

# PRÉVENTEX

## HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES

### How to have productive meetings

There is nothing like a good, productive meeting to settle issues and find solutions. This applies to all aspects of work, including the prevention of work-related accidents.

Some meetings work well; things get done. Some others, however, are not efficient at all. Discussions go on forever and the committee just doesn't make headway.

What category of meeting does your health and safety committee belong to ?

This information bulletin provides some advice on making your meetings efficient and productive.

#### PREPARATION

##### Good meetings must be carefully prepared

First, the contents. A relevant agenda is essential. Co-chairs consult committee members and prepare it together. Issues at hand are researched and documented, in order to make discussions easier and avoid wasting time. The agenda takes into account issues and discussion arising from the previous meeting.

The agenda is circulated well before the meeting so that committee members have ample time to prepare and gather material required for the meeting. Minutes from the previous meeting should be reviewed to ensure follow up on decisions taken then.

#### NOTICE AND AGENDA

##### Convening the meeting

The co-chair who will be presiding over the meeting is responsible for serving notice of the meeting and forwarding the agenda to all people concerned.

The notice includes the date, time and location of the committee meeting. It should be sent at least one week in advance so that members have time to prepare. The committee sets the specific delay for convening meetings.

#### QUORUM AND START UP

##### Do you have quorum ?

The quorum is the minimal number of members required to make the meeting valid. The Committee's internal rules of procedure should specify the minimum number of representatives from each party whose presence is required to hold a valid meeting.

If quorum is established, the meeting may start. Begin by defining the goal and objectives to be reached, particularly if it is a special meeting. Remind participants of the general rules applying to discussions: focus debates on ideas, finish dealing with an issue before taking on another, etc.

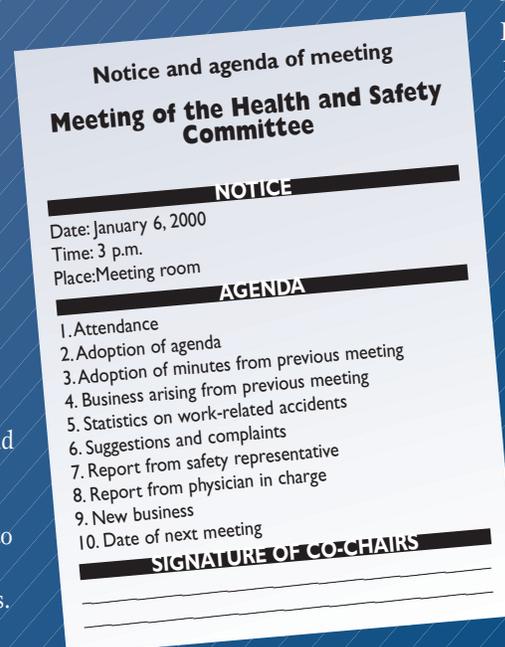
Proceed with the reading and adoption of the agenda. Once adopted, the agenda serves as a basis to control the time period allocated to each item. This avoids new issues being unexpectedly added on.

## Préventex

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Preparation  
Quorum and start up  
Facilitating  
Vote  
Closing  
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Minutes





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## FACILITATING

### Facilitate your meeting

Health and Safety Committees (HSC) should provide a forum for discussion, sharing ideas and finding solutions. The atmosphere should be pleasant so that members feel free to take an active and useful part in the proceedings. The facilitator is responsible for creating this conducive working climate by helping members to express their opinions, discuss them and make the right choices. Facilitators should not try to influence participants or impose their own ideas.

The role of facilitators is to help the group meet its objectives and to that end, they must help the committee get organized and make efficient use of its time and energy. Facilitators will assist by identifying barriers along the way. In short, they are at the service of committees.

The role of facilitators covers three main aspects: clarifying, organizing and facilitating.

#### Roles of facilitators

##### Clarifying

- Define
- Rephrase
- Question
- Make links

##### Organizing

- Give the right to speak
- Motivate participation
- Control participation
- Manage time

##### Facilitating

- Greet
- Listen and observe
- Express ideas and emotions
- Ensure objectivity
- Dissipate tension
- Provide feedback

Before the meeting, the facilitator will arrange the room so as to make participants comfortable and ensure that nothing is missing: water, audiovisual equipment, board, paper, pencils, etc. The objective of the meeting can be written out on the board.

At the start of the meeting, the facilitator make sure that the objective is clear to everyone and that all participants agree on the theme or issues at hand. The facilitator spells out the meeting procedure and reminds participants of operating rules. He or she sets the prescribed time for the meeting and generally aims to create an atmosphere conducive to productive discussions.

