



FORMATION AND OPERATION OF A HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Préventex – Textile & knitting sector-based association
2035, Victoria Avenue, suite 203, Saint-Lambert QC J4S 1H1
Téléphone: (450) 671-6925 • **Fax:** (450) 671-9267
eMail: info@preventex.qc.ca

In this document, the masculine form is used without discriminatory intention and only for purposes of clarity.

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Lexicon

ASP JSA	Association sectorielle paritaire <i>Joint Sector-based Association</i>
BRP PBR	Bureau de révision provincial <i>Provincial Board of Review</i>
CALP	Commission d'appel en matière de lésions professionnelles
CLSC	Centre local de services communautaires
CSS HSC	Comité de santé et de sécurité <i>Health and Safety Committee</i>
CSST	Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail
GAQ	Groupe d'amélioration de la qualité
ISO	International Standards Organization
LATMP AIAOD	Loi sur les accidents de travail et les maladies professionnelles <i>Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases</i>
LSST AOHS	Loi sur la santé et la sécurité du travail <i>Act respecting occupational health and safety</i>
SST OHS	Santé et sécurité du travail <i>Occupational health and safety</i>

Introduction

Contents

In the course of an information and discussion meeting on health and safety committees (HSC) organized by Préventex, participants were called upon to discuss several aspects of HSC. Companies with successful committees divulged some of their winning strategies and to a certain extent, their sound advice was integrated into this guidebook. In doing so we applied to participating HSC members the principle that we would like to see them apply toward management and workers: to consult and to listen.

This objective of this guidebook is to provide a maximum amount of information while remaining simple and accessible to all. It aims to convince but also to equip, advise and assist people involved in prevention. Occasionally, the guidebook refers to another document published by Préventex and entitled **Structure en santé et sécurité** (Health and Safety Structures), which supplies guidelines for prevention management. The present guidebook is an ideal complement to the training sessions provided by Préventex consultants to HSC members.

The book also refers to acts and legislation regulating HSC. The textile and knitting industry is not yet considered a priority sector of activity, so the provisions of these legal documents do not have force of law. However, it is advisable to comply with legal requirements when forming a committee so that no adjustments will be necessary if our industry is declared a priority sector. In any case, many HSC in the industry already meet these requirements and even exceed them.

Structure of the guidebook

The guidebook is divided into 3 modules. **Module 1** comprises the first four chapters and deals with preliminary conditions for the formation of a health and safety committee. Chapter 1 deals with the true costs of work-related accidents, which are often higher than expected. Chapter 2 examines the rationale for prevention. Chapter 3 presents the conditions to success in prevention as prerequisites to the efficiency of all subsequent steps. Finally, the motives for creating a HSC are the object of Chapter 4.

Module 2 covers the three following chapters, relative to the formation of HSC. These chapters address issues such as the mandate of HSC (Chapter 5), the selection of members (Chapter 6) and the structure of the HSC (Chapter 7).

The last section, **Module 3** encompasses the three final chapters of the guidebook. This module provides practical advice on holding meetings (Chapter 8), solving problems (Chapter 9) and implementing HSC projects (Chapter 10).

Reference documents are listed at the end of each chapter, as well as credits for tables, figures or illustrations.

Module 1

The true costs of work accidents

Chapter summary

This chapter deals with the global costs of work-related accidents for all parties concerned.

1.1 For workers

In some circumstances, accidents can mean financial costs.

Every injury entails physical costs.

Serious injuries imply human and psychological costs for workers and their family.

The social life of workers and their family can also be affected: these are social costs.

1.2 For employers

Initially, employers must cover compensation costs, or direct costs, through the CSST.

Accidents where workers are compensated generate other costs covered by employers: these are indirect costs.

There are many other accidents, for which workers do not receive compensation. They are the most frequent and costly in terms of other costs.

1.3 For society

Indirectly, society bears some costs related to work accidents, which are almost impossible to quantify.

Once a year, the CSST sends companies an assessment rate notice. Generally, the amount involved is significant. It is so high, in fact, that many people think that it covers the entire costs of accidents. Compensation costs for occupational injuries are effectively substantial, as shown in the CSST annual report.

Yet these only represent part of the costs, and not necessarily the biggest part. In the following sections, we will briefly review the global costs of accidents, at three different levels: for workers, for employers and for society in general.

1.1 For workers

For workers who are victims of an accident, costs can take on many forms. A full inventory has yet to be made, but the main categories of costs for accident victims are listed at Table 1.1 and summarized below.

First, at the financial level, accident victims receive only 90% of their net wages. Workers who have a second job sometimes lose that income as well. In principle, people should not be financially penalized because of an accident but in actual fact, the accident will sometimes represent a decrease in revenue. The compensation plan obviously attempts to be as fair as possible but no plan can hope to be perfect.

Cost of accidents for victims and their family	
1. Financial costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease in revenue• Expenses not covered by the plan
2. Physical costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain, suffering• Loss of physical capacity, permanent effects, loss of limb, loss of autonomy• Insomnia
3. Human and psychological costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty to accept and adapt to new condition• Insecurity about the future, about returning to work• Disruption of intimate and love life• Family tensions, broken family life• Loss of self-esteem, sense of uselessness• Sense of being overwhelmed by bureaucracy• Alcohol and drug abuse• Violence
4. Social costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prejudice from friends and acquaintances• Disruptions of social life

Table 1.1

Second, there are physical costs, such as the loss of a limb, a disability or permanent effects. Pain is difficult to evaluate and impossible to calculate in terms of dollars, but it is often considerable. Accident victims who took part in a one-day workshop called *Pour mieux se prendre en main* (Taking charge of yourself) organized by the CSST said that the pain was such that they could not sleep for more than one hour or two each night for weeks. And this is only one of the ways in which pain affects the life and morale of victims.

Third, we cannot ignore the psychological and human costs of accidents for victims and their family. We need only consider the tension created between the worker and his family because he “can’t bear it” or because the pain makes him irritable and impatient. Families will sometimes fall apart because of the tension. We can also think of the anguish and worries of the worker about his future. In cases of serious injuries, the victim may wonder if he will have his job back even if he is able to work again.

Fourth, there are social costs associated to accidents. Victims are often subjected to sarcasm and prejudice, they may lose some friends and become isolated. There are also consequences for colleagues of the worker involved. For instance, the loss of an experienced co-worker, even if only temporary, could mean a decrease in production; if workers receive performance bonuses, there may be financial losses. Colleagues could also start worrying about having an accident themselves and such concerns do not improve the workplace atmosphere or productivity.

1.2 For employers

As mentioned earlier, compensation costs for occupational injuries are paid by the company that owns the premises where the injury occurs. These costs include compensation for loss of revenue for accident victims, compensation for permanent disabilities, compensation in case of death, medical costs, rehabilitation costs, and many others. The total amount is very substantial.

Yet these are not only costs covered by employers. Occupational injuries also generate **indirect costs**. A replacement must be found for the injured worker, for instance, and employers have to pay two salaries for one job. Training and teaching the new employee can also cause a decrease in productivity.

The time devoted to the investigation or analysis of the accident, the paperwork, the formalities, transportation to the hospital if necessary, all such costs are related to the accident but **directly** covered by the employer. So many elements fall under the category of indirect costs, in fact, that Form 1, which was prepared by CSST economist Jacques Cousin and is presented at Schedule 1, runs for three full pages. In addition, a study of the indirect costs for compensated accidents, led by Bernard Brody and his colleagues from the Université de Montréal's School of industrial relations concluded that one dollar of indirect costs is incurred for every dollar paid to the CSST.

Relation of costs to accident/incident ratio

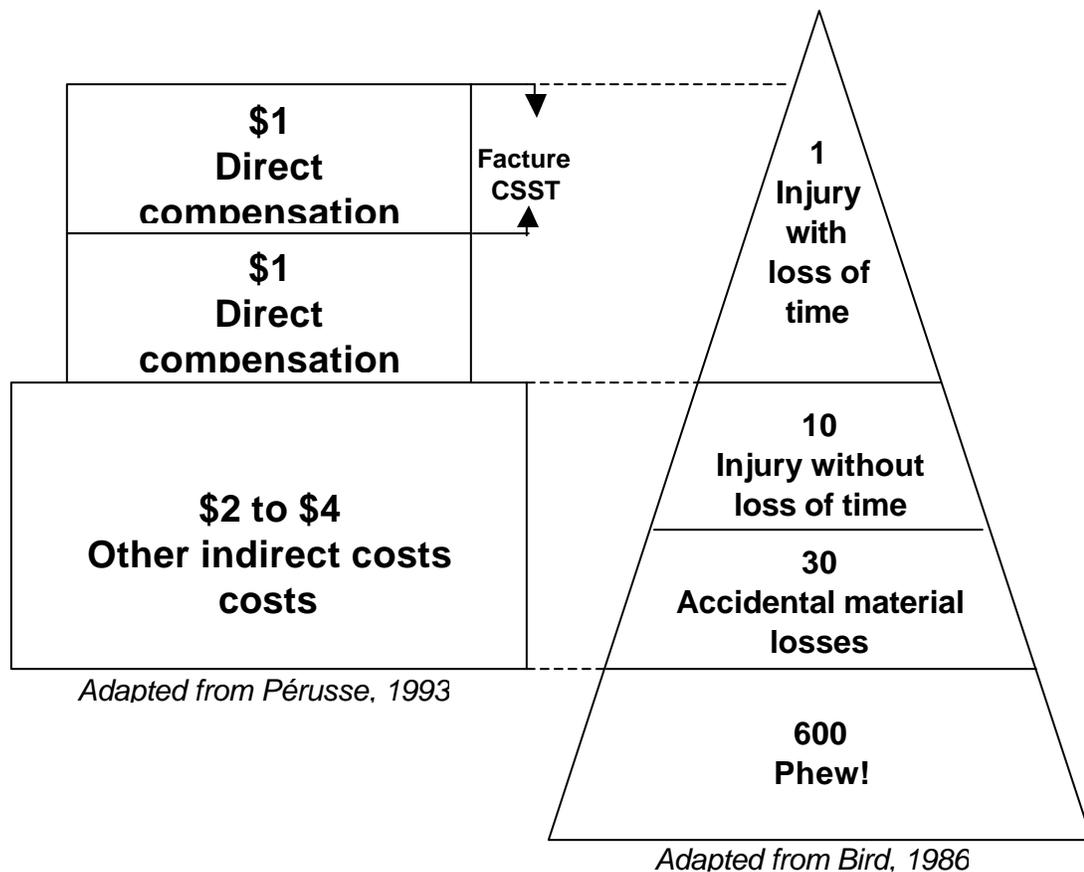


Figure 1.1

Furthermore, there are other types of accidents where no compensated injuries occur. As consultants Gaétan Gibeault and Diane Legault, from the firm of *Experts-Conseils FPC* explain, some accidents cause material damages but no bodily injury, yet are considered a potential cause of injury; other accidents result in no downtime but some lost productivity due to time spent on first-aid and medical care on the day of the accident, etc. As illustrated in Figure 1.1, these type of accidents are the most frequent and often the costliest, particularly as regards material damages. The amounts involved are two to four times CSST costs.

As an example, let's consider the case of a company with a \$50,000 CSST assessment rate. If we consider the total costs for the company, the following calculation can be made: the company pays \$50,000 in other indirect costs, plus \$100,000 to \$200,000 for accidental material damages and other accidents. The total amount paid by the company reaches \$200,000 to \$400,000. This example gives only a general idea but various studies conducted in actual companies have shown that such results are not far from the truth.

1.3 For society

Finally, what are the costs of accidents for society ? We cannot really say, but we can suggest that they equal the sum of costs to the worker and costs to the employer, as inevitably reflected on society. What is the social cost of the loss in productivity generated by accidents ? How many jobs are lost because companies have to pay hundreds of employees during their convalescence following an accident ? Economists could probably give us scary answers. What is the cost to society when a family loses its source of revenue and becomes dependent on social welfare programs ? What is the cost to society when a person must learn to live with a handicap ? These costs are certainly not negligible. And we could go on giving examples of how the costs to workers and to employers translate into social costs.

There are also costs that are just as difficult to evaluate and that are covered by society as a whole. For instance, what proportion of global health costs is attributable to work accidents ? What is the impact of jobs not created as a result of decreases in productivity caused by work accidents on the financial situation of governments ? Answers to questions such as these would have a theoretical rather than a practical interest. But we have said enough to make it clear that accidents are costly for everyone, whether directly or indirectly.



To find out more

- 1) BRODY, B., LÉTOURNEAU, Y., POIRIER, A. et ROHAN, P.C.: “La connaissance des coûts indirects des accidents de travail: un effet stimulant pour la prévention”, Travail et Santé, 6 (1), March 1990.
- 2) BRODY, B., JALETTE, P., LÉTOURNEAU, Y., PLOUFFE, S. et POIRIER, A.: “La définition des accidents de travail et de leurs coûts indirects: des choix valables”, Travail et Santé, 6 (3), September 1990.
- 3) GIBEAULT, G. et LEGAULT, D.: “La connaissance des coûts indirects des accidents du travail: un effet stimulant pour la prévention”, Travail et Santé, 6 (3), September 1990.
- 4) PÉRUSSE, M.: “Gérer la prévention, c’est rentable !”, Travail et Santé, 9 (2), June 1993.

The rationale for prevention

Chapter summary

This chapter presents the many reasons justifying prevention.

2.1 Reduce the costs of accidents

There are many ways to reduce the cost of accidents: financial management of CSST files, medical and administrative management of compensation files, and management of prevention.

Of all these measures, management of prevention is the most beneficial.

2.2 Increase productivity

The right preventive measures will reduce material losses, reduce downtime and increase the production volume, which help increase productivity.

2.3 Improve product quality

An example taken from the textile industry illustrates the fact that prevention can also help improve product quality.

2.4 Improve the workplace atmosphere

As well as improving quality of life for workers, prevention can increase the level of job satisfaction and improve the atmosphere by lowering staff turnover rates and easing tensions.

2.5 Respect legal obligations

Finally, sound prevention practices allow companies to satisfy AOHS requirements and regulation.

