Course Name	: Occupational Health and Safety
Course Code	: APBPH 2201
Course Level	: level 4
Credit Units	: 4 CU
Contact Hours	: 60 Hrs

Course Description

The Course deals with reasons for occupational health and safety, the management of systems in streamlining the policies and procedures regarding occupational health and safety. Further it details how planning of such services should be scheduled to improve the working environment of the employees. Understanding tragedies and risks involved in work places and how these are systematically assessed to provide remedies for a better employee welfare and stability at work.

Course Objective

- To help students get exposed to different strategies up held by employers to protect their employees.
- To increase the student's capacity in understanding the employee's freedom and rights.
- To ensure student's appreciation of the existence of employee policies and procedures for occupational health and safety

Course Content

Introduction to occupational safety and heath

- Definition
- Concepts
- Work situation
- Health precautions

Importance of Health and Safety at Work place

- Importance
- Dos
- Don'ts

Policies and Procedures for Health and Safety at work

- Policies
- Procedures
- Precautions

Managing Health and Safety at work place

- Introduction
- Work life balance
- Safety precautions

Conditions affecting Health and Safety at Work

- Factors to good health
- Safety issues

Responsibilities and Organization   for safety

- Employer responsibilities
- Employee responsibility
- Safety measure

Planning Safety training the   Safety training cycle

- Planning the training
- Safety training cycle
- Lessons learnt

Work Schedules and Policies

- Work schedules
- Policies involves

Risk Assessment at Work Place

- Risk
- Solutions

Health and Safety audit/ Workplace inspection

- Audit practice

- Audit procedures
- Work place inspection

Occupational Health Programmes

- Situational analysis
- Global arrangement
- Country programs
- Health issues involved

Mode of delivery   Face to face lectures

Assessment

Course work 40%

Exams   60%

Total Mark 100%

OCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MODULE

Occupational safety and health (**OSH**) is a cross-disciplinary area concerned with protecting the safety, health and welfare of people engaged in work or employment. The goal of occupational safety and health programs is to foster a safe and healthy work environment.[1] As secondary effects, OSH may also protect co-workers, family members, employers, customers, suppliers, nearby communities, and other members of the public who are impacted by the workplace environment as well as reduce medical care, sick leave and disability benefit costs. OSH may involve interactions among many subject areas, including occupational medicine, occupational (or industrial) hygiene, public health, safety engineering / industrial engineering, chemistry, health physics and ergonomics.

Definition

Since 1950, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have shared a common definition of occupational health. It was adopted by the Joint ILO/WHO Committee on Occupational Health at its first session in 1950 and revised at its twelfth session in 1995.

The definition reads:

"Occupational health should aim at: the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations; the prevention amongst workers of departures from health caused by their working conditions; the protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health; the placing and maintenance of the worker in an occupational environment adapted to his physiological and psychological capabilities; and, to summarize, the adaptation of work to man and of each man to his job

The main focus in occupational health is on three different objectives: (i) the maintenance and promotion of workers' health and working capacity; (ii) the improvement of working environment and work to become conducive to safety and health and (iii) development of work organizations and working cultures in a direction which supports health and safety at work and in doing so also promotes a positive social climate and smooth operation and may enhance productivity of the undertakings. The concept of working culture is intended in this context to mean a reflection of the essential value systems adopted by the undertaking concerned. Such a culture is reflected in practice in the managerial systems, personnel policy, principles for participation, training policies and quality management of the undertaking."