During the meeting, the facilitator tries to help participants understand each other. He or she may rephrase questions and opinions, making links with other interventions. The facilitator makes sure that each person has a chance to be heard and brings discussions into line with the meeting's objectives.

At the end of meetings, the facilitator provides a summary, reviews allocated duties and sets the date for the next meeting.

## VOTE

### If you must take a vote

Building a consensus is the best option, but it is not always possible and a vote may be necessary. Rules about voting are found in the Act respecting occupational health and safety and in the Regulation respecting health and safety committees. All workers' and employers' representatives are allowed one vote. Guests and observers (physician in charge or other) do not have the right to vote. If representatives of either party fail to agree on the position to be adopted with regard to a particular question, the position of that party is that which has received the majority vote from its representatives.

## CLOSING

### Now that the work is done

Try to end the meeting on a positive note. This is encouraging for members and help them look forward to the next meeting. For instance, you may point out that the entire agenda was covered.

Take the time to review your accomplishments, emphasizing the good parts and the decisions taken during the meeting. Remind participants of their duties, specifying who is in charge of every issue and what should be expected for the next meeting.

Before concluding the meeting, set the date for the next one. This is an essential step!

## FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

### Meeting schedule

Many people wonder how often HSC meetings are held. Here is some information about this question.

The number of meetings depends on the size of the establishment and the complexity of its operations. Each committee determines the frequency of meetings in accordance with its specific requirements.

## Reading material

Préventex : Mise sur pied et fonctionnement du comité de santé et de sécurité ; 1995

APSAM : Vers un comité de santé et de sécurité efficace ; 1999

Centre patronal de santé et de sécurité du travail du Québec : Les outils du comité de santé-sécurité ; 1997

Association paritaire pour la santé et la sécurité du travail – secteur fabrication de produits en métal et produits électriques : Guide du participant, L'animation de réunion ; 1990

PÉRUSSE, Michel : Les comités de SST/Contexte favorable nécessaire ; Partie 1, Travail et Santé, vol. 10, no 1, pp. 32-38

PÉRUSSE, Michel : Les comités de SST, Aide-toi et le ciel t'aidra, Partie 2, Travail et Santé, vol. 10, no 2, pp. 45-48

PÉRUSSE, Michel : Le diable et les CSS, Travail et Santé, vol. 12, no 23, pp. 36-39

POULIOT, Gaston : Les pièges à éviter pour être plus efficace ; Objectif Prévention, vol. 17, no 3, pp. 7-8

POULIOT, Gaston : Comment fonctionner en équipe au sein des comités : expérience ontarienne ; Objectif Prévention, vol. 17, no 4, pp. 26-28

The Regulation respecting health and safety committees provides the following terms of reference.

Meetings are held during normal working hours, unless the committee decides otherwise. Whatever the time chosen, employees are reputed to be at work when taking part in committee meetings.

Special meetings may be convened. Rules for convening and holding special meetings must be included in your internal rules of procedure.

### Size of establishment

Under 25 employees

25 to 100 employees

Over 100 employees

### Frequency of meetings

Once every three months

Once every two months

Once a month

## PROBLEM SOLVING

### How to solve problems

Even if you follow every rule for preparing and facilitating meetings, problems are sure to arise sooner or later. A good problem-solving technique can come in handy.

#### Identify the problem

Initially, it is important to clearly define the problem.

- ◆ Is it a question of a material order, such as workstation set-up, tools, equipment ?
- ◆ Is the problem related to the organization of work, for example work management and planning, duty allocation, etc. ?
- ◆ Is it an issue involving human relations, such as diverging opinions, behaviors, etc. ?

Address simple issues first and then go on to complex questions.

#### Evaluate the level of control over issues

The committee must determine how much control it actually has over the problem.

- ◆ The HSC fully understands the issue and has complete control over the problem and its solution, e.g. choosing individual protective

equipment, devising training and information programs, etc.

- ◆ The HSC does not fully master the issue but may exercise some influence (power of recommendation), e.g. modifying equipment to make it safer.
- ◆ The HSC has no understanding or jurisdiction over the problem, e.g. administrative decisions, issues of work relations, etc.

#### Define the problem

It is essential to describe the problem as precisely as possible.