We all agree that accidents are costly for everyone. But why choose prevention ? Is it really worthwhile ? Will efforts towards prevention amount to anything ? In the following sections, we will attempt to provide answers to these questions .

2.1 Reduce the costs of accidents

In view of the fact that accidents are so costly, one of the goals of prevention is to reduce costs. There are many ways to go about it and some are widely applied. They include temporary assignments, appeals and medical and administrative management of grievances. So why promote prevention in particular as a way to reduce costs ?

The answer is found in Figure 2.1. It shows that measures such as the management of financial files or the medical and administrative management of files affect only the visible portion of costs, or the direct and indirect costs of compensated injuries. These measures cannot in themselves lower CSST costs. In addition, accidents continue to occur and generate costs. As Figure 2.1 clearly indicates, these measures do not affect the type of accidents that do not result in downtime or accidental material damages, which constitute the highest costs. Only prevention can achieve that.

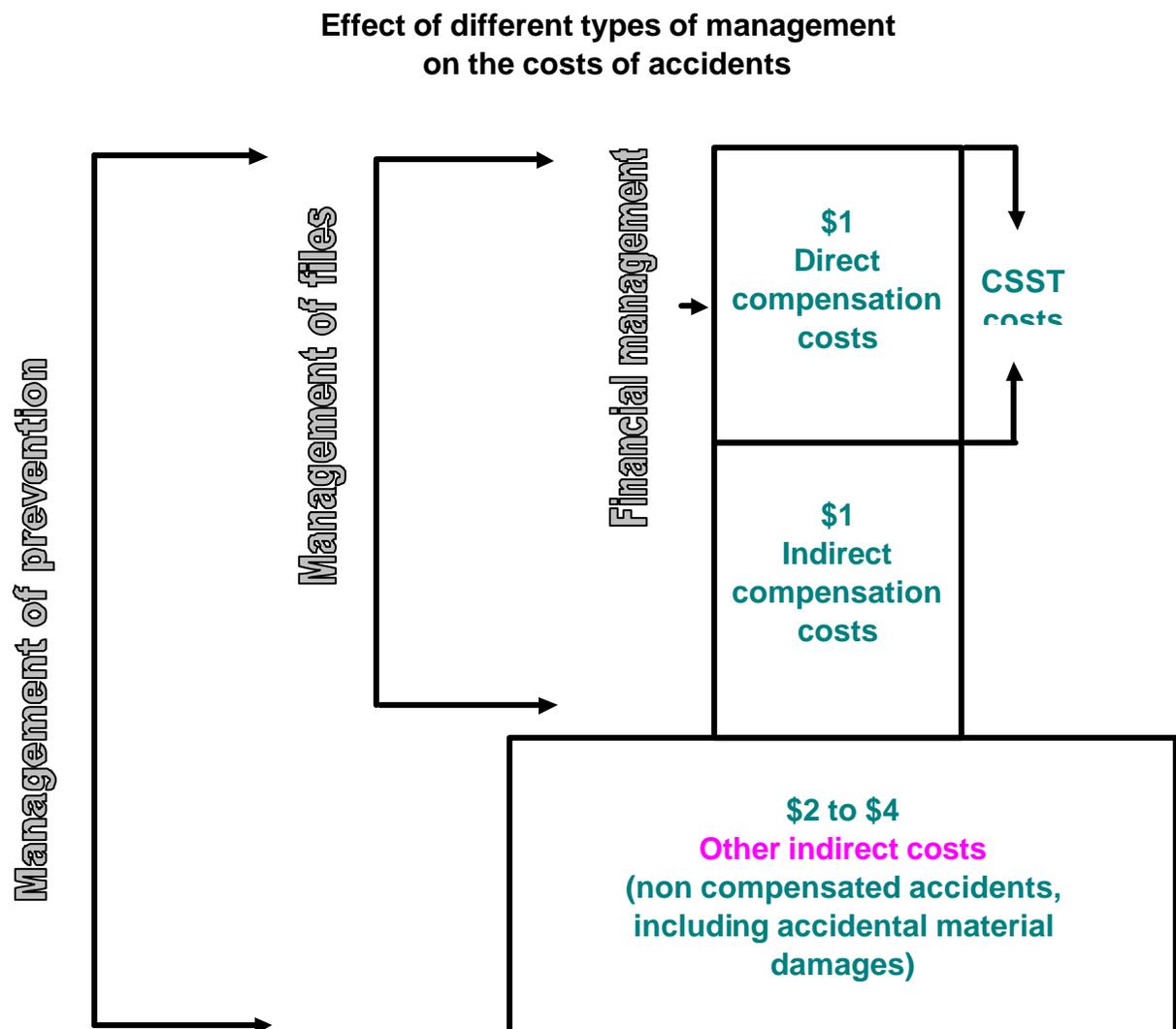


Figure 2.1
Source: Travail et Santé, 9 (2), June 1993

2.2 Increase productivity

As shown in Figure 2.2, there are many other good reasons to encourage prevention: it helps reduce the costs of accidents and production costs, which in turn improves the financial situation of the company.

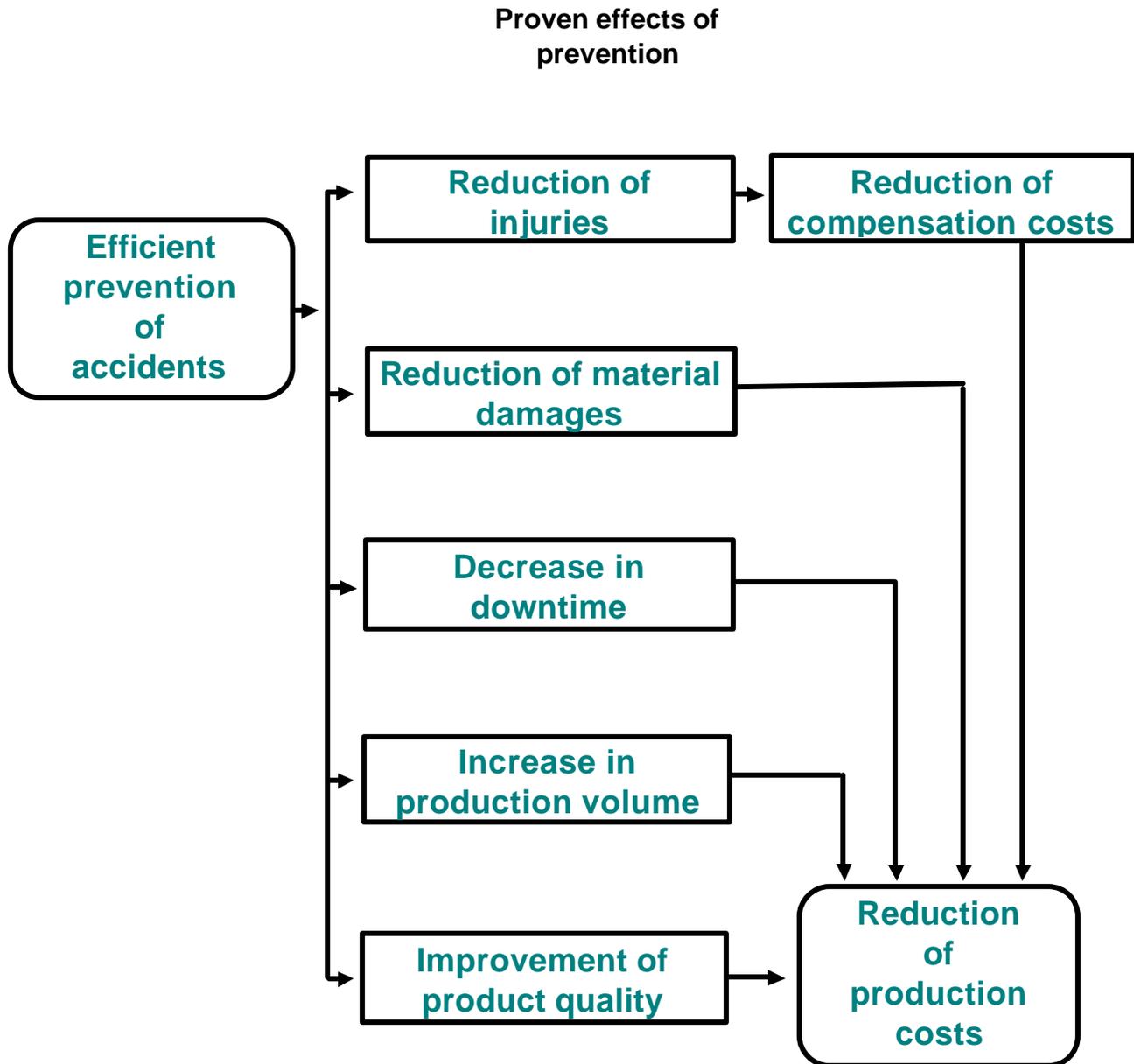


Figure 2.2

Source: Pérusse, M.: "La prévention des accidents en entreprise", Éd. Travail et Santé, 1995

Among other benefits, efficient prevention can help avoid damages to equipment, eliminate downtime and increase production volume. Here is an example. At the C.S. Brooks bedspread manufacturing plant, seamstresses had to manually unroll bands of material up to 150 meters long before sewing them. This work required repetitive movements causing pain in the shoulders, back and wrists. To solve the problem, an ingenious and inexpensive device was installed, which not only unrolls the material but also brings it directly to the sewing machines. This eliminated the manual work required to unroll the material and carry it to the machine. As a result, the risk of occupational injury was greatly reduced and productivity increased by 40% in the department. There are many other similar examples.

2.3 Improve product quality

Figure 2.2 also refers to improvement of product quality. It has been shown that good preventive measures will help improve the quality of finished products.

For instance, in a *Dominion Textile* weaving mill, workers used to have to turn rolls of material weighing up to 600 kg in order to package them. The strain associated with the task meant a high risk of back injuries. In order to reduce these risks, an electric lever was set up to lift the rolls and move them to a mechanical roller without physical effort. The roller turns the rolls to make packaging easier.

In addition, someone had the great idea to incorporate electronic scales to the lever and combine weighing to lifting. After a while, it was noted that this new procedure had unexpected advantages for product quality: weighing errors were eliminated, rolls are not damaged at packaging and the protective envelopes are more adequately applied to the material, protecting it better during transportation. As a result, customers are more satisfied by a product of improved quality.

Specialists in quality improvement are the first to admit that improvement cannot take place without prevention. The latter is a key condition for the former. The means, the tools and the conditions for success are the same for both. An example from the *Nippon Steel Corporation* in Japan shows that nearly a quarter of the problems related to quality that were solved in 1982 by the company's quality improvement teams turned out to be related to safety. Total quality cannot be achieved without prevention. In addition, the 9000 series of ISO standards are currently being reviewed to expand the OHS contents of Quality handbooks.

2.4 Improve the work atmosphere

Some reasons for prevention cannot be measured in dollar terms but their impact is highly positive for companies that apply them. This is shown in Figure 2.3, on the human benefits of prevention.

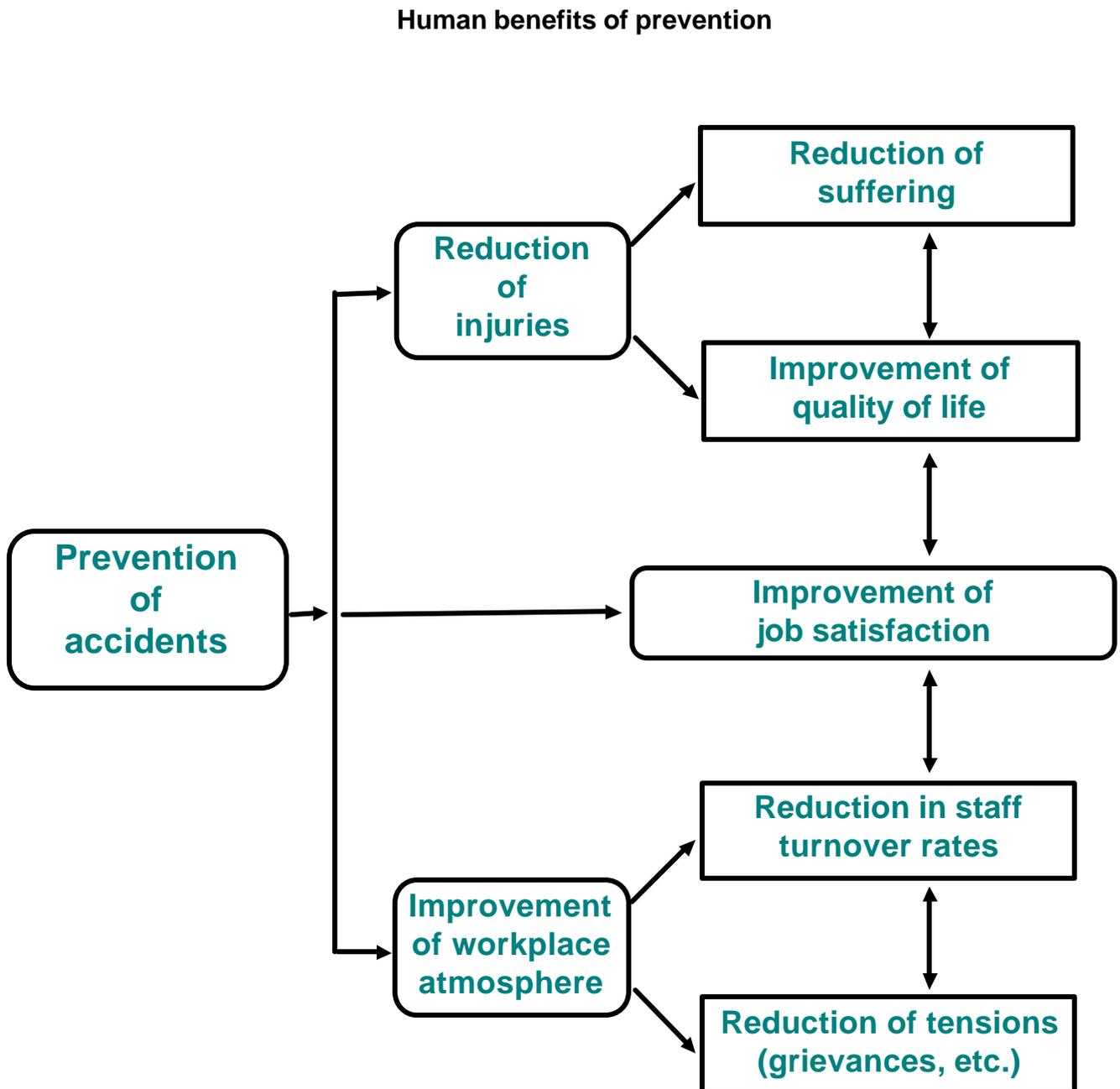


Figure 2.3

Source: Pérusse, M.: "La prévention des accidents en entreprise", Éd. Travail et Santé, 1995.

