

Increasing the Effectiveness of Labor-Management Safety and Health Committees

This material was produced under grant number SH29635SH6 from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. It does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Learning Objectives

- Introduce/reinforce the important role that workplace labor-management safety and health committees can play in improving health and safety on the job.
- Understand the structures and functions of effective labor-management safety and health committees.
- Understand ways to prepare for effective labor-management safety and health committee meetings.
- Understand ways to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of labor - management safety and health committees.

Introduction

- A document titled “The Role of Labor-Management Committees in Safeguarding Worker Safety and Health” by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor-Management Relations and Cooperative Programs, states:

“It is easy to have a labor-management committee for occupational safety and health. It is extremely difficult to have one that can make major inroads into solving tough, long-standing dangers to worker health and safety.”

Introduction

Labor-Management Safety and Health Committees may be formally spelled out in the contract or may be established by mutual agreement between the union and management.

Either way, management acknowledges the union's critical role in identifying and helping to resolve health and safety problems and improving health and safety conditions. The labor-management committee gives labor and management a forum to discuss, and hopefully resolve, important health and safety concerns and issues.

Labor-Management S&H Committee - Meetings

To be effective, the labor-management committees should follow these **Best Practices**:

- Effective committees meet on a regular basis and as often as needed. Weekly or twice monthly may be a good suggestion with which to begin, but the committee should meet at least once a month for as long as needed to cover the agenda or schedule more time to finish the agenda.

Labor-Management S&H Committee - Meetings

Labor-management committee meeting agendas are set in one of two ways:

- Both parties bring their agendas to the meeting. There, they have equal input to decide the order of the items; or
- The union and management chairs prepare the agenda together, ahead of time. They get it to committee members at least three days before the meeting. Newly identified issues can be added.

Labor-Management S&H Committee - Meetings

- Union representatives have time to meet before labor-management S&H committee meetings to prepare for the meeting [e.g., identify agenda items, discuss problems and concerns that have come to the union's attention, identify solutions (if needed, short- and long-term) to propose during the labor-management meeting, discuss outstanding items].

Labor-Management S&H Committee - Meetings

- The union members on the labor-management committee are selected by the union [National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) Section 8(a)(2)].

Labor-Management S&H Committee - Structure

- The labor-management committee consists of at least as many labor as management members.

Labor-Management S&H Committee - Structure

- There are two committee chairs. The union chooses the union committee chair and management selects its chair.

Labor-Management S&H Committee - Structure

- Members of management on the committee should be senior enough (have enough clout) to make real decisions.

Labor-Management S&H Committee – Duties & Functions

- All committee members are notified immediately of any accident, near-miss or work-related illness, and provided access to the workplace (this would extend to representatives of the USW Health, Safety and Environment Department or designee in cases of fatalities or life-altering injuries). This will allow an investigation that involves committee members and results in actions to eliminate, control and prevent hazards.

During the investigation/inspection, the union representatives shall have the right to take pictures, to take samples, to speak to employees and others, and to take other appropriate measures to collect evidence and information relevant to the health and safety conditions at the workplace.

