

Resources for Worker Safety Program Development

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Introduction

Why should pork producers care about worker safety? First of all, having a safe operation is good for business. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), an effective safety and health program can save \$4 to \$6 for every \$1 invested. It's the right thing to do, and doing it right pays off in lower costs, increased productivity, and higher employee morale [1]. Developing a worker safety program may seem like a daunting task. However, there are many free resources available to pork producers. These include government sources, such as OSHA, and materials developed by the pork industry itself.

Objective

To describe resources available to pork producers for worker safety program development.

Developing Your Safety Program

Safety programs are tailored to fit the needs of different operations. However, according to OSHA, there are five elements that every effective program should have [1]:

- Management leadership and employee participation (written policies, regular meetings, etc.)
- Workplace analysis (identification and elimination of hazards)
- Hazard prevention and control (equipment maintenance, safe work procedures, etc.)
- Safety and health training and education
- Program evaluation



After management buy-in has been received, one of the first tasks in worker safety program development is understand which OSHA requirements apply to your operation. The OSHA Compliance Assistance/Outreach website, available at http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/compliance_assistance/index.html, contains information to help pork producers achieve this. Though pork producers are not held to all General Industry standards, the Compliance Assistance Quick Start Guide for General Industry is a great place to start. Remember, there are additional standards that apply to agricultural operations. Some states also have additional safety requirements; see the following PIG factsheets: "What You Need to Know About OSHA" and "State-Specific OSHA Regulations" for more information.

Once you've learned which standards apply to your operation, a worksite analysis should be conducted. Generally, a worksite walk-through will be done; the purpose of this exercise is to identify and correct potential injury and illness hazards in the workplace. In addition to the walk-through, which may identify specific hazards, a hazard assessment (or job safety

assessment) should be conducted for each position in your operation. The JSA helps assess potential worker safety risks, to determine what personal protective equipment should be used, and to decide the safest ways to perform a task. The JSA should be reviewed and updated regularly and anytime that facilities or tasks change [2]. The National Pork Board has developed templates for JSAs involving many tasks in pork production. See <http://workersafety.pork.org/Default/hazard-assessment-forms.aspx> to download these forms for free.

If you don't feel comfortable performing a worksite analysis yourself, there are other ways to accomplish this task. You may hire an independent safety consultant familiar with pork production. Alternatively, consider OSHA's On-Site Consultation Program. This program offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses in all states across the country, with priority given to high-hazard worksites [3]. On-site Consultation services are separate from enforcement and do not result in penalties or citations [3].

The next step in developing your safety program is hazard prevention and control. A safety hierarchy structure can be used to describe the elements of hazard prevention and control, where the control methods at the top are more effective and protective than those at the bottom [4]. The safety hierarchy includes the following: elimination/substitution, engineering controls, safe work practices, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE).



Elimination or substitution of a hazard is always best, but may not be practical in some pork production operations. The next best strategy for hazard prevention and control is implementation of engineering controls. For example, to improve the air quality in barn, ventilation may be added to reduce the exposure to hazardous gases. Safe work practices include your company's general workplace rules and other operation-specific rules; through established safe work practices, employee exposure to hazards can be further reduced [5]. Work practices for specific OSHA standards that apply to pork production may include:

- Respiratory Protection [29 CFR 1910.134]
- Lockout/Tagout [29 CFR 1910.147]
- Confined Space Entry [29 CFR 1910.146]
- Hazard Communication [29 CFR 1910.1200, 29 CFR 1926.59]

Administrative controls and personal protective equipment are frequently used with existing processes where hazards are not particularly well controlled [4]. For example, workers may be allowed to work in a dusty environment for a limited time period, and respiratory protection may be required. Administrative controls and personal protective equipment programs may be relatively inexpensive to establish but, over the long term, can be very costly to sustain [4].

After your safety program has been developed and implemented, don't forget about evaluation. There are a number of outcomes that you can evaluate to determine if your safety program is working. These include [6]:

- Reduced employee injury and illness
- Increased employee satisfaction
- Improved safe work practices
- Reduced absenteeism
- Reduced workers' compensation costs or rates
- Increased productivity
- Improved workplace air quality

Summary

There are a number of free resources available to pork producers who are interested in developing a worker safety program. Most of these materials are produced by OSHA or by the National Pork Board, but independent safety consultants may also be valuable to some producers. For more information on worker safety in pork production visit <http://workersafety.pork.org/Default.aspx>.

References

- [1] OSHA. Q & A's for Small Business Employers. <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3163/osha3163.html>. Accessed October 1, 2011.
- [2] National Pork Board. Hazard Assessment Forms. <http://workersafety.pork.org/Default/hazard-assessment-forms.aspx>. Accessed October 2, 2011.
- [3] OSHA. On-Site Consultation. <http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/smallbusiness/consult.html>. Accessed October 2, 2011.
- [4] NIOSH. Engineering Controls. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/engcontrols/>. Accessed October 2, 2011.
- [5] OSHA. Hazard Prevention and Control. <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/safetyhealth/comp3.html>. Accessed October 2, 2011.
- [6] NIOSH. How to Evaluate Safety and Health Changes in the Workplace. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2004-135/pdfs/2004-135.pdf>. Accessed October 2, 2011.

FAQs

Q. How can I make a business case for safety?

A. Information provided by OSHA shows that safety is good business. Although there is no data specific to pork production, visit these OSHA websites for more information on why and how a safety program will benefit your pork production operation:

- Making the Business Case for Safety and Health <http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/products/topics/businesscase/index.html>
- Safety and Health Management Systems eTool <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/safetyhealth/index.html>

Q. What are some common hazards that are encountered in pork production?

A. Respiratory and hearing hazards are common, as are more general hazards such as slips, trips, and falls. Refer to the National Pork Board's Pork Production Safety System for more information, available electronically at <http://workersafety.pork.org/Default/pork-production-safety-system.aspx> or at the Pork Store.