Evidently, the main human benefit of prevention is to reduce suffering, which in turn improves the workers' quality of life. This human benefit affects workers first but also indirectly affects companies, as the impact of quality of life improvements on the degree of job satisfaction is significant. As well, undertaking preventive action in collaboration with workers and their representatives has been shown to improve communications and relations between the parties involved, and the consequences are often felt on the general quality of labor relations (decrease in tension, reduced number of grievances, etc.)

An American study revealed that companies who have the best safety records are also the ones with the lowest turnover rates and thus the most experienced workforce. The explanation is both simple and logical: when employees feel happy at work, they do not look for jobs elsewhere and the company retains its experienced workers. The impact of human benefits on the financial situation of companies is difficult to assess, but it can only be positive.

2.5 Respect legal obligations

Prevention matters are also the object of legal requirements. Under the AOHS, business enterprises are obliged to eliminate hazards to the health, safety and physical integrity of workers at source. This obligation applies to all companies, including those in the textile and knitting sector.

Many companies chose to take preventive measures well before the AOHS was adopted. They were already aware of the benefits of prevention described in the previous sections of this book. When the AOHS came into effect, these companies had no difficulty complying with its requirements. Prevention was so well integrated that it had become common practice, a part of daily life. As a result, they avoided many legal troubles.

In short, it is easy to see that there are many good reasons for prevention. If we put them all together, the game is really worth the candle.



To find out more

- 1) GUY, P. et KRAUSE, T.R.: "Sécurité et qualité: les deux revers d'une même médaille", Travail et Santé, 10 (4), December 1994.
- 2) PÉRUSSE, M.: "Gérer la prévention, c'est rentable !", Travail et Santé, 9 (2), June 1993.
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- 4) PÉRUSSE, M. : "La prévention des accidents en entreprise". Napierville: Éditions Travail et Santé, 1995.
- 5) SMITH, M.J.; COHEN, H.H.; COHEN, A. et CLEVELAND, R.J.: "Characteristics of successful safety programs", Journal of Safety Research, Vol. 10, 1978.

The conditions for successful prevention

Chapter summary

There are three essential conditions for successful HSC:

3.1 Commitment of management

According to an American study, the first key to success is a firm commitment to prevention from the management.

3.2 Agreement between the parties

Many decisions should be taken jointly and collaboration is key.

3.3 Health and safety policy

The main directions for prevention are set forth in the health and safety policy; the HSC oversees the section relating to prevention.

As we will see in the following chapters, prevention implies taking measures to identify accident and injury hazards and to control or eliminate them. Yet in some cases, similar companies will take identical preventive measures for similar hazards and get very different results. This indicates that preventive action is not enough: the work place and the work environment have to be conducive to prevention.

What makes the work place conducive to prevention ? There are many specific conditions for the HSC to be efficient, but three basic elements must be found to ensure that every other step can be successful:

- 1) A firm commitment by the management
- 2) Agreement between workers and employers
- 3) A clear health and safety policy

3.1 Commitment by the management

According to some American studies, the main key to success in prevention is a firm commitment by the management to make safety as high a priority as production or quality.

Let's consider the example of a foreign steel mill. Safety records revealed a situation bordering on disaster; an assessment of preventive action in the company showed that there very few elements favoring preventive practices. In fact, only one major element provided a possibility for optimism: the plant manager declared that the mandate of the mill was to produce steel, and not dead bodies. He not only made the declaration but took the means to make it true. He asked that an action plan be drawn up and made sure that it was applied. He got personally involved in some activities and made his presence felt; he followed-up on results and demanded that employees render accounts. The results were so spectacular that they were presented at an international convention in Germany two years later.

This example clearly demonstrates how the commitment of management can go beyond words and translate into practical involvement. Experience has shown that without such involvement, efforts at prevention will peter out. As long as management displays its commitment in tangible ways, all is possible.

3.2 Agreement between the parties

However, the management is not the only party whose commitment is essential. Worker representatives are major partners in preventive action, since the approach described here rests on two fundamental principles: a joint approach, and cooperation. A joint approach means that the two parties are equally represented in the HSC. But a joint approach is not enough. If the parties are equally represented but cannot get along, the situation leads to a dead-end.

Rather, a climate of cooperation needs to be created. Management and worker representatives must work together to form the committee, give it a sporting chance and establish an efficient mode of operation. In addition to developing a favorable work climate in the HSC, this type of cooperative effort can have a positive effect on labor relations in general.

3.3 Health and safety policy

Management commitment to prevention should be spelled out in a health and safety policy. The book entitled "*Structure en santé et sécurité*" includes a section on health and safety policies. It describes the contents, structure and standard components of policies. An example of a typical policy is also included in the book. We will not repeat this information here, considering that all of it is not necessarily relevant to setting up a HSC.

The health and safety policy, however, is the foundation of the committee's work, its starting point. The HSC is responsible for the application of the section of the policy dealing with the management of prevention and it is useful to review some essential points in order to understand the next chapters of this guidebook.

To be coherent with the principles of collaboration described in the preceding section, the prevention aspect of the policy should be developed in close collaboration with workers. This is what Figure 3.1 illustrates. It is important to agree on the terms of the policy from the very beginning since both parties will have to live with them.

Also, the policy should state that both parties are committed to making the HSC work and willing to create conditions to ensure its success. In order to make that intention clear, the policy should be signed by both parties and widely distributed.

But beware ! Signing a policy binds the parties, and the true test of credibility for a policy lies in its application. A nice policy without firm commitment from the management will lead nowhere. Great declarations create high expectations and if they are not followed by practical and tangible action, only frustration will result. The policy should reflect the true values of the management and not remain only a piece of paper posted on the door.

Preliminary conditions to the creation of the HSC

Firm commitment by management

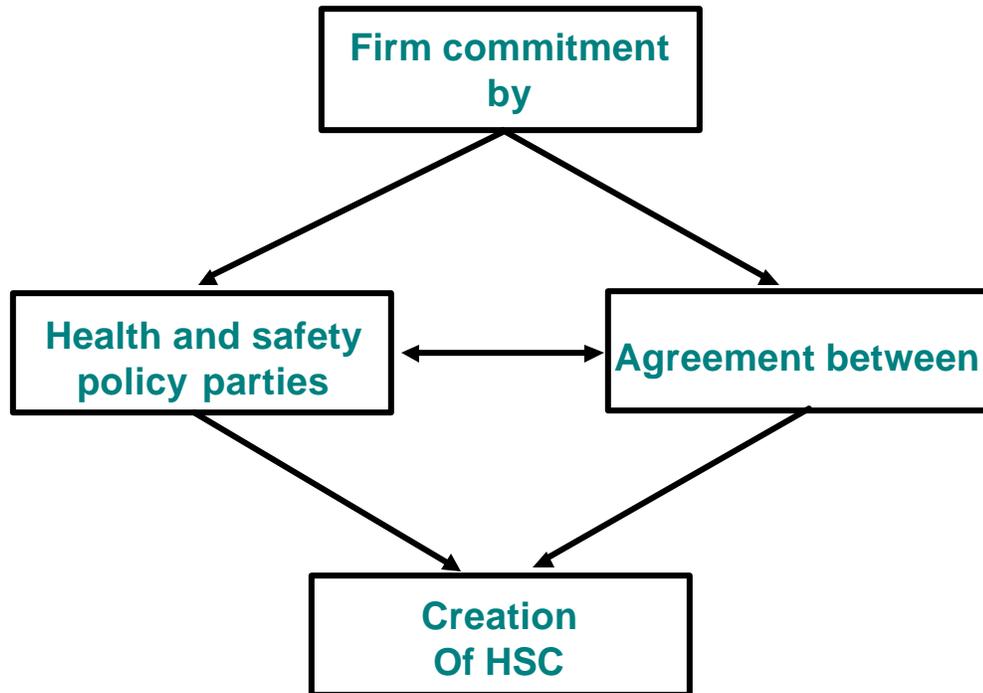


Figure 3.1



To find out more

- 1) PÉRUSSE, M.: "Gérer la prévention, c'est commencer par une politique", Travail et santé, 9 (4), December 1993.
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- 3) SMITH, M.J.; COHEN, H.H.; COHEN, A. et CLEVELAND, R.J.: "Characteristics of successful safety programs", Journal of Safety Research, Vol. 10, 1978
- 4) SPOKES, E.M.: "New look at underground coal mine safety", Mining Engineering, April 1986

The rationale for forming a HSC

Chapter summary

There are five main reasons why the HSC is responsible for managing prevention:

4.1 Encourage taking charge

Because the people from the work place know it best, the HSC encourages them to take charge of OHS issues.

4.2 Involve the people concerned

Bringing together representatives of workers and management, the HSC involves the people concerned by prevention and aims to mobilize all personnel.

4.3 Set up an efficient team

An efficient team can be set up by avoiding confrontation and looking for “win-win” solutions.

4.4 Identify hazards and find solutions

The goal of the HSC is to solve health and safety problems by identifying hazards and finding efficient solutions.

4.5 Integrate prevention to management

Finally, since everyone has a role to play in prevention, HSC will make it possible to integrate prevention to management and to the daily operations of the company.

In the preceding chapters, we have seen that accidents are costly for everyone and that prevention is worthwhile because of its many benefits at all levels. In order to develop a preventive approach, both parties must first reach an agreement and draw up a health and safety policy, which becomes the foundation for prevention.

But what is the role of HSC ? Is a policy not sufficient ? Are HSC really necessary ?

In fact, there are many strategic benefits to setting up a HSC to manage prevention in a company. HSC encourage taking charge of prevention by involving all people concerned in prevention. In order to achieve that, HSC must work as an efficient team so that they will not only apply preventive measures but fully integrate prevention to management. Let's take a closer look at the issue.

4.1 Encourage taking charge

In the White Book on health and safety, Quebec legislators establish the principle that nobody knows more about a work place than those who spend most of their active life in it. Employers and workers are the people who are most familiar with the equipment, processes, methods, work conditions and operational constraints of their work environment.

It is obvious that these people are in the best position to know the health and safety problems faced by workers and propose solutions that are realistic, applicable and suitable for everyone. The idea is to make it possible for people from the work place to work together and get organized, which is referred to as taking charge.

The HSC is a forum to debate opinions. It provides an opportunity to gather different perspectives on any given issue and come up with relevant solutions. The HSC also allows a greater number of people to get involved in prevention. That is why the HSC should encourage taking charge.

4.2 Involve the people concerned

We have demonstrated that the key to success with prevention is to actively involve the people concerned. It is impossible to prepare a recipe if some ingredients are missing, or if an ingredient is not doing what it should. In the same way, we cannot hope to eliminate accidents if some participants do not fulfill their role in safety.

The HSC is an instrument enabling the people who are most interested in prevention to get involved. It cannot bear the responsibility of prevention alone. Its role is to act in matters of prevention, of course, but HSC members cannot and should not be the only ones making efforts at prevention. Everyone has to participate and because the HSC includes worker and employer representatives it is in a privileged position to reach the entire company work force. It should act as a source of motivation, as a multiplier of resources, as the **focal point of prevention**. In short, the HSC reaches the people who wish to get involved but it should also aim to mobilize everyone.

4.3 Set up an efficient team

To set up an efficient team, HSC must learn to work as a team and not as two opposing factions. This does not mean that worker representatives should disregard the interests of workers or that employer representatives should disregard the interests of the company. But the two parties have to learn to find “win-win” solutions, where everyone is satisfied.

If a solution is acceptable only to some of the people involved, those to whom it is not will oppose a passive or even active resistance to the implementation of the solution. If the solution is acceptable to all, it is likely to be the best solution and stands a better chance of being successfully implemented.

Employer representatives should make sure that solutions proposed by the HSC are acceptable to the company, and worker representatives should make sure that the solutions are in the interest of workers. Confrontation is not the best way to achieve that goal. Confrontational attitudes should be left at the door before entering a meeting.

We tend to forget that strictly speaking, a joint approach implies that the two parties involved have the same importance. Yet joint efforts are not enough to create a sound atmosphere and the spirit of the AOHS also implies collaboration. Collaboration does not mean that one party denounces unacceptable situations without offering solutions, while the other party exercises a mandate to say no. Collaboration implies active efforts to understand the other party’s point of view and putting together available resources to find solutions acceptable to everyone.

There are simple methods to foster collaboration. For instance, the two parties should never sit on separate sides at meetings. A HSC is not a battle or a negotiating table ! To encourage consensus building, members should scatter around the table without a designated place. The HSC can then be considered a team where members all stand by the decisions that are taken.

4.4 Identify hazards and find solutions

Prevention means identifying hazards of accidents and occupational diseases, and finding solutions to control or eliminate them. Preventive action is nothing more than a problem solving technique applied to a particular category of problems, as illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Preventive action

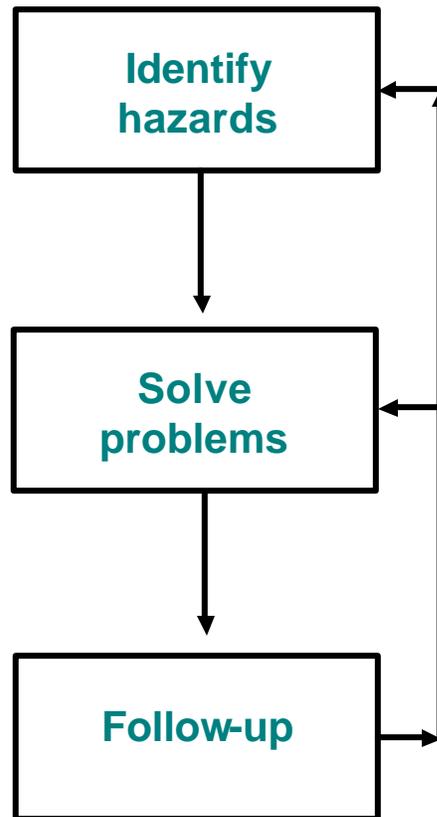


Figure 4.1

This information will be covered in more details in the following chapters. However, we must point out that preventive action includes a series of activities, which must be coordinated to be efficient. HSC are in the best position to organize different activities into cohesive action.

