

SAFE TIME

The Best Policy is a Safe Policy



by Ir. Shum Keng Yan

NOW that we have our Safety and Health Officer on board, let us go about establishing our guiding policy. This article is not about how to set up values, vision, policies and strategies for an organisation. There are good management books in the market on this topic. Let us get down to the basics on the policy statement that you see hanging on the wall of many companies and one which can be found in corporate annual reports.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994, Part IV, Section 16, employers or self-employed persons with more than five employees need to prepare and communicate a written statement of the general Safety and Health Policy for the employees and the organisation, and arrangements to carry out the policy. This general policy needs to be revised as often as may be appropriate to keep it current.

The policy hanging on the wall is actually the general policy statement of the employer's commitment to safety and health. It provides the framework on the philosophy, intent and implementation of safety and health at the workplace.

The policy needs to be displayed prominently at the workplace and provided to the employees (including new employees). The policy is a live document and will require at least an annual review or whenever there is any change. The most senior person in the organisation signs and dates the policy.

In order for the policy to work, details on the organisation to support the safety management system as well as the arrangements that will be put in place need to be developed. Without the organisation and these arrangements, the policy is but a piece of paper on the wall.

Some organisations combine Quality, Environment or Security into the policy. This is fine as long as the organisation, as well as the arrangements, are clear on how to make the policy work.

We will look at the organisation and arrangements next month. What is your best policy? Share with us at pub@iem.org.my. ■

Some managers are fluent in articulating safety, but have little commitment behind the scenes. Some managers may not be able to explain safety, but yet are very committed and involved in implementing safety. Talking the Walk sounds nice, but Walking the Talk is even better! Walking the Talk is my preferred policy.

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