Labor-Management S&H Committee – Duties & Functions

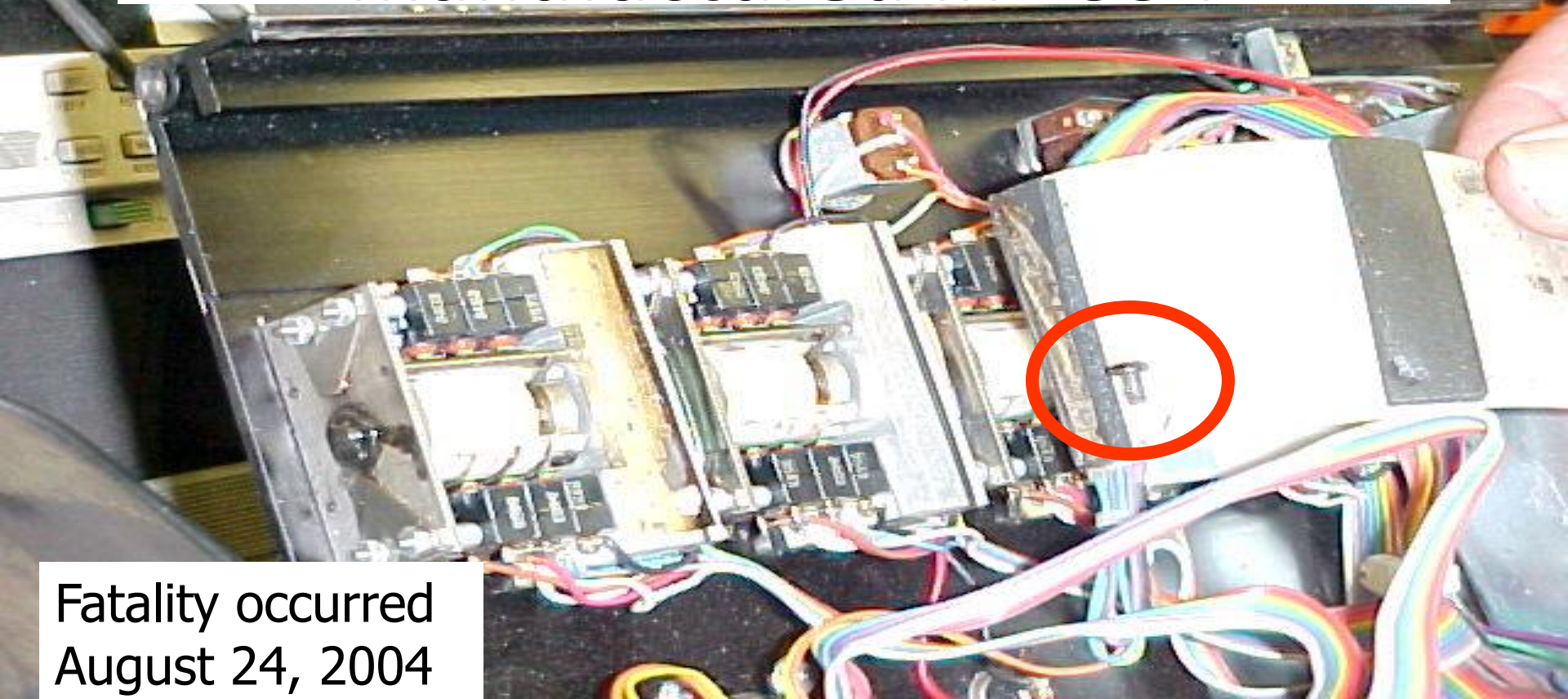
- There are regular inspections/audits conducted by union and management which are designed not just to identify hazards, but also assess trends and hazard control measures. These trends or hazard control measures could indicate the need for changes going beyond maintenance and mitigation to engineering and design changes. Inspections and rigorous worker-involved audits should look for and identify all categories of hazards (chemical, biological, ergonomic, work organization, physical and safety).

Labor-Management S&H Committee – Additional Items

The more health and safety problems that are resolved and the more identified hazards that are eliminated, reduced and/or prevented, the better the health and safety of the workforce and workplace will be.

- Meaningful lessons learned on how to eliminate, reduce and prevent hazards get shared — within the workplace, with other facilities of the same employer and within the industry.

Telemotive Series 8000 manufactured in 1994



Fatality occurred
August 24, 2004



Telemotive Series 8000 remote control crane box in use at a paper mill

HAZARD ALERT

Fatal Accident Involving a Remote Control Operated Overhead Crane

A USW member was fatally injured when he was crushed while saving a coworker's life. The victim was working in conjunction with two co-workers at the time of the accident. The three workers were in the process of changing the two stacked rolls of a Taper Mill. The top roll was rigged to an overhead crane for repositioning when the crane operator yelled to have two coworkers that he could not control the movement of the crane. As the crane moved the 28,000 lb roll/two towards a worker by the rigged end, the victim shouted a warning to him and then approached and pushed him hard from the roll's path. The victim turned, but before he could reach safety, the unsecured end of the roll dropped pinning him to the floor. The crane was found to be in normal operating condition. However, the Telemotive Series 8000 remote control box was found to have one very small screw (from the internal design of the box) that had worked its way free and eventually adhered to the sticky backing of the Mylar/Velcro strip that is placed over the micro-switches that operate the crane. The small screw was located directly against the component of the switch that controls the eastward traverse of the crane which prevented the crane from stopping once activated. The crane operator stopped the crane by deactivating the box, turning the key to the "off" position.