4.5 Integrate prevention to management

The right strategy for prevention includes all the elements described above and it is clear that the HSC cannot hope to accomplish that alone. The HSC may get involved in some of the activities but it is not the only actor in the play.

HSC become dysfunctional when the company discharges itself of all responsibility for prevention in favor of the HSC. The HSC is quickly overloaded and overwhelmed, the atmosphere deteriorates and the whole process becomes ineffective. See Figure 4.2

Integrating prevention to management

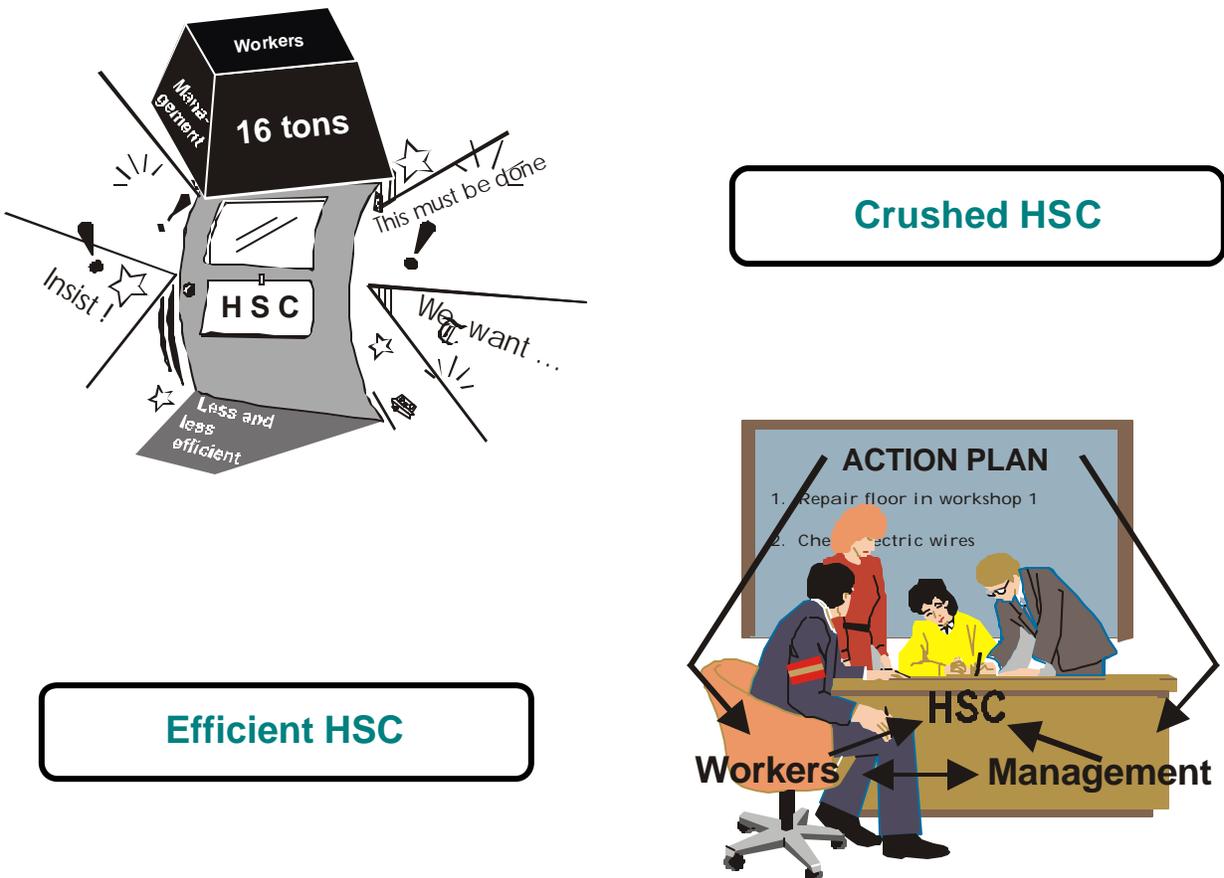


Figure 4.2

In addition to the prevention efforts it undertakes, the HSC must develop preventive action that will be taken on by the entire line of hierarchy and integrated into management, daily activities and operations. Prevention is not a concept that hovers around day-to-day activities; it should become part of every management gesture, action and decision.



To find out more

1) Gouvernement du Québec: "Livre Blanc: Politique québécoise de santé et de sécurité du travail". Québec: Éditeur officiel du Québec, 1978

Module 2

The mandate of HSC

Chapter summary

When defining the mandate of HSC, three elements should be considered:

5.1 The legal mandate

The legal mandate of HSC touches on three main aspects.

1. Decisional functions:

- Select a physician in charge
- Approve the health program
- Develop training and education programs
- Select individual protection equipment

2. Non decisional functions:

- Take part in hazard identification
- Keep a record of occupational accidents and diseases
- Receive notices of accident and investigate if necessary
- Receive various information (reports, statistics, etc.)
- Make recommendations on the prevention program
- Receive and process complaints and suggestions

3. Administrative duties:

- Determine terms and conditions for the application of the right to return to work
- Review disagreements about reassignments following preventive leave
- Review disagreements about temporary assignments
- Determine the time allocated to the safety representative for HSC work
- Forward to the CSST the information requested by it
- Carry out any duty given to the HSC under a labor agreement

5.2 Management of prevention

Successful HSC go beyond their legal mandate. They manage prevention and plan, organize, direct and control preventive action.

5.3 Initial mandate and review

An initial mandate is defined, which is reviewed periodically to take new priorities into account.

5.4 Decision-making powers

In order to be successful, HSC recommendations must be implemented. Some companies give HSC decision-making powers while others appoint members with decision-making authority to the HSC.

5.5 Issues to avoid

The HSC should benefit from positive elements like new approaches in human resources management. But it should also be protected from negative influences such as issues of labor relations or questions relating to the medical or administrative management of injury.

Once the idea that HSC are useful instruments is accepted, the next question is: "What does the HSC do?" In other words, what is the mandate of the HSC ?

One of the guaranteed ways to make any committee fail is to gather a group of people without telling them what is expected of them. This gives the group no sense of direction and no common vision. Disagreements and tensions will soon arise and the work will give no results. For the HSC to be productive, it must be given a direction, guidelines, a vision. This is where the **mandate of the committee** comes in.

There are two schools of thought about the HSC mandate. Some companies, particularly those in priority sectors, strictly adhere to the legal mandate and follow it to the letter. Other companies, especially in non-priority sectors or successful priority groups, go beyond the legal mandate. So what is the real story ? What should the HSC mandate include to make the committee efficient ?

5.1 Legal mandate

As mentioned earlier, the textile and knitting industry is not a priority sector so the legal provisions concerning HSC do not apply. However, it may be useful to review the legal mandate of HSC in priority sectors, for two reasons. First, this may give ideas to HSC who are getting organized. Second, companies who adopt proactive management methods make sure that they comply with the legal mandate even if they are not part of a priority sector. In this way, there will be no adjustments necessary if they are classified as a priority in the future.

The legal mandate of HSC is primarily described in the *Act respecting occupational health and safety* (AOHS) but some elements are also listed in the *Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases* (AIAOD) and the *Regulation on health and safety committees*. All these components are presented here, divided into three parts.

5.1.1 Decisional functions

First, under the health program, the HSC is responsible for selecting a physician in charge of developing the health program (AOHS, Art. 78.1). The role of the HSC is to collaborate with the chosen physician in the development of the program. Once the program is in place, it is submitted to the HSC for approval (AOHS, Art. 78.2). The HSC may also present a request for the dismissal of the physician in charge (AOHS, Art. 120).

Another important function of the HSC is to develop training and education programs on OHS. This duty is also part of the HSC mandate (AOHS, Art. 78.3). It involves identifying needs in matters of training and developing new material or finding existing appropriate material and resources to give the training. There are many issues to address: WHMIS, first aid, and other prevention activities. The HSC should remember that committee members will also need training to ensure maximum efficiency and that this training should ideally be given to all members at once.

Finally, the HSC is responsible for choosing individual protection equipment (AOHS, Art. 78.4). The main objective of prevention is to eliminate hazards at source. But legislators have acknowledged that it is not always possible to eliminate the causes of hazards and that it can also be useful to have a second line of defense. When choosing individual protection equipment, the HSC should keep in mind that there are alternative sources of information about equipment. If we are to respect not only the letter of the law but its spirit as well, workers who will eventually use the equipment should be actively involved in the selection process.

5.1.2 Non decisional functions

The HSC has a certain number of duties that are directly related to prevention, but for which it does not necessarily have the authority to make decisions.

First, the HSC takes part in identifying hazards of occupational accidents and diseases as well as contaminants and dangerous goods (AOHS, Art. 78.6). This can involve analyzing job safety, inspecting work locations and other diagnosis activities. Considering the extent of this task, the HSC is not expected to carry it out unassisted. Instead, the HSC acts as coordinator of the global effort to identify hazards. In addition, under the *Regulation on safety representatives*, the HSC determines the instruments provided to the safety representative, who also takes part in the identification of hazards in the work place.

Second, the HSC keeps a record of work-related accidents and diseases (AOHS, Art. 78.7) and establishes priorities on the basis of the record. In the same way, the HSC receives a copy of all accident notices and proceeds with the investigation and analysis of the accidents where applicable (AOHS, Art. 78.9). The HSC, however, should never lose sight of its place within the hierarchical structure. Supervisors, for instance, take part in the investigation. The HSC organizes the procedure for the investigation and analysis of accidents, controls the quality of the work done and follows-up if necessary. The HSC receives and reviews inspection reports, statistics and information from the CSST, the DSC or the CLSC and the physician in charge (AOHS, Art. 78.11 and 78.12).

Third, the committee makes recommendations on elements of the prevention program for which it does not have decision-making powers (AOHS, Art. 78.5). The employer is responsible for developing these elements and the HSC then formulates an opinion. The committee also receives, reviews and follows-up on the complaints and suggestions made by workers, unions or the employer (AOHS, Art. 78.10). In order to make the procedure effective, it should be organized on a systematic basis and provide follow-up to people who identify dangerous situations or suggest corrective action. To that effect, the form presented below can be a useful tool.

Some remarks about this process: even if the HSC is responsible for collecting complaints and suggestions, it should not take the place of the hierarchical order. The most efficient way to solve problems is for workers to take all corrective action possible themselves and report on what they cannot manage to their supervisor. The committee can play a very important role by ensuring that other members in the hierarchy fulfill their obligations and by following up on suggested corrective action.

Many committees spend too much time discussing complaints and suggestions, neglecting other important aspects of their mandate. Even if the HSC has a role to play in this regard, it is important to focus not only on that aspect. The HSC should work at finding solutions to problems of common interest for several departments and at coordinating efforts to find solutions, rather than waste time settling issues that could be best dealt with by workers and supervisors.

Suggestions and complaints Health and safety committee	
Date: _____	Name: _____
Job title: _____	Work station: _____
Description of complaint:	

Suggestions	

Response from Health and safety committee	

(Signature of co-presidents)	

5.1.3 Administrative duties

Finally, laws and regulations give HSC certain other duties that have to do with administration rather than prevention. Some of these duties deal with the rights of workers. The committee, for example, reviews disagreements in matters of reassignment when workers exercise their right to a preventive leave (AOHS, Art. 37 and 42). The same goes for disagreements about temporary assignments following work-related injuries (AIAOD, Art. 179). As well, the committee is responsible for establishing the terms and conditions for the application of the right to return to work for victims of work-related injuries (AIAOD, Art. 245).

The time allocated to the safety representative for carrying out some of his duties is determined by law. The time allocated for other functions is determined by the HSC according to the amount of work involved and the needs of the company (AOHS, Art. 92.2).

The Committee forwards any information that the CSST may request, including an annual report of activities (AOHS, Art. 78.8). Finally, the HSC carries out any duties given to it by the employer, the workers or the union under a labor agreement (AOHS, Art. 78.13).

5.2 Management of prevention

The mandate defined by law comprises many elements and HSC would do well to draw upon it. But experience has shown that committees formed in companies of priority sectors, even if they fully applied the legal mandate, have not necessarily been as successful as expected.

It is important to remember that the requirements of the law are to be considered as a strict minimum. And that the minimum is often not enough. Model committees, those that are truly efficient and effective, go beyond the mandate defined by law.

If we study these committees closely, we see that the key to their success lies in the fact that they are playing a management role in prevention, rather than trying to do everything themselves. When speaking of management, we mean planning, organization and control. Let's examine these elements one by one.

Successful committees plan and establish priorities. In other words, instead of trying to accomplish every task at once, they choose to work first on the most serious, frequent and pressing issues.

Their planning also includes identifying proposed prevention activities and measures, and structuring the whole project into an action plan. Successful HSC also organize a variety of activities such as health and safety weeks, thematic information campaigns, and others.

Once planning is completed, successful HSC start organizing. This organization process implies wide participation and aims to integrate prevention activities to daily operations. This means that it should involve the management, the supervisors and the workers. Organizing also implies that the HSC help determine the respective responsibilities of each in matters of prevention.

For this mobilization effort to succeed, the HSC will organize activities that management literature describes in terms of “direction”. Essentially, this means that the HSC tries to motivate the troops through adequate training and education.

Finally, HSC exercise control. They assess, measure and evaluate performance and results, ensure follow-up on activities and recommendations, and report on problems to the appropriate authorities. We can now understand better what is meant by prevention management, and why successful committees go beyond the mandate given by the law.