Reasons for Occupational health and safety

- Moral: duty of reasonable care; unacceptability of putting health and safety of people at risk; society's attitude to moral obligations; making the moral case to senior management
- Legal: the preventive (enforcement), punitive (through criminal sanctions), and compensatory effects of law
- Economic: direct and indirect costs associated with incidents and/or unhealthy workplaces and their impact on the organisation (includes insured and un-insured costs)

Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems

International

The International Labour Organization (ILO): published a standard in 2001 titled ILO-OSH 2001, which is similar to OHSAS 18001. The system is based on five

steps Policy, Organizing, Planning & Implementation, Evaluation, and Action for improvement. This is supported by auditing with an emphasis on continuous improvement. The ILO management system was created to assist employers to keep pace with rapidly shifting and competitive industrial environments. The ILO recognizes that national legislation is essential, but sometimes insufficient on its own to address the challenges faced by industry, and therefore elected to ensure free and open distribution of administrative tools in the form of occupational health and safety management system guidance for everyone. This open access forum is intended to provide the tools for industry to create safe and healthy working environments and foster positive safety cultures within the organizations.[3]

OHSAS 18000 is an international occupational health and safety management system specification. It comprises two parts, 18001 and 18002 and embraces a number of other publications. OHSAS 18000 is the internationally recognized assessment specification for occupational health and safety management systems. It was developed by a selection of leading trade bodies, international standards and certification bodies to address a gap where no third-party certifiable international standard exists. This internationally recognized specification for occupational health and safety management system operates on the basis of policy, planning, implementation and operation, checking and corrective action, management review, and continual improvement.

The British Standards - Occupational Health and Safety management Systems Requirements Standard BS OHSAS 18001 was developed within the framework of the ISO standards series. Allowing it to integrate better into the larger system of ISO certifications. ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems and ISO 14001 Environmental Management System can work in tandem with BS OHSAS 18001/18002 to complement each other and form a better overall system. Each component of the system is specific, auditable, and accreditable by a third party after review.

Also Standards Australia and the Association Française de Normalisation (AFNOR) in France have developed occupational safety and health management standards.

United Kingdom

Guidance note HSG65: Successful Health and Safety Management, achieves a systematic management of health and safety through a six step system, policy, organizing, planning and implementing, measuring performance, reviewing performance. These components are all linked to an audit system providing for evaluation and a feedback loop to improve performance.[6] This systematic

approach allows flexibility for the company through good business planning to strategically apply resources according to risk priorities.

National implementing legislation

Different states take different approaches to legislation, regulation, and enforcement. Also economic incentives for compliance to rules and general good occupational safety and health practice vary among nations. In the EU, for example, some member states promote OSH by providing public monies as subsidies, grants or financing, while others have created tax system incentives for OSH investments. A third group of EU member states has experimented with using workplace accident insurance premium discounts for companies or organisations with strong OSH records.

Number of full-time OSH inspectors per 100,000 full-time employees	
Italy	17,7
Finland	17,5
Denmark	11,9
UK	11,1
Norway	10,6
Sweden	10
Belgium	5,3
Netherlands	4,8
Ireland	4,5
Greece	4,1
France	3,5
Spain	2,1

The number of OSH personnel used to ensure compliance to OSH rules varies markedly between countries.[8]

European Union

In the European Union, member states have enforcing authorities to ensure that the basic legal requirements relating to occupational health and safety are met. In many EU countries, there is strong cooperation between employer and worker organisations (e.g. unions) to ensure good OSH performance as it is recognized this has benefits for both the worker (through maintenance of health) and the enterprise (through improved productivity and quality). In 1996, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work was founded.

Member states of the European Union have all transposed into their national legislation a series of directives that establish minimum standards on occupational health and safety. These directives (of which there are about 20 on a variety of topics) follow a similar structure requiring the employer to assess the workplace risks and put in place preventive measures based on a hierarchy of control. This hierarchy starts with elimination of the hazard and ends with personal protective equipment.

However, certain EU member states admit to having lacking quality control in occupational safety services, to situations in which risk analysis takes place without any on-site workplace visits and to insufficient implementation of certain EU OSH directives. Based on this, it is hardly surprising that the total societal costs of work-related health problems and accidents vary from 2.6% to 3.8% of GNP between the EU member states.[9]

UK

In the UK, health and safety legislation is drawn up and enforced by the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities (the local council) under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.[10] Increasingly in the UK the regulatory trend is away from prescriptive rules, and towards risk assessment. Recent major changes to the laws governing asbestos and fire safety management embrace the concept of risk assessment.

