

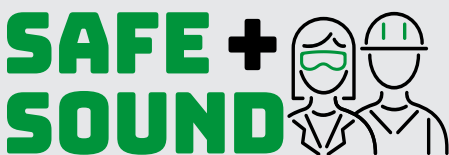
**BE SAFE + SOUND AT WORK**

# Worker Participation



## WHAT IS WORKER PARTICIPATION?

Worker participation is engaging workers at all levels in establishing, implementing, evaluating, and improving safety and health in the workplace so that workers understand they are a valuable partner in making their workplace safer and are encouraged to communicate with management about hazards on the job.



**Safe + Sound** is a year-round campaign to encourage every workplace to have a safety and health program. This nationwide effort raises awareness of the value of workplace safety and health programs, which can improve businesses' safety and health performance, save money, and improve competitiveness.

For the latest news and information visit [www.osha.gov/safeandsound](http://www.osha.gov/safeandsound).

# WHAT CAN YOU DO?

## Listen and Ask for Feedback

Creating opportunities for open dialogue encourages workers to raise safety and health concerns or report a work-related injury or illness without fear of retaliation. Take the following steps to engage your workforce:

**Build trust:** Be present and maintain an open door policy to allow workers to speak with managers about safety and health concerns in your workplace during work hours. If possible, give workers a phone number to reach management at any time about safety and health issues. Take notes on the workers' concerns and make sure to follow up with any resolutions.

**Host listening and discussion sessions:** Invite your workers to participate in a safety listening and discussion session with management. Have a manager ask open-ended questions to spur dialogue, such as: What hazards do you face on the job? Which current safety procedures should be revised? How should we improve the processes for workers to report hazards?

**Establish ways for workers to give anonymous feedback:** Set up a physical or virtual (e.g., email, voicemail, hotline, intranet site portal) suggestion box that workers can use to communicate safety and health concerns. Create a worker perception survey in order to ask workers to evaluate safety in your workplace and suggest areas for improvement. Make it clear there will be no retaliation for submissions. Publicize the suggestions you receive and your response so that people know that they were heard.

## Empower Workers with Safety and Health Information

The more workers have the knowledge, tools, and skills to play an active role in the health and safety of their workplaces, the more meaningful their participation will be. Take the following steps to engage your workforce:

**Hold a training:** Train workers on every shift to identify and report hazards and "near misses," as well as your safety precautions and procedures. Take time to brainstorm potential hazards and controls. Bring in a speaker from outside your organization



(e.g., workers' compensation or other insurance carrier, outside safety and health professionals, industry trade associations) for a fresh perspective.

**Create safety and health-related material:** Make information—such as chemical and equipment manufacturer safety recommendations, workplace inspection reports, and incident investigation reports—publicly accessible (e.g. binder, intranet site, shared computer).

## Recognize Workers for Contributions to Workplace Safety

Workers contribute to keeping your workplace safe throughout the year. Recognizing this time and effort makes them feel appreciated and acknowledges that their involvement adds value. Take the following steps to recognize your workforce:

**Reward safe workers:** Host a celebration or ceremony to recognize individuals who make safety contributions, provide "on-the-spot" awards, or create a "Safety Hall of Fame" to recognize your workers' proactive and ongoing contributions to ensuring your organization is safe and sound.

**Have lunch with the boss:** Invite workers (e.g., those with designated safety roles, members of your safety and health committee) to have lunch with your CEO, president, or other leadership to discuss safety in your workplace. An informal setting might be a good way for senior management and workers to take a more personal approach to learning about safety and build a strong relationship.



## MAKE IT EFFECTIVE! 3 TIPS FOR WORKER PARTICIPATION

**Make it work:** Schedule meetings, trainings, and events to provide workers with easy avenues to give their safety and health feedback in places and ways where they can access them. Give frequent and regular updates to show that workers' feedback is heard and addressed.

**Be inclusive:** Ensure that workers at all levels of your organization can participate, regardless of skill level, status, or education. Provide translation if needed to reach all your workers.

**Have an open mind:** Be receptive to suggestions. Focus on advancing proactive solutions and continuous improvement. Leave the past behind you. Avoid being defensive, adversarial, and casting blame. Never retaliate when workers speak up about safety or health.

### Partner for Safety and Health Planning

The development of long-term safety and health activities provides workers with regular opportunities to further contribute to the success of an organization. When workers are involved in finding solutions, they feel invested in the program. Take the following steps to engage your workforce:

**Establish a safety committee:** Invite workers to join your safety committee, or ask workers or labor representatives to nominate individuals. Make sure that as many job functions as possible are represented on the committee. Host a kickoff meeting for the committee to discuss objectives and goals. Consider hosting regularly scheduled (e.g., bi-weekly, monthly) committee meetings and have the committee host all-hands meetings to report out.

**Share mutual goals:** Involve workers in your organization's process for setting annual safety and health goals – including inviting workers to help research, brainstorm, and decide on the appropriate targets.

**Include safety experts:** Involve workers with safety and health expertise in existing teams throughout your organization (e.g. product and process design, procurement, executive, business planning, employee recruitment and orientation, evaluation and assessment, risk management, operations, emergency preparedness, wellness, sustainability). This approach will help ensure that safety has a strong voice and that impacts on workers are considered in business decisions.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO NEXT?

- Use the National Safety Council's ["Speaking of Safety"](#) or Safe + Sound's ["Better Safety Conversations"](#) to change the way you have safety conversations with your workers.
- Learn how to use employee safety perception surveys by reviewing National Safety Council's ["Measuring Safety Excellence"](#) webinar or completing The Center for Construction Research and Training's [Safety Climate Assessment Tool](#).
- Develop an anti-retaliation program using OSHA's [recommended practices](#).

# SAFE + SOUND



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