5.3 Initial mandate and periodic review

The parties must agree on the mandate that they will give to the HSC. Guided by the information provided in the preceding sections of this book, they will agree on a mandate that will become an asset for the committee and give it every chance of success.

As mentioned in the introduction, a work group cannot function nor hope to last without clear guidelines. So it is important to clearly define the mandate of the HSC as early as possible after its formation has been decided. This is called the initial mandate.

The committee establishes priorities and plans its activities in accordance with the initial mandate. Once the actions are implemented, an assessment is made once or twice a year. The assessment process gives the HSC an opportunity to review its priorities and make adjustments to the mandate if necessary, as illustrated by Figure 5.1.

Initial mandate and periodic review

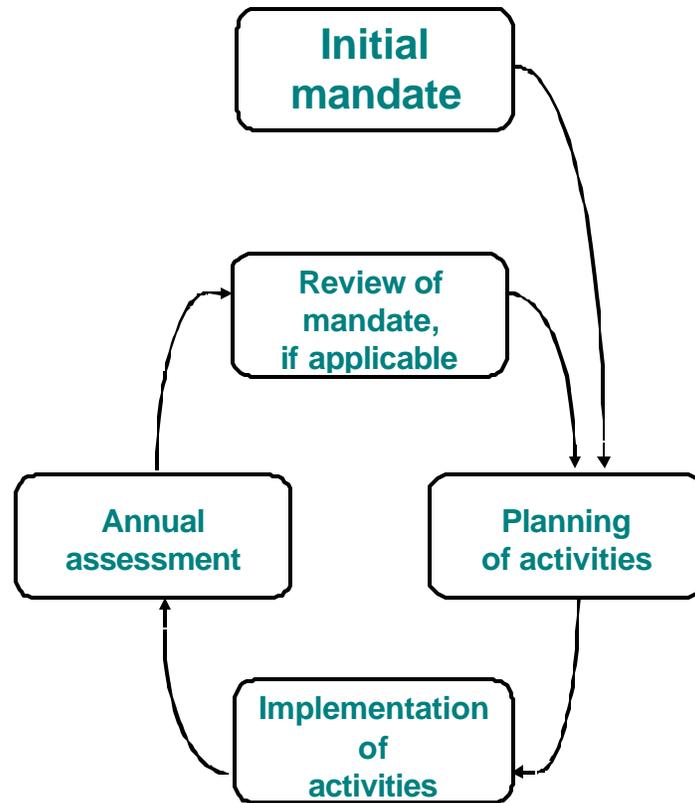


Figure 5.1

5.4 Decision-making powers

One of the questions often asked about HSC is “Should decision-making powers be given to HSC ? If so, which ?” The answer to these questions is not simple. It depends on the company and on the HSC mandate.

For a HSC to be efficient, the solutions it proposes must be applied. Some establishments prefer giving HSC the powers necessary to implement solutions themselves. This ensures some follow-up to the committee’s work, but may cause other types of problems. For instance, should a budget be allocated to the HSC ? If so, on what basis ? In addition, some conflicts may arise in the hierarchical line.

Other companies prefer giving their HSC the power to make recommendations. In this case, however, the HSC becomes dependent on other components of the organization. First, HSC members must have some credibility within the organization, act in good faith, refrain from using the HSC as an instrument for negotiation and propose realistic and applicable solutions. Second, it is highly advisable that people with decision-making powers sit on the HSC in order to take part in discussions and understand all aspects of issues so that it can make the right decision.

One thing is certain: it may not be mandatory to give HSC decision-making powers, but HSC should never be too far removed from decision-making authorities. Otherwise, decisions are never taken, problems remain unsolved and the same issues keep appearing on meeting agendas. This can only result in frustration, quarreling, or loss of motivation.

5.5 Issues to avoid

Another guaranteed way to paralyze a HSC is to give it contentious mandates or put contentious issues on the agenda. We have seen that the mandate of HSC should be the management of prevention; this cannot be achieved through confrontation. The only way to practice effective prevention is through collaboration and the HSC mandate should be defined accordingly.

HSC also needs to avoid pitfalls along the way. The appointment of members is important and will be the subject of the next chapter. The issues discussed at HSC meetings are also important. The HSC should be allowed to benefit from positive influences and be protected from negative ones. For instance, the committee can be inspired by the principles of total quality or quality improvement programs as regards the definition of priorities and project-based or sub-committee operations. New approaches in management can also exert a positive influence, especially concerning communication and team work. And of course, HSC should always encourage collaboration, which is at the very heart of the AOHS.

Conversely, the HSC should be protected from pressures that would undermine its work and eventually stifle it. HSC should not deal with issues related to the state of the economy (market situation, position of the workforce, competition, etc.). This also goes for questions concerning the medical or administrative management of occupational injury files (PRB, CALP, etc.).

The same principles should apply when establishing the mandate of the Committee, and when deciding on the agenda for meetings, as shown in Figure 5.2.

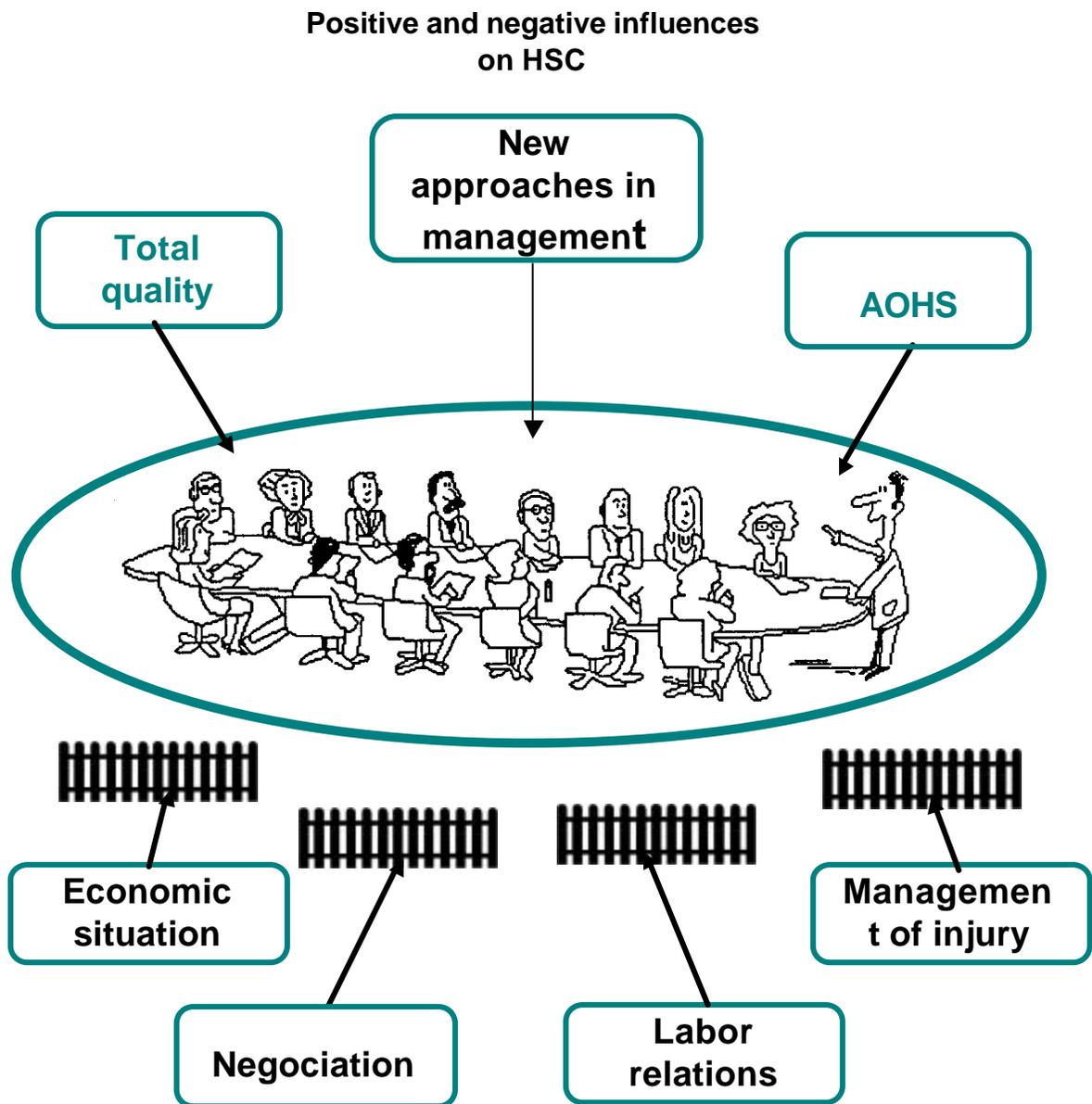


Figure 5.2
Adapted from *Travail et Santé*, 10 (1), March 1994



To find out more

- 1) Government of Québec: "Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases", RSQ, Chapter A-3.001.
- 2) Government of Québec: "Act respecting occupational health and safety", RSQ, Chapter S-2.1.
- 3) PÉRUSSE, M.: "Les comités de santé et sécurité. Partie 1: Contexte favorable nécessaire !", *Travail et Santé*, 10(1), March 1994.

Composition of the HSC

Chapter summary

It is important to appoint the right people as members of the HSC. The following points should be taken into account.

6.1 Number of representatives

The number of representatives is determined by the Regulation accordance with the size of the establishment. However, the parties should reach an agreement to form a committee big enough to ensure representation and small enough to be functional.

6.2 Selection of representatives

The main qualities of members should be a true concern for health and safety, an open mind, a positive attitude and motivation.

6.3 Participation of decision makers

To make discussions easier and more expedient, the presence of people with decision-making authority is a key element of success for HSC.

6.4 Double roles

Ideally, double duties should be avoided (conciliation and contention). If this is impossible, strict rules should be defined to separate each role.

6.5 Duration of term

The parties should agree on a term long enough to allow people to adapt and short enough to ensure some renewal.

We realize that the HSC can play a useful role in the management of prevention. We know that its mandate should be clearly defined, preferably through an agreement between the parties. We have taken steps to ensure that the mandate will allow the HSC to benefit from positive influences and be protected from negative ones.

The next question is: "Who sits on the HSC ?". This question is legitimate since the choice of members is a determining factor in the success and efficiency of the committee. In the following sections, we will discuss the principles to respect so that the composition of the HSC becomes another key to success.

6.1 Number of representatives

Article 4 of the *Regulation respecting health and safety committees* defines the number of members representing each party, determined in accordance with the size of the establishment. This is a useful reference.

Number of workers	50 and under	51 to 150	151 to 500	501 to 1000	1001 to 1500	1501 and over
Number of worker representatives	*2	3	5	7	9	**11
* This number is brought to 3 if there is a participating group, i.e. a group of workers not represented by a certified association.						
** Maximum number of representatives under the regulation.						

When deciding on the number of people who will sit on the HSC, two elements must be considered. First, the regulation is not applicable to the textile and knitting industry. Second, the legislation favors an agreement between the parties to determine the number of representatives. The best solution is for the parties to reach an agreement on the size of the committee.

In order to make the best possible decision, it is important to determine the ideal and optimal size of the committee so that it is not too big or too small.

The committee should include representatives from all sectors and departments of the company. People will often complain that they are being kept away and feel left out because their department is not represented on the HSC. The widest representation should be aimed for, otherwise the committee might be seen as an exclusive club, a closed circle.

However, particularly in large companies, achieving this can mean a large number of members. Discussions can become heavy, laborious and drawn out. Generally, the larger a group is, the less functional it will be.

To avoid that problem, it might not be necessary to have a large central committee. There are four methods of overcoming the difficulty: appointing people in charge of specific duties, who will find others to assist them, creating committees in each department, operating through sub-committees, or linking with supervisor-worker teams. The use of these methods has three advantages. First, it involves a greater number of people and allows wider representation. Second, many problems can be solved locally, freeing the central committee. Third, the HSC can have a normal, functional number of people.

Under the law, employers should delegate at least one representative to the HSC and the maximum number of employer's representatives is equal to the number of workers' representatives. Past experience has shown that the number of representatives from each party should be equal. This makes for balanced discussions and avoids either party feeling in an inferior position or getting on the defensive.

Times change and so do people and companies. Nothing prevents HSC from redefining the number of members they have chosen, which could be done at the annual assessment of activities.

6.2 Selection of representatives

Once the size of the committee has been determined, its members have to be selected. Once again, the *Regulation respecting health and safety* includes a process for the selection of worker representatives, particularly if there are several certification units or non-unionized workers in a company. That regulation concerns the selection process for candidates and not the selection criteria.

The success of a HSC is a function of the spirit that guides the team rather than the member selection process. Team spirit is a result of the members' personal qualities and not of the way they were chosen. There are no rules specifically governing the selection of HSC members but some general principles should be observed if the committee is to have every chance at success by choosing the right members.

First, the committee needs people who believe in health and safety, people who are genuinely interested in advancing the cause of OHS and not in using it as a means to further other interests.

In addition, members should have a positive attitude. A positive attitude means respect for others, a capacity to listen, a certain tactfulness and an open mind.

The committee also needs people who are highly motivated. Such members will show initiative and leadership. They will be creative and able to take decisions.

6.3 Participation of decision makers

We discussed the participation of people with decision-making authority in the previous chapter, but we come back to it in this context to emphasize two specific points. First, it would be difficult to convince the plant manager to come to every HSC meeting, even if that is the case in some companies. But the committee must find a way to avoid having to report to the management on every issue before making a decision, which would undoubtedly discourage members. Practically everyone agrees that the presence of members with the authority to make decisions is one of the most important, if not the key condition to success for HSC.

We must remember that this principle should also apply to the representatives of the employer, who should be from different departments (production, maintenance, purchasing, etc.). Because the activities and solutions proposed by the HSC can affect many aspects of operations, it is important to gather diversified opinions and particularly those of decision makers, so that they are able to justify their decisions and explain why some solutions are inapplicable.

OHS expert resources (coordinators or consultants) sometimes stand in as representatives of employers but while their expertise is indispensable, it would be regrettable if they replaced decision makers. To take advantage of the situation, there is a simple and ingenious solution. A growing number of companies give resource people a mandate to provide services as expert consultants, combined with a status of participating observer.