Denmark

In Denmark, occupational safety and health is regulated by the Danish Act on Working Environment and cooperation at the workplace. The Danish Working Environment Authority carries out inspections of companies, draws up more detailed rules on health and safety at work and provides information on health and safety at work. The result of each inspection is made public on the web pages of the Danish Working Environment Authority so that the general public, current and prospective employees, customers and other stakeholders can inform themselves about whether a given organization has passed the inspection, should they wish to do so.[13]

United States

In the United States, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 created both the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).[14] OSHA, in the U.S. Department of Labor, is responsible for developing and enforcing workplace safety and health regulations. NIOSH, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is focused on research, information, education, and training in occupational safety and health.

OSHA has been regulating occupational safety and health since 1971. Occupational safety and health regulation of a limited number of specifically defined industries was in place for several decades before that, and broad regulations by some individual states was in place for many years prior to the establishment of OSHA.

Canada

In Canada, workers are covered by provincial or federal labour codes depending on the sector in which they work. Workers covered by federal legislation (including those in mining, transportation, and federal employment) are covered by the Canada Labour Code; all other workers are covered by the health and safety legislation of the province they work in. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), an agency of the Government of Canada, was created in 1978 by an Act of Parliament. The act was based on the belief that all Canadians had "...a fundamental right to a healthy and safe working environment." CCOHS is mandated to promote safe and healthy workplaces to help prevent work-related injuries and illnesses.

Malaysia

In Malaysia, the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) under the Ministry of Human Resource is responsible to ensure that the safety, health and welfare of workers in both the public and private sector is upheld. DOSH is responsible to enforce the Factories and Machinery Act 1967 and the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994.

People's Republic of China

In the People's Republic of China, the Ministry of Health is responsible for occupational disease prevention and the State Administration of Work Safety for safety issues at work. On the provincial and municipal level, there are Health Supervisions for occupational health and local bureaus of Work Safety for safety. The "Occupational Disease Control Act of PRC" came into force on May 1, 2002. and Work safety Act of PRC on November 1, 2002. The Occupational Disease

Control Act is under revising. The prevention of occupational disease is still in its initial stage compared with industried countries such as the US or UK.

Roles and Responsibilities of Occupational Health and Safety Professionals

Safety Professionals in Europe

In Norway, the main required tasks of an Occupational Health and Safety Practitioner include:

- Systematic evaluations of the working environment
- Endorsing preventative measures which eliminate reasons for illnesses in the work place
- Giving information in the subject of employees' health
- Giving information on occupational hygiene, ergonomics and also environmental and safety risks in the work place

In the Netherlands, required tasks for health and safety staff are only summarily defined, and include:

- Voluntary medical examinations
- A consulting room on the work environment for the workers
- Health check assessments (if needed for the job concerned)

'The main influence on the Dutch law on the job of the safety professional is through the requirement on each employer to use the services of a certified working conditions service to advise them on health and safety'. A 'certified service' must employ sufficient numbers of four types of certified experts to cover the risks in the organisations which use the service:

- A safety professional
- An occupational hygienist
- An occupational physician
- A work and organisation specialist.[21]

It shows in Table 1 (based on the European Network of Safety and Health Practitioner Organisations [ENHSPO] survey to) that in Norway, 37 % of Health and Safety practitioners had a MSc education level, and 14% in the Netherlands; 44% were BSc graduates and 63% in the Netherlands; and 19% were of a Technician level and 23% in the Netherlands.

Safety Professionals in the USA

The main tasks undertaken by the OHS practitioner in the USA include:

- Develop processes, procedures, criteria, requirements, and methods to attain the best possible management of the hazards and exposures that can cause injury to people, and damage property, or the environment;

- Apply good business practices and economic principles for efficient use of resources to add to the importance of the safety processes;
- Promote other members of the company to contribute by exchanging ideas and other different approaches to make sure that every one in the corporation possess OHS knowledge and have functional roles in the development and execution of safety procedures;
- Assess services, outcomes, methods, equipment, workstations, and procedures by using qualitative and quantitative methods to recognise the hazards and measure the related risks;
- Examine all possibilities, effectiveness, reliability, and expenditure to attain the best results for the company concerned[23]

