



Risk Control

Short Service Employee Program

In today's market, employers struggle to maintain sufficient staff and are constantly looking for qualified people. This shortage may lead employers to reduce or even eliminate safety orientation and training, often resulting in injuries to new employees. New hires can be at higher risk of on-the-job injuries for many reasons. Companies who take steps to protect workers as they gain valuable on-the-job experience can help prevent accidents, decrease turnover, and lower worker's compensation costs.

To accomplish this, many organizations are implementing a Short Service Employee Program (SSEP). An SSEP is a formal, deliberate process to keep new employees safe from injury while simultaneously training employees to perform productively and efficiently. There are several important factors to consider when developing an effective SSEP. The information in this document will provide you with guidance and direction when developing or improving your company's SSEP.

General Guidelines and Program Components

New hires or "Short Service Employees" (SSEs) are to be managed according to this program to ensure that they receive the initial safety training required before starting work and throughout their participation in the SSEP. Individual organizations also have the ability to require subcontractors under their control to participate in the SSEP.

Participation timeframes in the SSEP will vary based on the tasks and the individual. Therefore, the organization must designate an experienced mentor to train and monitor the SSEs. Once the SSEs can demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the tasks safely and effectively, should they be allowed to move out of the SSEP.

Employers should be mindful as to how many SSEs they have on a crew or in a department. A rule of thumb would be that SSEs make up no more than 20% of a crew, workgroup, or department.

Mentors: Assigning mentors to SSEs is critical to any successful SSEP. Mentors offer a hands-on way to transfer skills and knowledge to SSEs and ease the transition to their new role. Mentors/trainers assigned to an SSE must be knowledgeable, experienced employees with the temperament to provide the necessary guidance and development required for the SSE. By working together regularly, the mentor can observe the SSE's development and need for additional training and guidance.

Exceptions: Exceptions (or an early release from the program) may be granted to employees with a high level of previous work experience in similar job functions. The SSE would need to demonstrate the level of competency required for the job and perform tasks safely and according to the expectations before being considered for an early release. All exception requests must be submitted in writing and approved by management.

Visual Differentiator: Co-workers, supervisors, managers, and others need to be able to recognize an SSE easily; therefore, an identification system should be developed for this purpose. This differentiator is a means of communicating that the SSE is in a

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transitional period. It should not be a designation of inexperience used to mark an employee as having a lower skill set or to bring unnecessary or negative attention to the SSE. One of the most common methods companies use is to provide participants with hard hats that are a different color than those worn by longer-term employees. Additional examples include wearing a vest or placing a decal or other distinguishable marker on a hard hat, vest or other item of clothing. Regardless, this differentiator should prominently identify the employee as an SSE and should be removed upon completion of all program requirements.

Roles and Responsibilities

Management

- Set expectations, evaluate effectiveness, and demonstrate a personal commitment to a functional HSE work culture.
- Establish a written HSE policy that sets compliance expectations for management and employees, and provides employees access to company policies, standards, and procedures.
- Establish a written SSEP for all new employees assigned to any job or task.
- Ensure that all new employees are identified to the responsible parties and placed into the SSEP.
- Perform audits to improve the effectiveness of the orientation and SSEP regularly.

Supervisor

- Ensure that the SSE has been through the Safety Orientation.
- Ensure that the SSE has received all necessary training and clearly understands expectations.
- Ensure that the SSE has the proper distinguishable PPE or item to be easily identified as an SSE.
- Assign a mentor/trainer to each SSE.

Mentor

- Possess knowledge and skills in the job tasks assigned to the SSE.
- Set the proper example regarding safety and work ethic.
- Provide on-site supervision and ensure that the SSE only performs tasks in which they have been properly trained.
- Maintain a positive attitude, avoid criticism, and strive to build confidence in the SSE.
- Communicate effectively with the SSE, frequently discussing any questions or concerns.

Short Service Employee

- Perform work as directed.
- Wear identifying PPE or clothing as instructed.
- Consult with and listen to their mentor and supervisor.
- Follow company safety rules and policies.
- Participate in all safety meetings and discussions.
- Report unsafe conditions immediately.

Graduating From SSE Status

Generally, SSE's should move forward and graduate at the end of the program (or before if they were granted an exception) once the SSE can demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the tasks safely and effectively. The SSE's performance should be based on their level of skill combined with adherence to the company's safety and health policies and rules.

Monitoring the SSEP

Management should review the SSEP for quality and effectiveness annually or when work place exposures change. All facets of the program should be audited for accuracy, timeliness, and completeness. On-site inspections should be conducted to ensure that supervisors, mentors, and SSEs are adhering to the SSEP. The incidents involving SSEs should be tracked, compared to the general workforce, and evaluated for trends or performance variations. Management should ensure that all program deficiencies are promptly corrected and documented.

Conclusion

An organization's growth is an achievement in many ways, and companies should be aware of the potential risks to their operations and employees caused by growth. The idea that a new employee is more likely to be injured on the job than an experienced workers is not new. However, having documented safety and risk management policies, from orientation during the SSEP and beyond, can help the company safely and efficiently onboard employees and encourage longevity among trained workers. By implementing an effective SSEP, organizations can overcome the undesirable effects of rapid growth and minimize the negative impact new employees can have on quality and safety.

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