6.4 Double roles

Another type of problem can arise among committees, that of double roles. By that we mean that one person can have functions involving some contentious issues as well as other functions, such as prevention or participation in a HSC, requiring a cooperation-based approach. This is also called intra-role conflict.

The problem is the following: contentious files are likely to bring about confrontation, and confrontation necessarily implies a winner and a loser. Human nature is such that winners will tend to close files quickly and move on to something else but losers will sometimes become bitter and be tempted by revenge. In short, it is hard to take a confrontation approach one day and a cooperative one the next.

That is why it is best to avoid appointing HSC members who play an active role in contentious files (director of personnel, labor relation representative for the employer, grievance agent or union negotiator). Functions involving contentious issues and those requiring cooperation should be kept separate.

This is all well in theory, and applies more easily in large companies. But in smaller establishments, the restricted number of candidates makes it difficult to follow that rule. In order to avoid the hazards of double roles, however, HSC can apply some simple principles. The HSC mandate should clearly state that contentious issues are not part of the mandate and are not to be discussed at HSC meetings. This rule should then be strictly followed and people who tend to confuse matters will be called to order. It is generally possible to achieve this with a touch of humor, for instance by teasing a person who switches role about wearing the wrong kind of hat !

6.5 Duration of term

Once the right people have been appointed, how long should they remain on the committee ? It is difficult to propose a set duration for the mandate of HSC members but some general guidelines can easily be established.

Experience has shown that people will require a certain time to become familiar with their role as HSC members and fully operational in that capacity. This time is estimated at approximately six months, at a rate of one meeting per month. The period of time can be longer if members receive no training, if meetings are less frequent and if members do not have enough time for committee work between meetings.

It is easy to understand that if the term is too short, members will not have enough time to become fully operational and new members will have to be appointed too frequently. A lot of time will be wasted going over ground that has already been covered, hindering the committee's work. The mandate should therefore be long enough to allow the committee to benefit from the experience of members who know about its operation.

The committee must also avoid the opposite extreme. HSC can be similar to the human body, in that they need to breath in order to function well. New members will bring new ideas and revitalize the committee. In some cases, this option gives positive results and so we suggest mandates of about two years.

However, committees should not adhere to the two-year rule at all costs. For example, if the right “chemistry” develops between members and if a good team spirit is established, why insist on bringing in members, at the risk of breaking the spirit ? Instead, some people suggest conducting annual assessments and evaluating the relevance of renewing members. Change may be a good solution for some committees, but if things are going well, why fix something that is not broken ?

Especially since there are many ways to reach a wider number of people and provide the committee with new ideas. For example, the HSC can ask new people to sit in as observers at meetings. This also gives wider exposure to the committee’s work and allows it to benefit from a fresh outlooks on problems.

As mentioned earlier, creating department committees or sub-committees and involving new people can help HSC breathe a little easier, by enabling it to reach out and raise the awareness of others within the establishment. This is a question of structure, which is the subject of our next chapter.



To find out more

- 1) Government of Québec: “Regulation respecting health and safety committees”, RSQ, c. S-2.1, r. 6.1.
- 2) Préventex: “Structure en santé/sécurité”, 1992.

Structure of the HSC

Chapter summary

Once members have been appointed, the HSC must define a structure.

7.1 Rules of procedure

The committee establishes rules defining the roles and responsibilities attached to key positions within the HSC, as well as rules related to meetings (frequency, notice, agenda, quorum, voting).

7.2 Co-chairs

A joint approach requires that each party appoint a member to act as co-chair. The roles and responsibilities of co-chairs are of prime importance to the operation of HSC.

7.3 Other positions

Successful committees also define the roles and responsibilities of other members such as the secretary, the people responsible for communications and for training and education.

7.4 Objectives coordinators

The committee appoints a coordinator for each of its specific objectives, who will be responsible for implementing the required preventive actions and reporting to the HSC.

7.5 Sub-committees

In some cases, particularly in large establishments, it may be advisable to form sub-committees to take on special projects under the authority of objective coordinators.

7.6 Constitution of the HSC

HSC rules and regulations should be set forth in a written constitution. The publication of the constitution can serve as an opportunity for direct contact between the HSC and other people of the company.

So far, we have learned that HSC are necessary, defined a clear mandate centered on prevention, determined the size of the committee and appointed the right people as members. Now we must make sure that all that work does not fail because of simple questions of procedure.

Establishing operating rules does not guarantee success. But problems of that nature can easily become irritants that impair the work of the committee and in some cases even lead to failure. In order to give the committee every chance of success, it is important to define operating rules and this is where the structure of the committee is involved. The following sections examine the main elements of the structure of successful committees.

7.1 Rules of procedure

It would be risky to improvise rules of procedures for your HSC. Obviously, over-regulating should be avoided but clear rules of procedure are needed to ensure that the committee is efficient and able to settle problems. That is why the first task of the HSC is to determine the rules of procedure.

7.1.1 Key positions

What should the rules be about ? Many points. It is essential to clearly establish the work of the committee and to distribute it fairly. To that end, the HSC defines the roles and responsibilities of key positions, such as those of the co-chairs, the secretary and the coordinators for training and education or communications, as well as other positions if required. Examples of descriptions of responsibilities are given in following sections.

7.1.2 Rules of procedure for meetings

The committee must then set rules to determine the procedure for convening meetings, reaching quorum, writing up the agenda and keeping the minutes.

In each establishment, the parties will work cooperatively to define rules adapted to the company's specific situation, constraints, size, schedules, etc. The following sections suggest some guidelines, including the terms and conditions set forth in the AOHS and in the Regulation respecting health and safety committees. These may serve as an inspiration for companies when establishing their own rules of procedure.

a) Frequency of meetings

The first meeting should be held within thirty days after its members have been appointed, in order to establish, among other things, the schedule for subsequent meetings. The following table indicates the minimum number of meetings:

Size of establishment	Frequency of meetings
Under 25 workers	Once every three months
25 to 100 workers	Once every two months
Over 100 workers	Once every month

Meetings are held during normal working hours, unless the committee decides otherwise. Representatives of the workers are considered to be at work when taking part in meetings and in the general work of the committee.

The HSC does not hold only regular meetings. Rules of internal procedure should also define the procedure for convening and holding special meetings.

The HSC will hold a special meeting within three working days after a request of one of its members, when one of the following events occurs:

- death of a worker, **or**
- injury to a worker resulting in an inability to work for ten working days or more, **or**
- injury to several workers resulting in an inability to work for one working day, **or**
- material damages estimated at \$50,000 or more

These events, listed at Article 62 of the AOHS, are the same ones that employers are required to report to the CSST within the shortest possible delay. The HSC can also determine other situations justifying special meetings and include these in its rules of procedure.

b) Notice and agenda of meetings

The committee establishes rules for convening and holding meetings. Co-chairs usually get together before the meeting to establish the agenda together.

The co-chair who presides over the meeting sends notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda to all the people involved (members, guests, etc.). An example of notice of a meeting is presented below.

Notice and agenda of a meeting of the Health and Safety Committee

Notice

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Agenda

1. Attendance
2. Adoption of agenda
3. Approval of minutes of _____'s meeting
4. Business arising from the last meeting
5. Study of statistics on work-related injuries
6. Suggestions and complaints
7. Report from the safety representative
8. Report from the physician in charge
9. New business

_____ Date of next meeting

Signature of co-chairs

In order to give members time to prepare adequately, how long before the meeting should notice be given ? The committee is responsible for establishing the minimum delay between the notice and the meeting, in accordance with its requirements.

At the beginning of the meeting, any committee members may submit additional items for discussion, which will be added to the agenda upon the agreement of other members.

c) Quorum

It is important that the committee establish a quorum, which is the minimum number of participants required to make the meeting valid. The minimum number of members from each party required for the meeting to be held has to be clearly established. Under Article 26 of the Regulation, at least half the members who represent the workers and at least one member representing the employer constitute the quorum.

It may be very frustrating for members in attendance to be forced to postpone a meeting because the quorum has not been met. This illustrates the importance of giving notice of meetings well in advance in order to ensure maximum attendance.

d) Vote

Committee members should always try to build a consensus and most committees working within a team spirit will succeed. Yet it is not always possible to do so and some rules should be defined if a vote is necessary to settle differences. Concerning this latter point, problem solving techniques will be discussed in a following chapter.

The Act and the Regulation establish the following rules on voting: members representing the workers and members representing the employer all have a right to vote. Guests and observers such as the physician in charge or external resources have no right to vote. If committee members who represent either party fail to agree on a particular question, the position of that party is that which has received the majority vote of the committee members who represent it.

7.2 Co-chairs

In the context of a joint approach, each party (employer and workers) appoints a member as co-chair. Among other duties, co-chairs are responsible for preparing and convening meetings, and for presiding over meetings in turn. However it may be useful to define and keep a record of other responsibilities of the co-chairs in the rules of procedure.

In addition to the roles given to them under the Regulation, co-chairs can be responsible for :

- defining the responsibilities of each member and supporting their work;
- writing the constitution of the HSC and ensuring that rules of procedure are respected;
- following-up on schedules for HSC projects;
- acting as representatives of the HSC to other official bodies.

Co-chairs play a crucial role in the efficient operation of HSC. Presiding over meetings is important, but preparation is also a key element. For example, some co-chairs will consult members before an upcoming meeting to determine items to put on the agenda. The co-chairs will then get together to establish the agenda. In this way, items that are not the responsibility of the HSC or part of its mandate will not be put on the agenda, nor will items not ready for discussion. At the beginning of meetings, co-chairs can explain to members why some items have been left out. New items can be added to the agenda at the last minute or at the beginning of the meeting, but proceeding as described above helps keep bad surprises and digressions to a minimum.

7.3 Other positions

The duties of co-chairs are the only ones officially recognized by the Act and the Regulation. Nothing prevents the HSC, however, from creating other functions for its members. On the contrary, this is highly advisable and many successful committees have adopted this approach.

a) Secretary

The position most often created is that of secretary, which typically includes the following duties:

- Take notes at meetings and keep the minutes of meetings along with the co-chairs;
- Keep the register of minutes up to date;
- Establish the agenda of the meeting along with the co-chairs;
- Support the work of committee members;
- Write the annual (or semi-annual) report, with the help of the co-chairs, as requested by employers and workers.

b) Communications coordinator

This is another function to which a specific HSC member will often be appointed. The person who holds that position may act as representative of the committee to other authorities. He or she will then coordinate efforts with the co-chairs.

- Give information about the HSC, its mandate, composition and duties in the company.
- Circulate the works of the committee, both inside and outside the company.
- Publicize the work of the HSC so that employees may be kept informed of the issues discussed, the decisions taken and the preventive actions suggested at HSC meetings.
- Post minutes of the meetings.
- Establish a system for collecting suggestions and complaints from workers and supervisors.
- Develop and organize programs to raise awareness about health and safety issues.
- Obtain and keep up to date relevant literature on the promotion of occupational health and safety.

c) Training and education coordinator

In some cases, specific committee members will be put in charge of training and education for committee members or for workers and management. The roles and responsibilities generally associated with this position are the following:

- Evaluate the information and training needs of HSC members, workers and management in matters of health and safety.
- Identify the organizations and people most likely to provide the required training or information.
- Obtain and maintain up to date relevant literature to answer training and education needs.
- Integrate health and safety education to job training programs for workers.
- Take part in the development, planning and organization of training and education sessions.

In fact, every HSC member should act as a representative of the committee and promote its exposure. The HSC might ask employer representatives, for instance, to report on HSC decisions at management meetings. Representatives of the workers, for their part, can take turns sitting on meetings of supervisors to take note of suggestions from workers and supervisors. This is a good way to give the committee high exposure and ensure coordination with the rest of the organization.

7.4 Objectives coordinator

We have seen that it is important to appoint specific people as coordinators for the main areas of activities of the HSC. The same goes for specific prevention objectives.

Health and safety structure

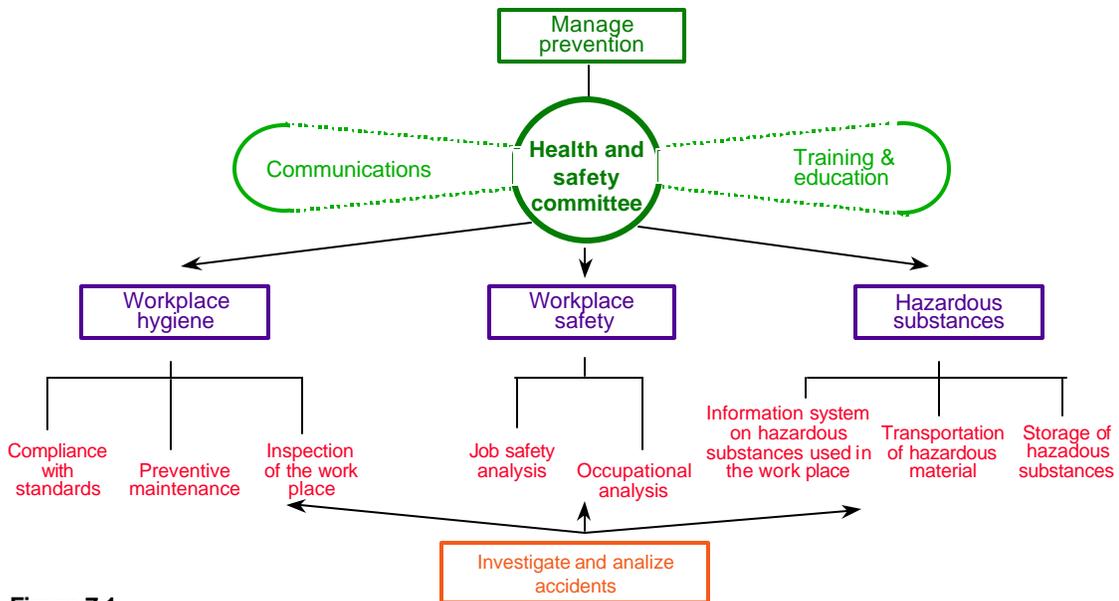


Figure 7.1

Figure 7.1 shows the proposed structure for the management of prevention issues, which is the fundamental mandate of HSC. The structure divides the functions of HSC into three main objectives covering global preventive action and also includes the investigation and analysis of accidents.