Knowledge required by the OHS professional in USA include:

- Constitutional and case law controlling safety, health, and the environment
- Operational procedures to plan/develop safe work practices
- Safety, health and environmental sciences
- Design of hazard control systems (i.e. fall protection, scaffoldings)
- Design of recordkeeping systems that take collection into account, as well as storage, interpretation, and dissemination
- Mathematics and statistics
- Processes and systems for attaining safety through design

Some skills required by the OHS professional in the USA include (but are not limited to):

- Understanding and relating to systems, policies and rules
- Holding checks and having control methods for possible hazardous exposures
- Mathematical and statistical analysis
- Examining manufacturing hazards
- Planning safe work practices for systems, facilities, and equipment
- Understanding and using safety, health, and environmental science information for the improvement of procedures
- Interpersonal communication skills

Different areas of need and focus between countries and regions

Because different countries take different approaches to ensuring occupational safety and health, areas of OSH need and focus also vary between countries and regions. Similar to the findings of the ENHSPO survey conducted in Australia, the Institute of Occupational Medicine found that in the UK, there is a need to put a greater emphasis on work-related illness. [26] In contrast, in Australia and the USA a major responsibility of the OHS professional is to keep company directors and managers aware of the issues that they face in regards to Occupational Health and Safety principles and legislation. However, in some other areas of Europe, it is precisely this which has been lacking: "Nearly half of senior managers and company directors do not have an up-to-date understanding of their health and safety-related duties and responsibilities." [27]

Identifying Safety and Health Hazards

Hazards, risks, outcomes

The terminology used in OSH varies between countries, but generally speaking:

- A hazard is something that can cause harm if not controlled.
- The outcome is the harm that results from an uncontrolled hazard.
- A risk is a combination of the probability that a particular outcome will occur and the severity of the harm involved.

"Hazard", "risk", and "outcome" are used in other fields to describe e.g. environmental damage, or damage to equipment. However, in the context of OSH, "harm" generally describes the direct or indirect degradation, temporary or permanent, of the physical, mental, or social well-being of workers. For example, repetitively carrying out manual handling of heavy objects is a hazard. The outcome could be a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) or an acute back or joint injury. The risk can be expressed numerically (e.g. a 0.5 or 50/50 chance of the outcome occurring during a year), in relative terms (e.g. "high/medium/low"), or with a multi-dimensional classification scheme (e.g. situation-specific risks).

Hazard Assessment

Hazard analysis or hazard assessment is a process in which individual hazards of the workplace are identified, assessed and controlled/eliminated as close to source (location of the hazard) as reasonable and possible. As technology, resources, social expectation or regulatory requirements change, hazard analysis focuses controls more closely toward the source of the hazard. Thus hazard control is a dynamic program of prevention. Hazard-based programs also have the advantage of not assigning or implying there are "acceptable risks" in the workplace. A hazard-based program may not be able to eliminate all risks, but neither does it accept "satisfactory" -- but still risky—outcomes. And as those who calculate and manage the risk are usually managers while those exposed to

the risks are a different group, workers, a hazard-based approach can by-pass conflict inherent in a risk-based approach.

Risk assessment

Further information: Risk assessment#Risk assessment in public health

Modern occupational safety and health legislation usually demands that a risk assessment be carried out prior to making an intervention. It should be kept in mind that risk management requires risk to be managed to a level which is as low as is reasonably practical.

This assessment should:

- Identify the hazards
- Identify all affected by the hazard and how
- Evaluate the risk
- Identify and prioritize appropriate control measures

The calculation of risk is based on the likelihood or probability of the harm being realized and the severity of the consequences. This can be expressed mathematically as a quantitative assessment (by assigning low, medium and high likelihood and severity with integers and multiplying them to obtain a risk factor), or qualitatively as a description of the circumstances by which the harm could arise.