- ◆ Define the situation in precise terms, e.g. presence of solvent fumes in the mechanics workshop.
- ◆ Define the objective to reach, for example, eliminate solvent fumes.
- ◆ Gather and classify information on the issue: number of reported cases, undesirable events, state of location, etc.
- ◆ Choose one aspect of the problem over which the committee exercise some control. For instance, if the presence of solvent fumes affects production, quality and health and safety, focus on health and safety.

#### Analyze the problem

Conduct a thorough analysis of the problem by asking the following questions:

- ◆ Where does the problem come from ?
- ◆ What are the cause ?
- ◆ Why is that so ?

Work with tangible facts, and concentrate interventions on the causes of the problem.

**Your HSC is a joint working group; its primary objective is to improve actions in the field of health and safety and prevent work-related injuries.**

### The wrong kinds of committee:

The “monopoly committee”: knows it all

The “tug-of-war committee”: might is right

The “slippery committee”: stalling on issues

The “ghost committee”: for appearances' sake

The “negotiating table” committee: drives a hard bargain

The “impatient committee”: instant solutions only

The “police committee”: keeping tabs on you

Solution	Preventive value	Other impacts	Feasability	Stability	Cost

### Look for solutions

There may be several solutions to any given problem. Try to list them all by organizing a brain-storming session with committee members. Take note of all ideas, even the most far-fetched, without judgment.

### Evaluate solutions

Evaluate all proposed solutions and weigh the pros and cons of each. The following chart may be useful.

### Adopt a solution

Once all solutions are analyzed, pick the most efficient and practical one, that which will benefit all parties concerned.

### Implement the solution

Now comes the time to implement the chosen solution. The committee must structure the process and determine objectives, steps to take, duties to accomplish, means required, etc. Distribute the work among HSC members and designate a person to coordinate and follow-up on the implementation process.

### Evaluate the final result

In evaluating final results, you may ask the following questions:

- ◆ Was the solution implemented as planned ?
- ◆ Is it having the expected results ?
- ◆ Has the situation improved ?
- ◆ Is the problem solved ?

## MINUTES

### Minutes: so everything is on paper

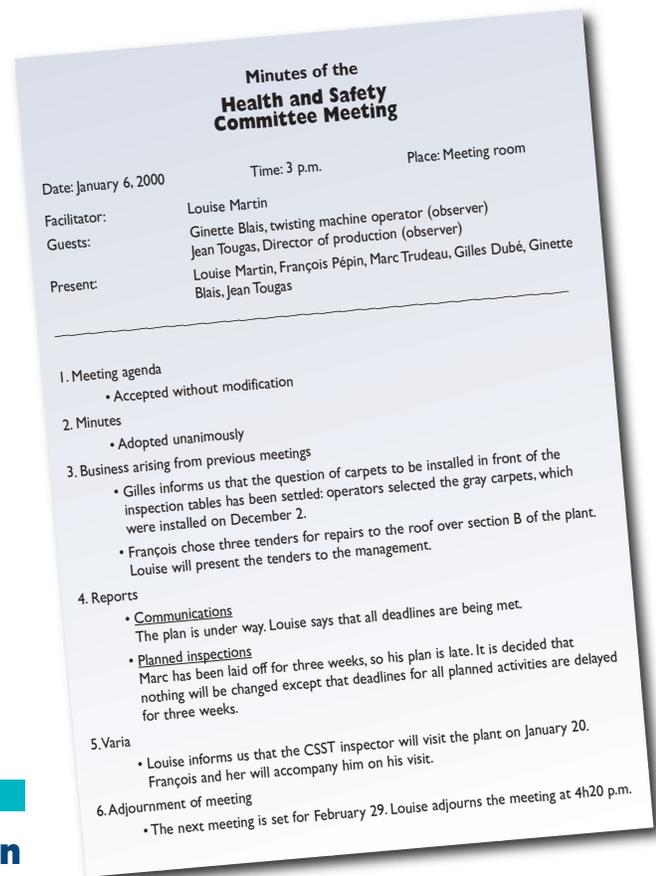
Once the meeting is over, minutes should be written up so that nothing is neglected. Minutes will help you follow up on projects: what is to be done, who will do it, and when. Minutes also help keep the staff informed about current health and safety issues.

The minutes should be brief. They will include a summary of discussions, serving to remind members of decisions taken and recommendations made (including people in charge and deadlines).

The minutes should be distributed promptly to all HSC members and to any person concerned by the decisions taken.

They should also be posted in various locations so that all personnel can read them.

Here is an example of minutes.



## NEXT ISSUE

Protective devices on machinery