The HSC is responsible for determining needs and setting priorities for implementing related objectives and preventive actions. Ultimately, in order to achieve the objectives, all steps in preventive action must be followed. The HSC should therefore designate coordinators for each of the main objectives, and a person responsible for the investigation and analysis of accidents.

The allotment of responsibilities is done according to the size of the establishment and the number of HSC members. In some cases, many members will be in charge of one objective while in some others, one member will be responsible for many objectives.

Coordinators inform the HSC on the progress of each step taken. They get the approval of the HSC for proposed activities before implementing them. It goes without saying that coordinators can ask for assistance in order to reach the set objectives.

To help the HSC make the best decisions, it can also enlist the help of other people within the establishment (purchase or maintenance personnel, mechanics, director of human resources, etc.) or outside resources such as Préventex, the CLSC, the CSST, expert consultants, etc.

It is important for objectives coordinators to keep in close contact with one another so that preventive actions complement each other, duplication is avoided and coordination is made easier. For all these reasons, co-chairs will fill vacancies in objectives coordinators as quickly as possible.

7.5 Sub-committees

As mentioned earlier, a group with too many members can be hard to manage. In large companies, one solution is to create sub-committees.

For example, objectives coordinators might form teams that involve other people from the establishment and not only committee members. It is important to note, however, that the coordinators will answer for the work of the team before the HSC.

Sub-committees can be put in charge of finding solutions to specific problems, such as finding new protection devices for a given machine, reducing the noise level at a work station, etc. In such cases, sub-committees function like problem-solving teams, or quality improvement groups, as illustrated by Figure 7.2.

Creation of sub-committees

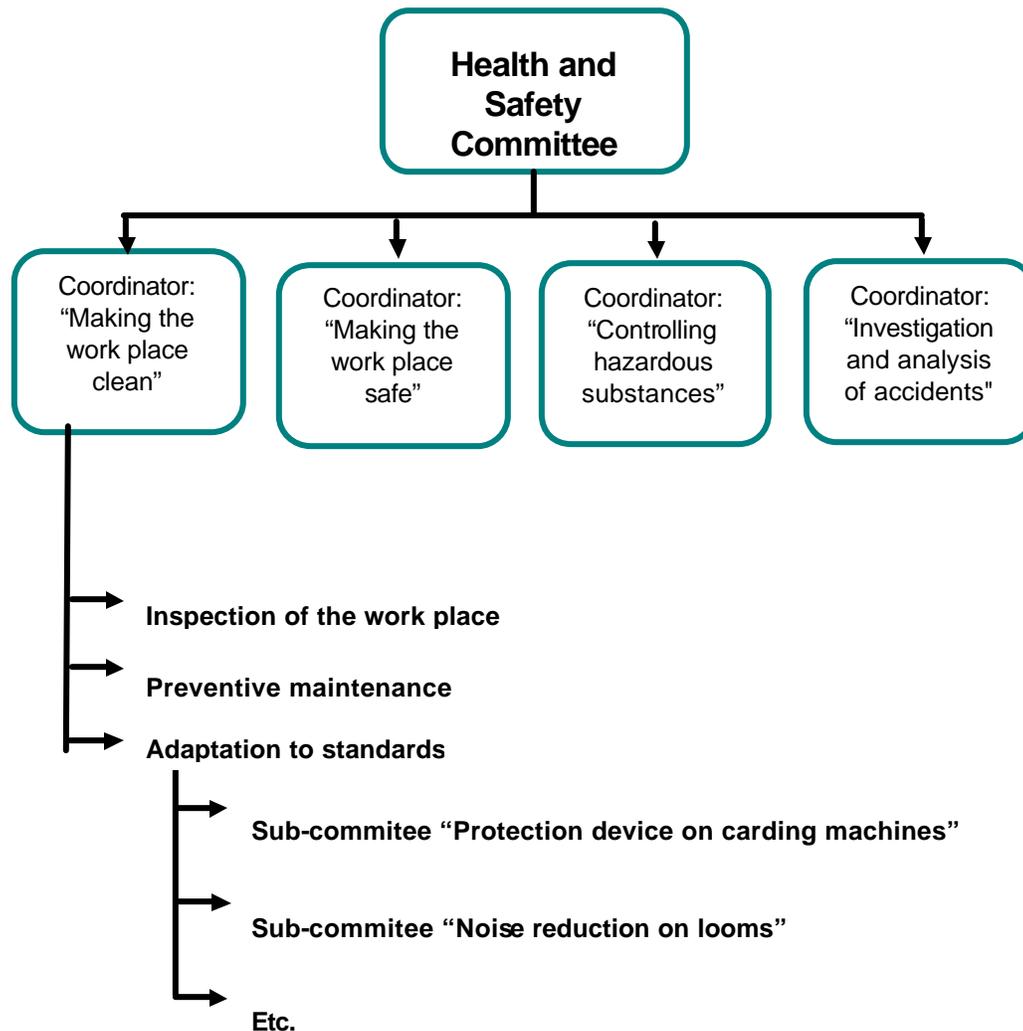


Figure 7.2

Adapted from Travail et Santé, 10 (1), March 1994

Sub-committees document the problem, propose and review solutions, determine the best option and experiment to see if it brings the expected results or can be improved.

Once the sub-committee has completed its work, the coordinator reports to the HSC, who will then coordinate efforts and establish new priorities. Committees who have adopted this type of procedure find their work highly gratifying: not only are they not working alone to find solutions, but they can also mobilize a greater number of people.

7.6 Constitution of the HSC

Some experts suggest that the HSC produce a written constitution to describe the mandate of the committee, its rules of procedure, the roles and responsibilities of members and their official duties, as well as the operating structure. The constitution makes things clear, serves as a reference if needed and publicizes the work of the committee.

However, writing things down will not be enough to generate a team spirit within the committee. And without this team spirit, the constitution remains only a piece of paper. In fact, committees where a team spirit prevails do not necessarily need a written constitution.

In addition, the committee should not rely on written statements to make its work known to other members of the establishment. Nothing should replace direct communication. Rather, distributing the constitution to workers should serve as an excuse or an opportunity for direct consultation.

Finally, we must remember that a constitution is a little like a safety procedure: it should be regularly reviewed and adapted. This can be done at the time of the annual assessment.



To find out more

- 1) Préventex: "Structure en santé/sécurité", 1992.
- 2) PÉRUSSE, M.: "Les comités de santé et sécurité. Partie 2: Aide-toi et le ciel t'aidera!", Travail et Santé, 10(2), June 1994.
- 3) CENTRE PATRONAL DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ DU TRAVAIL: "Faites de votre comité de santé-sécurité un meilleur partenaire en prévention". Montréal: CPSST, 1995.

Module 3

Health and safety committee meetings

Chapter summary

In order for HSC meetings to be successful, there are many aspects to consider.

8.1 Preparation

The first condition for success is the adequate preparation of the contents, context and material resources by the co-chairs.

8.2 Getting started

This is another important aspect: greeting guests and explaining the contents, the agenda, the work method.

8.3 Moderating

Skillful moderating is a crucial element. It involves three main roles:

- Explaining the contents by defining, rephrasing, questioning and making links between items.
- Organizing the meeting by establishing the mode of operation, which implies giving the right to speak, controlling participation and managing time.
- Facilitating the meeting, or creating the right atmosphere, which calls on the moderator's capacity to welcome, listen, observe, express facts and emotions, maintain objectivity, create diversions, release tensions and give feedback.

8.4 Adjournment

Meetings should always end on a positive note, and members are reminded of duties to carry out before the next meeting.

8.5 Assessment of meetings

The quality of meetings is periodically assessed to define solutions to improve them.

The purpose of the HSC is to manage issues related to prevention and its mandate has been defined accordingly. The best possible people have been appointed as members and a sound structure has been established. These steps all serve to establish a solid basis, enabling the HSC to build upon strong foundations

Now the committee must get to work. This is the time to discuss files, exchange points of view, share ideas and take decisions. Meetings are the focal points of the HSC. Efficient meetings are essential to the life and success of the committee. There are ways to ensure that meetings are not only productive but also satisfying for all parties.

8.1 Preparation

The success of a good meeting starts well before the meeting itself. The quality of preparation work is directly proportional to the success rate of meetings. In this section we discuss ways to prepare well for meetings.

First, the contents must be carefully prepared. It is important to review follow-up on items, projects and decisions discussed at the previous meeting. Co-chairs consult members to establish the agenda and send the agenda to members well in advance (about a week) so that they may have enough time to prepare. Co-chairs also exercise some discretion by avoiding putting irrelevant items on the agenda and clarifying the formulation of items to avoid misunderstandings.

The context of the meeting should then be prepared. This could mean, for instance, ensuring that the time chosen for the meeting is suitable for everyone or as convenient as possible. It also means taking measures to keep disturbances at a minimum. Posting a sign on the door saying that a meeting is under way, or rerouting calls to the reception are simple ways to avoid interruptions. A reminder sent a few days before the meeting can also be helpful. For time management purposes, it is a good idea to allot a specific time for each item on the agenda and schedule a sufficient total period of time for the meeting. Set time for a pause if the meeting is to last for long. This will give members a brief respite and can help reduce accumulated tensions. The pause should be scheduled in advance.

Logistical aspects need to be taken care of: reserving the room, setting up audio-visual equipment, having enough chairs and tables, paper and pencils if required, etc.

If documents will be distributed, there should be a sufficient number available at the appropriate time.

8.2 Getting started

As the saying goes, "Punctuality is the politeness of princes". Waiting for late members is highly frustrating and can create a bad atmosphere from the start. A call to order on the importance of arriving on time is sometimes justified. Also, it may be useful to ask around just before the meeting to find out if members will be late or absent, so that the meeting can start without them.

There are simple ways to create a good initial working atmosphere. For example, the person chairing the meeting should make it a point to greet guests and introduce them to the members. This may avoid the suspicions sometimes generated by the presence of strangers in a group. It also encourages people to mix so that they all feel part of one team.

It is generally recommended to explain the goals and objectives of the meeting right at the beginning, particularly if it is a special meeting. A brief reminder of the rules can also be useful. For instance, especially at the first meetings of a newly formed committee, it could be emphasized that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss ideas and not people.

The reading and adoption of the agenda are also important steps. They form the basis on which the person chairing the meeting can manage time efficiently, sometimes by calling to order members who digress or introduce new subjects.

In some cases the committee will establish a work method for a specific item on the agenda. It may also determine and assign duties such as appointing a secretary if the person who usually fulfills that duty is absent. Technicalities should be settled at the beginning of the meeting so that they do not become obstacles to the committee's work.

8.3 Moderating

HSC meetings should provide an opportunity for people to get together, share ideas and find solutions. For this to happen, meetings must be efficient and discussions must be held in a conducive atmosphere. The moderator's role is to ensure that procedures are effective and to create a good working climate. The importance of that role and of the person who assumes it are obvious.

Moderators need to maintain an impartial attitude. This means that they should not try to influence participants or impose their own ideas. Instead, they will try to encourage the group to take charge of the work. They should facilitate operations and discussions and help the committee make the right decisions.

To that end, the function of moderator includes three main roles: clarifying, organizing and facilitating. These are presented at Figure 8.1.

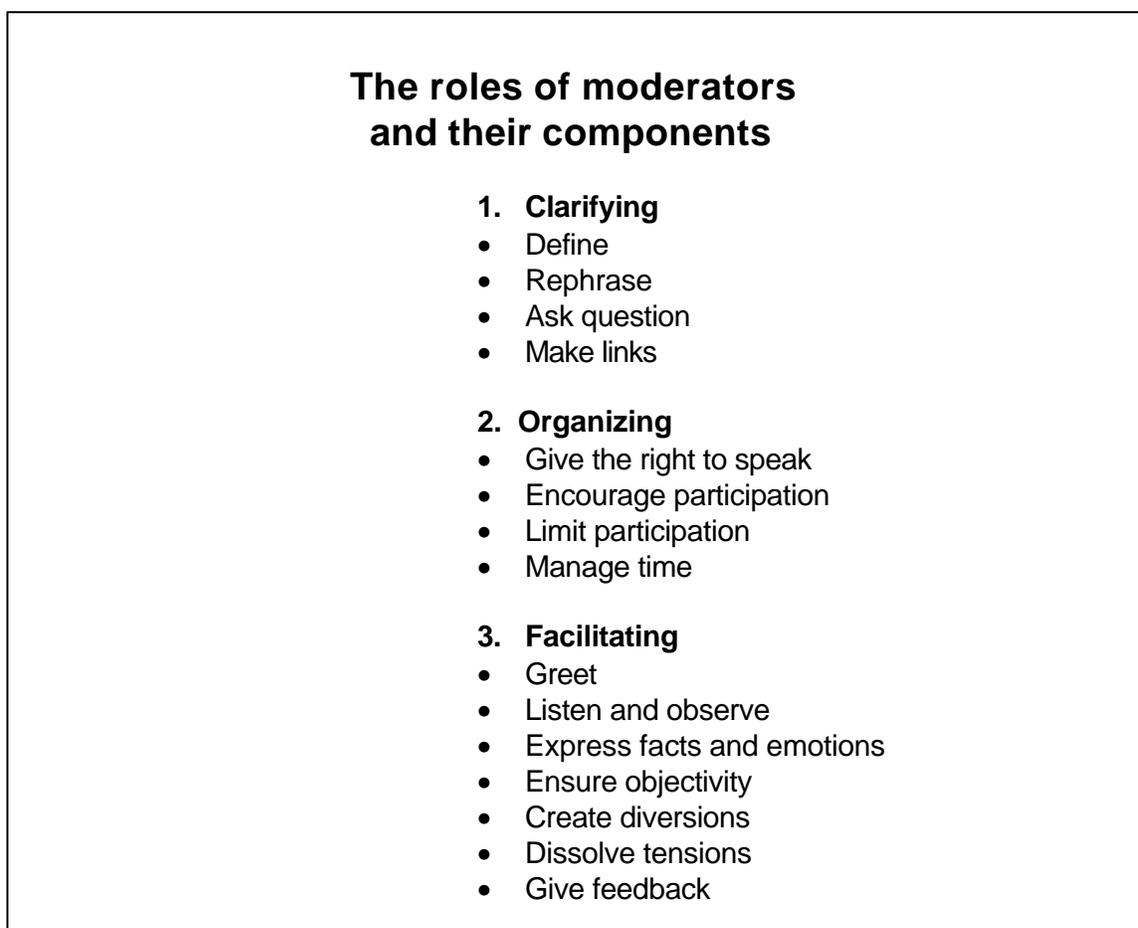


Figure 8.1

8.3.1 Clarifying

One of the main sources of frustration at meetings is when discussions are disheveled and disperse in irrelevant directions. To be efficient and preserve morale, the group has to restrict discussions to the basic facts. That is why the moderator's role of clarification primarily concerns the contents of discussions.