The assessment should be recorded and reviewed periodically and whenever there is a significant change to work practices. The assessment should include practical recommendations to control the risk. Once recommended controls are implemented, the risk should be re-calculated to determine of it has been lowered to an acceptable level. Generally speaking, newly introduced controls should lower risk by one level, i.e., from high to medium or from medium to low.

Common workplace hazard groups

- **Mechanical hazards** include:

  By type of agent:

  - Impact force

- o Collisions
  - o Falls from height
  - o Struck by objects
  - o Confined space
  - o Slips and trips
  - o Falling on a pointed object
  - o Compressed air/high pressure fluids (such as cutting fluid)
  - o Entanglement
  - o Equipment-related injury

By type of damage

  - o Crushing
  - o Cutting
  - o Friction and abrasion
  - o Shearing
  - o Stabbing and puncture

- Other **physical hazards**:
  - o Noise
  - o Vibration
  - o Lighting
  - o Barotrauma (hypobaric/hyperbaric pressure)
  - o Ionizing radiation
  - o Electricity
  - o Asphyxiation
  - o Cold stress (hypothermia)
  - o Heat stress (hyperthermia)
  - o Dehydration (due to sweating)

- **Biological hazards** include:
  - o Bacteria
  - o Virus
  - o Fungi
  - o Blood-borne pathogens
  - o Tuberculosis

Future developments

Occupational health and safety has come a long way from its beginnings in the heavy industry sector. It now has an impact on every worker, in every work

place, and those charged with managing health and safety are having more and more tasks added to their portfolio. The most significant responsibility is environmental protection. The skills required to manage occupational health and safety are compatible with environmental protection, which is why these responsibilities are so often bolted onto the workplace health and safety professional.

Healthy city

On an international scale, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have begun focussing attention on the labour environments in developing nations with projects such as Healthy CitiesThis focus is well-placed, as many developing countries are caught in a trap: They have fewer resources to invest in OSH, yet because of this, they must also suffer from increased costs of work-related illnesses and accidents. A 2007 Factsheet from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work states:

"Countries with less developed OSH systems spend a far higher percentage of GDP on work-related injury and illness — taking resources away from more productive activities. [...] The ILO estimates that work-related illness and accidents cost up to 10 % of GDP in Latin America, compared with just 2.6 % to 3.8 % in the EU.

Future Risks

Nanotechnology

Main articles: Health implications of nanotechnology and Environmental implications of nanotechnology

Nanotechnology is another example of a new technology with few studies available that access the risks to human health. A Swiss survey of one hundred thirty eight companies using or producing nanoparticulate matter in 2006, resulted in forty completed questionnaires. Sixty five per cent of respondent companies stated they did not have a formal risk assessment process for dealing with nanoparticulate matter

Nanotechnology in the near future presents unique challenges for occupational health and safety professionals to anticipate and control, this will only become more difficult as nanostructures become more complex. The size of the particles renders most containment and personal protective equipment ineffective. The toxicology values for macro sized industrial substances are rendered inaccurate due to the unique nature of nanoparticulate matter. As nanoparticulate matter decreases in size its relative surface area increases dramatically, increasing any catalytic effect or chemical reactivity substantially versus the known value for the macro substance. This presents a new set of challenges in the near future to

rethink contemporary measures to safeguard the health and welfare of employees against a nanoparticulate substance that most conventional controls were not designed to manage

Relationship to occupational health psychology

Occupational health psychology (OHP), a related discipline, is a relatively new field that combines elements of occupational health and safety, industrial/organizational psychology, and health psychology.[32] The field is concerned with identifying work-related psychosocial factors that adversely affect the health of people who work. OHP is also concerned with developing ways to effect change in workplaces for the purpose of improving the health of people who work. For more detail on OHP, see the section on occupational health psychology.