Telemotive Series 8000 **Loose Screw Pinning**

Recommendations to Prevent Recurrence:

- Inventory all remote control boxes (including spares) for the same or similar condition and remove from service as warranted.
- Contact the manufacturer regarding their design changes or replacement box and a periodic inspection program for crane boxes.
- Where remote cranes are used, the remote box design must include a safety switch that assures the crane cannot be activated unless two-hands are in contact with the box and has adequate guarding that prevents inadvertent activation of the control switches.
- Develop comprehensive procedures on rigging and moving loads, including egress, with overhead cranes and effectively train workers on the procedures.
- Implement a comprehensive crane inspection program and procedure and control the hazards identified.

UNITED STEELWORKERS OF AMERICA
USW
1000 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004
202-546-4000
www.usw.org

The information provided in this alert is based on confidential data and is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be used for legal or other purposes. The information is the property of the U.S. Department of Labor and is provided to you under license.

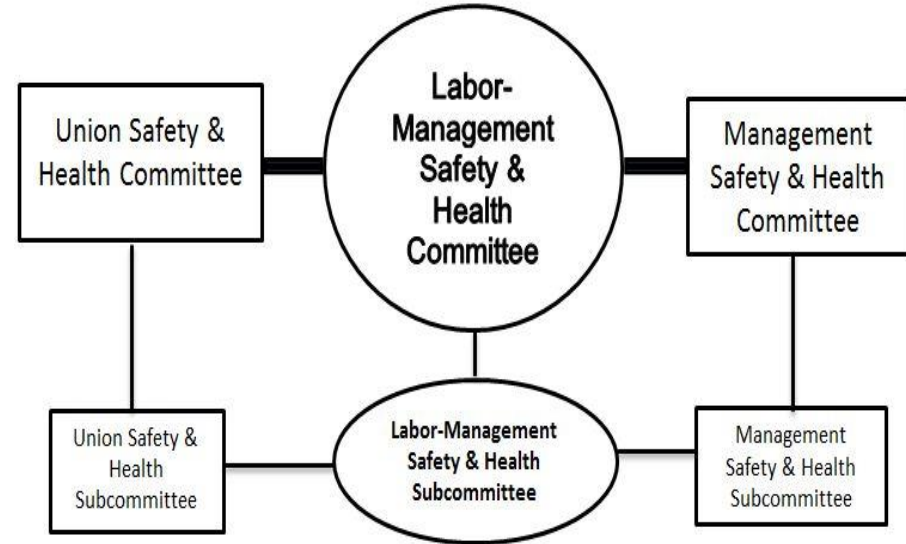
Eyes, Ears and Voices

- Members of the Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee should **represent major departments, shifts and work groups**; but we must also recognize that some small committees won't be as complex as larger committees.

Eyes, Ears and Voices

This is a sample Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee structure for a basic committee.

Note the presence of separate union and management safety and health committees; each supporting a Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee. If there are subcommittees (for example, an ergonomics subcommittee), the structure for the subcommittee would mirror the structure for the full labor-management safety and health committee.



Watch Out for These Pitfalls – Three Serious Deviations from Best Practices

1. The Deep, Dark Hole

A labor-management committee might have good discussions of health and safety problems and even discussions of possible solutions that would address identified hazards. But if nothing changes, if there are no real resolutions to identified problems coming out of these discussions, then the labor-management committee is little more than the deep, dark hole where health and safety problems go; never to be heard from again and never being resolved.

Watch Out for These Pitfalls – Three Serious Deviations from Best Practices

2. The Fix-it Committee

If a labor-management committee's meetings primarily deal with lists of maintenance jobs (repairs, etc.) and a discussion of which were completed and arguments over which were not, that committee is missing the boat on many other significant aspects of health and safety and improving conditions in the workplace. Mechanical repairs are important, but they should be done routinely (not saved for committee meetings). Discussion of lists of pending repairs should not dominate labor-management committee time and discussions.

Watch Out for These Pitfalls – Three Serious Deviations from Best Practices

3. The Employer-dominated Committee

It is actually a violation of the U.S. National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), Section 8(a)(2) for an employer to dominate a Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee. Employers:

- Must not choose bargaining unit members to serve on these committees (nor ask for volunteers);
- Must not unilaterally establish or disestablish these committees; and
- Must not unilaterally set the agenda, run the committee meetings, determine the length and times of when the committee meets, etc.

Questions and/or Comments

THANK YOU!