Creating a Safety Awards Program that Lasts

INCENTIVE
+
MOTIVATION =
RESULTS AND PRODUCTIVITY

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You can use a safety awards program to promote your safety management system (SMS). Safety awards programs encourage employee buy-in through the use of incentives and awards to motivate your workforce in participating and improving your SMS. Developing a safety awards program requires planning and collaboration and a successful program identifies and rewards behaviors that exceed job requirements.

Organizations frequently invest resources into safety awards programs only to find the money spent on incentives and awards does not drive SMS improvements. Below, you will find considerations for effectively establishing a safety awards program at your organization so you can avoid having an unsuccessful program.

LEARN ABOUT SERVICE GUIDANCE, SMS EXPECTATIONS, AND WORKPLACE NEEDS

Do your homework to determine if your Service/Agency and SMS criteria requires a safety awards program – many times guidelines are already in place for you to follow. Look at your existing SMS and determine where you see the most opportunities for improvement (e.g., safety culture, injuries/illnesses, conducting self-inspections, training). Review SMS-related goals to ensure they align with your organization's mission and SMS expectations. Examine your safety and health (S&H) budget to determine which incentive and award types are feasible. Develop some ideas to justify how establishing a safety awards program will drive SMS improvements and help meet your organization's mission.

GAIN LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Leadership support for your safety awards program is paramount. Meet with leadership to discuss the possibility of a site-specific safety awards program, your ideas, and the plan to move forward. Ensure leaders know their support and engagement is paramount to the program's success. Inform leaders how they can help by participating in the development, communication, and execution of the awards program. Ask leadership for their involvement in publically issuing awards and incentives, as well as directing funding for the program.

INVESTIGATE DETAILS FOR THE SAFETY AWARDS PROGRAM

Form a safety awards program team composed of different representatives of your organization to:

- Define program goals and how to use the program to improve the SMS
- Solicit the workforce to identify meaningful awards and incentives
- Discuss the nomination process and consider forming a nomination evaluation team
- Determine who to award or incentivize – those who go above and beyond S&H requirements, individuals, teams or groups, and those who accomplished a job well done
  - In any case, be all-inclusive of your workforce and make sure each employee is eligible to participate in the program and receive an award or incentive
- Decide when and how to issue awards and incentives.

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CONSIDER AWARDS AND INCENTIVES TO INCLUDE IN THE PROGRAM

Use Service guidance, employee input, and funding availability to choose the types of awards and incentives in your program. Discuss the awards program and possible incentives and awards with the Legal Office to ensure there are no conflicts in implementing the program or with the incentives offered. A partial list of examples of safety awards include:

Time off	Cash or gift cards	Merchandise premiums	Mystery prizes
Trophies or plaques	Certificates	Parties	A public pat on the back from leadership

ESTABLISH A WRITTEN SAFETY AWARDS PROGRAM

Develop a written program detailing the program requirements. A written program specifies roles and responsibilities, defines eligibility requirements and the terms of the program, and lists key information to successfully execute the program at your workplace. Be sure the written program supports Service-specific guidance, SMS requirements, and organizational needs to make it meaningful to your workplace. Consider adding a requirement to document issued awards and incentives to track the numbers and types of awards and incentives distributed.

> Make sure your safety awards program does not promote underreporting of S&H concerns.
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> Rewarding employees for not reporting injuries, illnesses, or hazards promotes undesired behaviors at your workplace.
>
> **OSHA DISAPPROVES**

PROMOTE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION

Employee participation makes your safety awards program successful. Periodically, ask employees for feedback on the safety awards program, the nomination process, the types of awards and incentives included, and how to make the program better. Continually think of ways to make the safety awards program more appealing to your employees. Consider using your safety awards team or administering a perception survey to gain this information.

MARKET YOUR PLAN

Market your safety awards program to receive maximum employee participation. Identify ways to communicate your program to all levels of the organization. Assign responsibility, as needed, and consider the use of posters, flyers, emails, leadership briefings, and supervisor safety talks to communicate the program. Consider putting together a "Safety Win" to show when employees receive an incentive or award and why they received it.

EVALUATE THE PROGRAM

Evaluate your program annually, at a minimum, to make sure it is meaningful to your employees, aligns with organizational expectations and needs, and is effective in improving your SMS.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: https://www.smscx.org/.