General

- ANSI Z10
- Environment, Health and Safety - EHS, HSE, SHE or HES
- Material safety data sheet - MSDS
- Mountain & Plains ERC - A NIOSH-Funded Education and Research Center in Colorado
- Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems - OHSMS
- Occupational Medicine Specialists of Canada
- OHSAS 18001
- Public safety

Government organizations

- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (Canada)
- Congressional Office of Compliance (US)
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU)
- Safe Work Australia (Australia)
- Health and Safety Executive (UK)
- Health for Work Adviceline for small businesses (UK)
- Information Center of Occupational Safety and Health (Israel)
- Institute of Occupational Safety_and_Health[1]
- International Labour Organisation (United Nations)

Employee Health and Safety
For smooth functioning of an organization, the employer has to ensure safety and security of his employees. Health and safety form an integral part of work environment. A work environment should enhance the well being of employees and thus should be accident free.

The terms health, safety and security are closely related to each other.

Health is the general state of well being. It not only includes physical well being, but also emotional and mental well being. Safety refers to the act of protecting the physical well being of an employee. It will include the risk of accidents caused due to machinery, fire or diseases. Security refers to protecting facilities and equipments from unauthorized access and protecting
employees   while   they   are   on   work.

In organizations the responsibility of employee health and safety falls on the supervisors or HR manager. An HR manager can help in coordinating safety programs, making employees aware about the health and safety policy of the company, conduct formal safety training, etc. The supervisors and departmental heads are responsible for maintaining safe working conditions. Responsibilities of managers:

- Monitor health and safety of employees
- Coach employees to be safety conscious
- Investigate accidents
- Communicate about safety policy to employees

Responsibilities of supervisors/departmental heads:

- Provide technical training regarding prevention of accidents
- Coordinate health and safety programs
- Train employees on handling facilities an equipments
- Develop safety reporting systems
- Maintaining safe working conditions

When Tragedy Strikes: Eleven Tips for Your Workplace Response

Tragedies that affect the Workplace

Personal Tragedies Affect Workplaces

In our workplaces, more personal tragedies also occur regularly. Coworkers and their family members die. Customers file for bankruptcy and leave hundreds unemployed. Manufacturing plants burn down. Friends are diagnosed with terminal illnesses. An incident of workplace violence leaves coworkers dead.

While not as riveting and all-encompassing as major, national tragedies, the more personal, closer-to-home tragedies and the national, bigger-than-life tragedies have much in common for people in workplaces.

National Tragedies Affect Workplaces

To start, we frequently find out about national tragedies while we are at work. We gather with coworkers watching national news unfold on televisions and computer screens. We gather in groups and talk about the event.

We share information and talk incessantly. We reach out to understand how the tragedy is affecting our associates. We look out for each other. As an example, many of us watched the planes crash into the World Trade Center while at work.

With the more personal tragedies, our actions and wishes are likely less public, but there is that same sense of wanting to do something to help and not knowing what to do.

In most instances, for positive mental health, we reach out to each other for friendship and support. Sometimes, it's the more personal tragedies about which we feel the most inadequate. After all, they are occurring right here - and we should be able to help.

A national tragedy or a personal tragedy has a huge impact at work. And, organizations can help people successfully weather the tragedy. They can ease the passage people experience during tragedy. They can help people deal with the helplessness and grief they experience during tragedy. They can provide a support system to help prop people up during grief.

These ideas will help you help your employees as they experience either a national tragedy or the regular, life-changing tragedies that occur within your own workplace.

Recommended Actions During Tragedy and Heartbreak

Make Sure People Are Safe

If the incident is happening in your workplace, make certain people are safe before you do anything else. Implement your disaster plan, ring the fire alarm, do whatever your company emergency evacuation plan prescribes for safety. The plan should designate a meeting location, where attendance can be taken, so you know the members of your work force are safe.

Cut People Some Slack

People cannot return to productive work immediately upon hearing about a tragedy. If you expect them to continue working, people will make errors and mistakes because they are distracted by the events or information. Don't pretend. Just tell people that it is all right to focus their energy on the happening. If you do this, most individuals will return to productive work more quickly when their need for information and interests are satisfied.

Assess the Personal Involvement of Employees

If the tragedy impacts an individual personally, offer release time, support, a ride, help obtaining information, and anything else the individual appears to need. For major and direct impacts on your workplace, you may need to decide whether to continue paying employees, even though they are not working, for a period of time. You may offer shelter, relocation, or other forms of compensation during tragedy, too.

