

Safety & Health Training: Voluntary Protection Programs Requirements for Employees

Education and training provide your employees with a greater understanding of safety and health (S&H) and how they contribute to your safety and occupational health management system (SOHMS) implementation and sustainment. Employees are important to a successful SOHMS because they are most impacted by workplace culture and organizational policy and procedures. You must ensure they have adequate knowledge and expertise to support your efforts and drive improvements for a safe and healthful workplace. This one pager discusses the S&H training requirements for employees in a SOHMS, specifically the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) Safety and Health Management System.



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NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

New employee orientation gives your organization an opportunity to educate all employees *before* they begin work. It informs your employees of the hazards of their work, how to protect themselves from those hazards, how to respond in emergencies, what their employee S&H rights are, and the basics of OSHA VPP.

While there are minimums expected by OSHA for new employee orientation, it does not mean you should not strive to create a better, all-encompassing orientation based on your organization.

Conduct a needs assessment to determine any other preliminary information your employees should receive during orientation. Supplement organizational new employee orientation with an on-the-job orientation provided by managers or supervisors. This orientation helps provide employees with specifics regarding the unique risks, hazards, and S&H rules associated with their assigned work areas. Consider developing an onboarding checklist identifying the information to cover during orientation.

Required Topics

- Hazards at the worksite
- Protective measures
- Emergency evacuation
- Rights under the OSH Act
- OSHA VPP

OSH = Occupational Safety and Health



TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYEES

The criteria for OSHA VPP regarding S&H training for your employees is found in the [OSHA Cooperative and State Programs 03-01-005, VPP Policies and Procedures Manual](#), and the [OSHA Site-Based Participation Evaluation Report](#). You will have separate courses for particular S&H training, especially as required by specific work tasks, hazards, or OSHA standards. You may also cover some topics in a more thorough new employee orientation. The table below summarizes the required S&H training topics to include in your S&H training program.

Knowledge of Hazards	Required by Standards	Employee Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazards of their workplace How to recognize hazardous conditions Signs and symptoms of workplace-related illnesses Protective measures and PPE Emergency procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varies based on assigned job duties and hazards specific to the worksite Training Requirements in OSHA Standards Training Requirements in 29 CFR 1960, Subpart H 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazards identified, based on hazard analysis findings Position descriptions Specific work tasks and safe work procedures Assigned S&H responsibilities

CFR = Code of Federal Regulations PPE = personal protective equipment

ADDITIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING TOPICS

Do not rely solely on the OSHA VPP minimum requirements! Conduct a training needs assessment and evaluate the current experience and education of your employees against their hazard exposures and their assigned roles and responsibilities. This assessment helps determine whether you need to provide additional training to help employees work safely and contribute to your SOHMS. You can accomplish this assessment through additional new employee orientation, additional training courses, or even meetings and gatherings, like supervisor safety meetings. Training should focus on the following categories and topics, considering the hazards of the workplace and assigned duties:

Rights & Responsibilities	SOHMS and S&H Programs	S&H Information and Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rights and responsibilities under the OSH Act (general industry employees) Rights and responsibilities under 29 CFR 1960 (federal agency), found on your Federal Agency Poster Service/Agency anti-retaliation protections OSHA literature on whistleblower protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSHA VPP expectations Hazard control programs applicable to assigned work Reporting hazardous conditions Mishap and near-miss reporting S&H responsibilities (e.g., Unit Safety Officers, conducting S&H inspections, performing risk assessments) Employee involvement in OSHA VPP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S&H goals and objectives Leadership/management S&H policies or letters S&H accountability, performance, and disciplinary action Incentive programs S&H trend analysis results Occupational healthcare procedures S&H resources, references, and points of contact

Ensure training occurs in frequencies required by an applicable standard. Consider providing ongoing and refresher training too, even when not required by standard. Assess the importance of each training to determine suitable intervals for your organization. Refresher training helps employees retain the information better and ensures training when changes occur.

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