;
- How tools, equipment, and machines are to be used. This includes going over all company safe operating procedures (SOPs).
- How to report near misses and accidents; and
- How any required forms are to be filled out and filed. In some cases, employees may be required to fill out the form and then place it in a designated area for supervisors to review.





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Employees who have questions or violate safety and health policies and procedures may require refresher training. Furthermore, employees should be given training anytime a new procedure, tool, piece of equipment, machine, or new hazard is introduced.

Training should be documented either on attendance sheets, sign-in sheets, or electronic sign-off. Records should be kept in accordance with your company's policies.

## INSPECTIONS

In addition to training, a supervisor is also responsible for assuring that all required inspections of the work area and equipment are completed. Inspections may take place at the start of each shift or on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. Inspections should include:

- Worksite or work area;
- Personal protective equipment;
- Tools;
- Equipment; and
- Machines.

In order to document that inspections took place, supervisors may be required, per company policy, to fill out inspection forms, take photos, videos, and so on. Any hazards or unsafe work conditions that were noticed or noted during the inspection must be corrected. Corrections can include tagging and removing broken tools from the area until such time they can either be repaired or replaced, lockout of equipment and machinery until such time maintenance or third-party contractors can come out to repair or replace the item in question, guards or other barriers are put into place to better protect employees, and creating new processes and procedures that either eliminate the unsafe work condition or minimize exposure to the hazard.

Repairs, replacements, and changes in work conditions should be documented to prove that changes have been made. Documentation can include receipts, pictures, videos, and so on.

## INVESTIGATING ACCIDENTS

While inspections can help minimize or eliminate certain hazards in the workplace, there is always the possibility of an accident occurring. When you are notified of an accident, you must:

- First tend to all injured individuals. If needed, alerting paramedics and other rescue personnel to get the individual or individuals emergency medical treatment;
- Record the incident on your company's 300 log. In some incidents, an accident will need to be reported to your local OSHA office within 8 hours of the incident taking place. For more information on reporting requirements, please read your company's Accident/Incident Investigation program or refer to our "Management: Reporting Work Related Injury and Illness" lesson.
- And follow your company's investigation procedures. This can include talking to witnesses, taking photos, reviewing procedures, taking notes, and so on. At the end of your investigation, you should submit a report that offers suggestions on how to prevent such an accident in the future.

Regarding near misses, these incidents should also be investigated because near misses can be a precursor to an accident. Near-misses should be investigated in accordance with your company's policies.

Additionally, all investigations should be documented. Documentation can include forms, reports, pictures, and videos.





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## ENCOURAGING AND MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

In relation to other responsibilities, as a supervisor you play a role in encouraging and motivating your employees to work safely. When encouraging and motivating employees you should:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect. Constructive dialogue cannot take place if people feel defensive or attacked.
- Talk with people in a calm and controlled tone. Your tone of voice can dictate how people will respond.
- Be clear on safety and health policies and expectations. Employees cannot meet expectations or follow policies if they are uncertain or confused. If someone has questions, make sure their question has been fully answered before exiting the conversation.
- Involve employees in the safety process.
- Be sure to calmly listen when concerns are brought forth. Keep dialogue open and allow for suggestions to be made.
- Work with your employees to fix problems.
- And follow through with any repairs, replacements, or introduction of new processes and procedures where needed. Employees may feel that concerns are not being met if nothing is taken care of.

## DISCIPLINE

While encouraging and motivating employees can go a long way in creating a safe and healthy work environment, there may be times when supervisors must impose disciplinary measures. Disciplinary measures can help minimize or stop unsafe behaviors and help create a safe and healthy work environment. Discipline can include:

- Verbal warnings;
- Written warnings; and
- Termination.

Supervisors should conduct disciplinary measures in accordance with their company's policies and procedures. Additionally, all disciplinary measures should be documented.

## RECORDKEEPING

As a supervisor you may find yourself dealing with a variety of records. Recordkeeping is an important skill for all supervisors to have because certain records are required by law and others may be needed in the event of an accident or illness. Supervisors are required to fill out and keep:

- Training records;
- Inspection records;
- Accident records, including 300 logs;
- Maintenance records;
- Medical records; and
- Disciplinary records.

OSHA requires that records be maintained for a minimum of five years. These records can be kept in physical or digital forms. Supervisors should make sure that all records are being kept in accordance with their company's policies and procedures.





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## CONCLUSION

To conclude, supervisors have many responsibilities and legal obligations in the workplace. You are a leader and employees will turn to you for guidance and support. To set a good example for all employees, make sure that you are fulfilling all of your responsibilities in a safe manner. And remember, that you have a legal obligation to assure the safety and health of all employees who work under you.