Give People Information

If you can do so without totally disrupting work, provide televisions and computer screens so workers are informed about events as they unfold – even if only in break rooms. In more personal tragedies, give all employees as much information as possible, as soon as the information is available. (I do not mean providing employee confidential information, but other information is essential.) Information helps people process the events. Turn on radios, broadcast breaking news over your speaker system and recognize that people will call friends and acquaintances to share information and compare notes. The closer you are to the tragedy, the more people will want to know.

Provide Places for People to Gather and Talk

Many people take comfort in being close to other people when tragedy strikes. You can informally provide opportunities for this interaction by leaving conference rooms with televisions unused. Wheel the television into a break room. Bring in lunch for your staff so people are encouraged to spend time with each other for encouragement, shared grief, and support. Suggest a pot luck lunch for the second or third day, depending on the nature of the tragedy. Many people talk incessantly during a tragic event; others suffer silently. You will want to draw your silent people out when possible. Central gatherings will help.

Schedule a Meeting to Share Information

In a national tragedy, people want to know the latest information about

what is happening. They want reassurances that they and their loved ones are safe. In more personal workplace sorrows, correct information is also important.

Without breaking the confidentiality of the people involved, and with their permission, tell people as much as you can. The more legitimate information people have, the less likely they are to depend on rumors, the less time they spend seeking information.

Give People Something to Do to Help

In times of sorrow, when people draw together for sustenance, many want something to do to help solve the problem or to ease the situation. In the instance of the terrorist attack on America, stories of volunteerism, sharing of food and space, giving blood and helping out neighbors and friends abounded. The same kind of stories dominated the Gulf Coast residents' response to Hurricane Katrina.

People want to bring a casserole to the bereaved family, send flowers to honor the dead and the living, send memories of the employee to the family, and make donations to favorite charities.

Several of my clients held company meetings to bring people up-to-date and share how to donate to relief and the location of the nearest blood donor center during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Others hold company raffles, with the money designated for donations; they purchase raffle items with American Express travel points and employees donate other offerings for the raffle. Many employers match the amount collected. Some companies match employee donations up to a certain amount of dollars with a receipt from the charity. I am sure you can imagine more ways to help that are congruent with your workplace culture.

Make Managers and HR Staff Available

Supervisors and HR staff members are critical company members during tragedy. In a study done years ago by the American Psychological Association, employees overwhelmingly listed personal attention from the supervisor as one of the most rewarding aspects of work. Free up your calendars when tragedy strikes and spend time walking through the workplace and meeting with people who need support or just a listening ear. Be visibly available.

Offer Employee Assistance

If your company has an Employee Assistance Program or counseling available via your health plan, make sure employees know it is available for people who need it. Some programs offer counseling in the workplace. Explore possibilities.

Be Prepared Before Disaster or Tragedy Strikes

Every organization needs a disaster plan. You also need plans for fire, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, and any other natural disaster that can occur in your area. All employees should be trained in the specifics of the plan. Prepare people about what actions to take if they are confronted with potential injury in the workplace. Think about whatever is likely to happen and make a plan to handle it – in advance.

Make Grief Training Part of Your Training Program

When tragedy strikes, people are uncertain about what to do. As an example, the spouse of a coworker dies. Close work associates attend the funeral or remembrance ceremony. They may supply the family with food and time. When the employee returns to work after their bereavement leave, however, few fellow employees know what to do.

Should they offer sympathy or encourage the person to talk about his loss. The employee is often isolated because people don't know what to say or do, so they do nothing.

Teach your staff members about grief, the stages of grief, how to deal with grief in self and coworkers, how to tell children about a tragedy, and more. It will support your workplace positive morale, build employee self-confidence, and lessen the long term impacts of tragedy.

Tragedy does happen in this world. From major national tragedies to more intimate, personal tragedies, we all experience sorrow and tragedy in our lives. I trust these ideas will help you address those that occur or unfold in your workplace more effectively.

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