

## Fifteen Things Every Union Leader Should Know About Safety and Health

1. The twin goals of a union safety and health program are to improve working conditions and to build the union. These goals are equally important. In fact, you can't do either one well unless you do both.
2. Management and the union have different safety and health goals. Management may care about safety in its own right, but may be more concerned with workers' compensation costs and public image. Building the union is never one of management's goals.
3. Joint labor-management safety and health activities are a form of collective bargaining. Even if you don't see it that way, management does.
4. Safety and health isn't a technical issue. Although technical knowledge is sometimes helpful, strategy and organization are much more important.
5. Every local union needs a union safety and health committee. You should create one even if you don't have a joint safety and health committee. You don't need the employer's permission to establish a union committee.
6. It's a good idea to have a joint safety and health committee, with representatives from the union and from management. Joint committees are a good way to resolve ongoing safety and health problems.
7. Even if you have a joint committee, you still need a union committee. The union committee can be made up of union members on the joint committee or membership in general.
8. The union side of the joint committee should meet by themselves as often as they meet with management. Separate meetings are important to set union priorities and plan strategy. Can you imagine what would happen if your bargaining committee met only with the company at contract time, and never by itself?
9. You should never, ever allow the company to appoint your safety and health reps, to veto the union's choices or to dismiss your reps from their union positions.
10. "Behavior" contributes to some accidents. But hazards cause all of them. It's easier to fix hazards than to change human nature.

11. Safety programs that focus on behavior tell our members that they are the problem. We believe that our members and their union are the solution.
12. Union safety reps should think of themselves as organizers, promoting safety and health in a way that builds the loyalty and commitment of membership. That means involving members whenever possible, and communicating with them effectively, both in written form and by word of mouth.
13. The best way to find hazards is for union safety and health reps to talk to every worker about his or her job, and how to make it safer and easier.
14. Enlisting members in pushing for improvements is a good way to bring membership together to create a safer workplace.
15. You're not alone. USW is here to support you, and can provide you with the resources you need. Every district has a safety and health coordinator, and our International Health, Safety and Environment Department is available by phone, fax or e-mail.