

Developing a Safety & Health Policy Letter

A safety and health (S&H) policy letter communicates your senior leader's vision and direction for S&H performance in the workplace. A S&H policy letter is typically short and concise, but the letter can be as long as your leaders see fit to communicate their message for S&H program expectations.

Your DoD Component may not require a S&H policy letter; however, many safety management system (SMS) models do require one. It is important to check the specific criteria and requirements for a S&H policy letter if you are planning to implement an SMS. This one pager identifies the topics to include in a policy letter and how to communicate it to your workforce. You can view a sample S&H policy letter on the next page.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A S&H POLICY LETTER

Your SMS criteria may include a list of commitments, statements, or values senior leaders must include in their S&H policy letters. Some common commitments include:

- Fulfilling legal or compliance requirements regarding S&H (e.g., Occupational Safety and Health Administration or DoD Component standards, federal agency responsibilities under Executive Order 12196, Title 29 Code of Federal Regulations Part 1960)
- Meeting SMS criteria and maintaining an effective SMS
- Setting S&H goals and objectives
- Providing adequate resources to maintain the SMS
- Identifying and eliminating or reducing S&H risks
- Ensuring S&H roles, responsibilities, and accountability
- Allowing employees to participate in the SMS
- Continuously improving S&H performance and the SMS

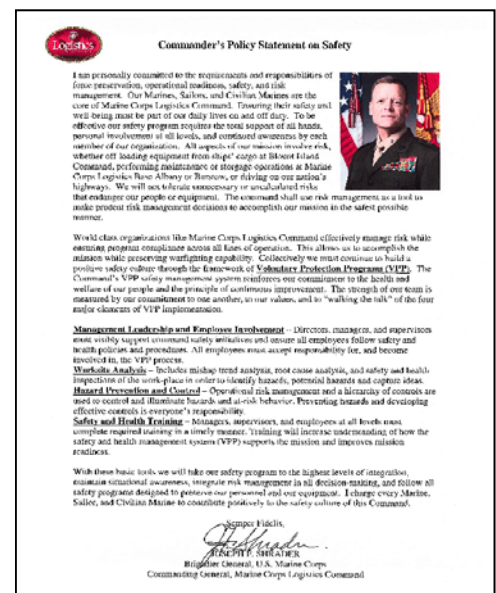


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COMMUNICATING YOUR LETTER

While it is important to have a S&H policy letter from your senior leader, it is equally important to effectively communicate it across the organization. Post the S&H policy letter in conspicuous and common areas (e.g., official bulletin boards, in break rooms). Post it electronically as well, using social media or your organization's internal websites. Brief employees on the S&H policy letter during new employee orientation and morning safety talks. Ask leadership to brief the letter during an all hands meeting. Communicating your S&H policy letter is an ongoing process. Revise, redistribute, and recommunicate the letter as senior leaders or policy letter content changes.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at:

<https://www.smcx.org/>.



SAMPLE SAFETY & HEALTH POLICY LETTER

Command logo or
letterhead

S&H POLICY LETTER

Date signed

It is my expectation that a safe and healthful working environment be maintained for all employees to enable the workforce to complete our mission. As such, I commit to ensuring all recognized safety and health (S&H) risks are promptly eliminated or controlled for the safety of our workforce. To help achieve this, we will implement a safety and occupational health management system (SOHMS) and become formally recognized for our effectiveness in ensuring a safe and healthful workplace. I commit to meeting and maintaining our SOHMS criteria to ensure worker safety and our mission remains uninterrupted from preventable injuries and illnesses. We will also strive to build upon our SOHMS to continuously improve our S&H performance over time.

Image of top
ranking leader
signing the letter

To that end, I expect all managers, supervisors, and employees to follow and fully implement the requirements of our written SOHMS. The Safety Office will provide administrative and technical guidance to help ensure compliance with all applicable laws, standards, procedures and instructions. All managers, supervisors, and employees are required to perform safety inspections of their work areas, report and correct S&H hazards, attend and complete required S&H training, follow prescribed S&H rules and procedures, wear appropriate personal protective equipment, and develop and utilize the job hazard analysis process. Supervisors shall enroll their employees in any applicable medical surveillance programs and ensure their workers receive their required examinations. All supervisors and employees shall continually review and update their work procedures accordingly to ensure they are following current S&H standards. All job-related injuries or illnesses shall be reported by employees to their supervisor as soon as possible. We will not compromise accident and injury prevention for production.

Every manager, supervisor, and employee at this command has the right and responsibility to report any perceived unsafe/unhealthful working condition to their supervisor as soon as possible to prevent injuries and illnesses to our personnel. If your supervisor is unavailable, use the chain of command, or contact the Safety Office staff. Reports may be submitted via telephone, email, in-person, our electronic reporting system, or through the use of forms available on official safety bulletin boards. Should you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact our Safety Office at ext. XXXX.

As Commander, one of my key objectives is ensuring your safety, health, and wellbeing. As such, my expectation is if any work task is unsafe we will not do it until the hazard is mitigated or we otherwise make it safe. I expect your support to fulfill my expectations to accomplish S&H excellence.

Leader's Signature