One way to clarify matters is to describe the issues by delimiting the focus of discussions and defining the terms used. Discussions will often go wrong only because two people are giving the same word a different meaning.

Rephrasing issues is another method of clarification. Members do not express themselves in the same way and with equal ease. The moderator can help participants by emphasizing important elements or summarizing an issue, making sure that everyone has the same understanding of the matter at hand. As well, regularly assessing the progress made will give members some encouragement. In the same way, an attentive moderator will notice if some participants did not understand what has been said and ask speakers to make their statements clearer.

Moderators also make links between interventions in order to encourage participants to listen to each other. This also brings out the relation between arguments from different participants

8.3.2 Organizing

Moderators are responsible for making the meeting work well and should help the committee establish an efficient mode of operation.

Some participants try to dominate discussions, which makes others feel excluded and frustrated. The person presiding over the meeting has to make sure that everyone gets an opportunity to express themselves: this is called the right to speak. Moderators will make sure that this right is respected and that all participants get a chance to share their ideas, by systematically going around the table if needed.

Beyond giving the right to speak, moderators sometimes need to actively encourage participation. When morale is low and the group seems exhausted, it is the moderator's role to encourage and motivate. Congratulating members on the progress accomplished or emphasizing how little remains to be done are easy ways to give the group a second wind. Encouraging participation also means that moderators try to avoid getting personally involved in discussions.

To encourage the group to take charge, moderators can use simple means such as returning a question to the group instead of answering it themselves. Finally, encouraging participation implies encouraging members to take on responsibilities and initiatives; congratulating people on initiatives taken, thanking volunteers and other gestures to motivate the group and ensure a fair distribution of the work.

In some cases, however, co-chairs will have to restrict participation instead of encouraging it. This happens when discussions become too lively or when certain members take up too much discussion time. Moderators can ask people to sum up their intervention and allow others to express their point of view, or simply restrict speaking time.

This brings us to the final organizational aspect of the moderator's role, that of time management. Meetings that go on forever or are not completed will leave participants with a sense of frustration. Moderators should help the group manage its time well.

If the committee is spending too much time on a specific item, for instance, moderators can point out that there are many other items to be discussed. If members start rushing things, on the other hand, moderators will remind them that there is still time left to settle issues. To make time management easier, moderators can determine a specific period of time for each item, leaving a possibility to review the schedule as the meeting progresses.

Groups can waste a lot of time if they have no method to settle the problems that arise during discussions. Applying the right problem solving technique can help manage time more efficiently and avoid many conflicts. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

8.3.3 Facilitating

The aim of the role of facilitator is to create a pleasant working atmosphere in the group. A good moderator can have a great influence on the atmosphere of the meeting. In order to favor a healthy atmosphere, the first duty of moderators is to greet participants. A warm welcome can help create a good climate right from the start. This point has already been dealt with in the section on getting started.

In order to fulfill their role of facilitators, moderators must listen and observe well since they may be required to clarify arguments and ideas, bring discussions into line and sometimes summarize points of view in order to fully understand what they imply and express what has been left unsaid. Moderators should also pay attention to the physical attitude of participants to help them gauge their interventions and adjust their strategies.

During discussions, participants often express feelings and emotions as well as ideas and facts. This is a good thing, since repressed emotions can sometimes deteriorate and become negative. Moderators should therefore encourage participants to describe the facts and express their emotions.

Yet expressing emotions can create delicate situations. Individual opinions must be respected and personal attacks must be avoided at all times. If such attacks occur, the person presiding over the meeting must bring discussions back on the right path.

The best way to keep discussions under control while allowing emotions to be expressed is to maintain objectivity. If two members start quarreling, for example, the moderator can separate the emotional aspect of their debate from the actual facts and ideas. By bringing the discussion back to the level of ideas, tensions are lowered. Also, the emphasis is put on what brings people together rather than on what sets them apart, which encourages cohesion and team spirit within the group.

The second way to keep discussions under control is to create a diversion, for example by leading talks to a secondary issue until people calm down. It may be a good idea to take a break if the atmosphere is tense and members are getting tired. Intelligent use of humor can also help and a well-timed joke can avoid a verbal confrontation. If all else fails, the meeting can be adjourned.

8.4 Adjournment

It is important to end the meeting on a positive note. Simply pointing out that members have covered all the items on the agenda is a good way to do that. It is also important and stimulating to go over the work that has been accomplished, emphasizing the good points, the decisions taken and the work to be done until the next meeting. This is a good opportunity to remind members of their responsibilities and duties until the next meeting. Finally, the meeting never ends without setting the date and time of the next meeting.

8.5 Assessment of meetings

Well-run organizations always try to improve themselves. In the case of HSC, this can be achieved by periodically assessing the committee's mode of operation.

The assessment can deal with points such as the level of participation by members, compliance with the agenda and set objectives, the atmosphere of meetings, the efficiency of discussions, the quality and relevance of interventions, and so on.

The idea is to identify the aspects that did not work well in order to find solutions and improve the system. However, it is difficult to keep a self-evaluation objective and the committee can ask an impartial, non participating observer to conduct the assessment.



To find out more

- 1) ASP Fabrication de produits en métal et produits électriques: "Guide du participant: l'animation de réunions". St-Léonard: ASP Métal, 1990.
- 2) PÉRUSSE, M.: "Le choix des mesures correctives", Travail et Santé, 5 (4), December 1989.
- 3) CENTRE PATRONAL DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ DU TRAVAIL: "Faites de votre comité santé-sécurité un meilleur partenaire en prévention". Montréal: CPSST, 1995.

Problem solving

Chapter summary

Even when meetings are well prepared and skillfully moderated, problems can arise and it may be necessary to use a problem solving process.

9.1 Identify the problem

The first step in solving a problem is to classify it and determine whether it is a problem that the group can solve. The problem is then defined as precisely as possible.

9.2 Analyze the problem

Once the problem is defined, further questions should be asked to fully understand all its components. The problem and its causes are analyzed.

9.3 Find solutions

After completing the analysis, a solution must be found. At this stage, all suggestions should be taken in indiscriminately.

9.4 Evaluate solutions

Each proposed solutions is then evaluated on the basis of selected criteria. In health and safety matters, usual criteria include preventive value, other impacts of the solution, applicability, stability and costs.

9.5 Adopt a solution

The committee adopts a solution through consensus, on the basis of the evaluation. If a consensus cannot be built, the group may have to repeat some of the preceding steps.

9.6 Implement the decision

To implement its decision, the group has to determine duties, responsibilities and a schedule.

9.7 Evaluate the results

The committee evaluates the impact of the solution and changes are brought as needed. The group can then go on to another problem.

Even if they follow the advice on preparation and moderation discussed in the preceding chapter, committees may encounter problems and dead-end situations that are difficult to overcome. Using a problem solving technique can help. This technique involves a systematic process, as illustrated in Figure 9.1, and we will examine its different components in the following sections.

The problem solving process

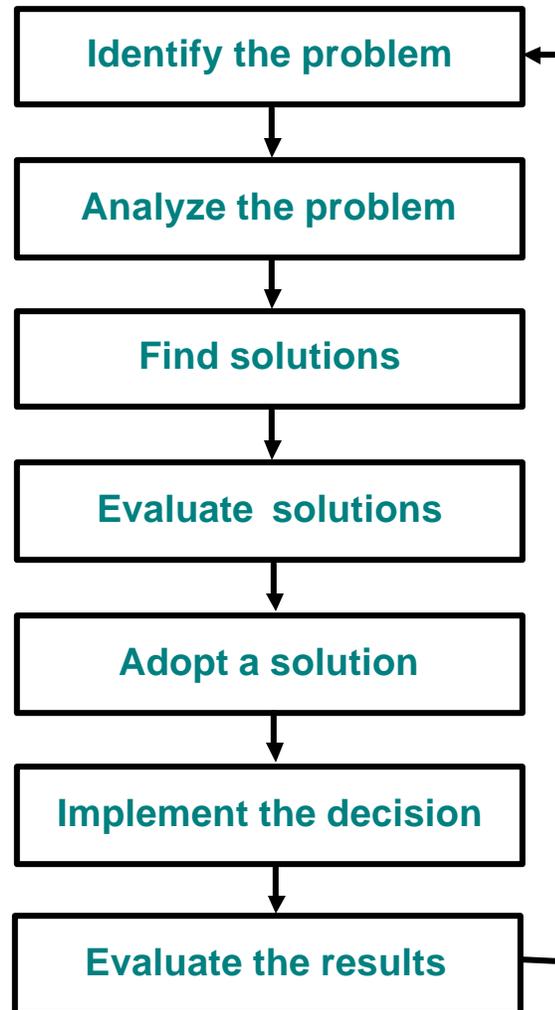


Figure 9.1

9.1 Identify the problem

9.1.1 Classify the problem

The first step in the problem solving process is to clearly define the problem. There are three categories of problems:

- Material problems related to work station layout, tools, equipment, etc.
- Organizational problems associated with work planning and organization, duty allocation and other aspects of the mode of operation.
- Human relation issues resulting from diverging ideas, opinions or behaviors.

To make its work easier, the committee should start by addressing simpler problems, which are often material questions. By proceeding from simple to complex, the group learns to work together and develops the mutual trust required to work on difficult and delicate issues. When discussing organizational problems and especially, questions of human relations, the group should take care to focus on facts and situations and not on the people involved.

9.1.2 Assess the level of control

Assessing the level of control or influence that the committee has over the problem is a useful step. Here again, problems can be divided into three categories.

- The committee has complete control over the problem, and both the problem and its solution are fully within its authority. Examples include selecting individual protection equipment or establishing a training and education program.
- The committee has only partial control over the problem but may have some influence. In this type of situation, the committee is not responsible for implementing the solution but might influence the decision that will be taken, which is referred to as the power to make recommendation. For instance, if a piece of equipment needs to be modified to make it safer, the committee cannot carry out the modification but it can make a recommendation to the person in charge as to the best possible way to do so.

- The committee has no control or influence over the problem. This category includes decisions that are strictly administrative, issues of human relations and the implementation of programs exclusively related to operations. The committee can waste a considerable amount of time and severely affect morale if it attempts to discuss problems that are completely out of its jurisdiction.

Problems of that nature are often outside the HSC mandate and as soon as the committee realizes it has no control or influence over a problem, it should stop discussing it and refer the problem to the appropriate authorities.

9.1.3 Define the problem

Once the committee has determined that it has full or partial control over a problem, the issue needs to be clearly defined.

1. Describe the problematic situation in precise terms, for example “The presence of fumes in the mechanics workshop.”
2. Describe the corrected situation, which represents its goal and objective. In the same example, “Eliminate solvent fumes”, the problem being the discrepancy between the unsatisfactory situation and the desired situation.
3. Collect and organize available information about the problem: number of cases and undesirable events, health assessment data, state of location or any other relevant information. It may be advisable to structure this information by making a chart or table.
4. Choose one aspect of the problem over which the committee has a certain control or influence or where it can offer some expertise. For example, if a problematic situation has negative impacts on production, quality and health and safety, the HSC should restrict itself to health and safety issues.
5. Define the problem in precise terms, including observable facts and proposed objectives. It is too early in the process to suggest a solution yet. The whole group should agree on the definition of the problem.

Discussions will sometimes get bogged down. The moderator will have to consider such questions as "Where do discussions stumble exactly? Why? Is it only because of a difference in perceptions? Did everyone get the same information?" In order to avoid such difficulties, the group must work on concrete facts, with all available information, and avoid basing discussions on presumptions or personal opinions.

To encourage consensus building, the group can try to define elements on which all members agree and that the group can build on. At this stage of the process, simply defining the problem and clarifying the words used can go a long way.

9.2 Analyze the problem

Once the problem is clearly defined, the next step is to analyze it further. To that end, the question technique can be used: "Where does the problem come from? What are the causes, the contributing factors? Why is that so?". The group will make progress by finding answers to simple questions such as Who? What? Where? When? How? and How many?

The principle that applies is the following: if the problem cannot be settled directly, acting on its causes will generally solve it. The group dissects the problem, divides it into smaller components and looks for causes by asking the question "Why?".

It is important to remember that the committee should work with concrete, tangible and precise facts and not with presumptions or hypotheses.

9.3 Find solutions

Once the group has reviewed the components of the problem, the information about it and possible causes, the following step is to look for solutions. No problem has only one solution and all possible avenues should be considered.

The brain-storming technique, written or verbal, can be useful at this stage. It calls upon the group's creativity and members are asked to submit all their ideas, even the most far-fetched, and make note of them.

After all, we must remember that many brilliant ideas started out as far-fetched notions that were later remodeled ! There will be ample time to discuss them, work on them, perhaps combine them and establish priorities later.

9.4 Evaluate solutions

Once members have identified all possible solutions, the committee evaluates them. The pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages of each proposal are weighted in turn.

If the problem is related to health and safety, the committee might consider using a grid like the one presented at Figure 9.2. The criteria for evaluating solutions are: preventive value (Will the problem really disappear ?), other impacts of the solution (What are the effects of this solution on production ? On quality ?), applicability (Is the solution technically feasible ?), stability (Will the problem be settled for good ?) and costs.

Selection of preventive measures

Possible solutions	Preventive value	Other impacts	Applicability	Stability	Cost
Modify the equipment					
Move the equipment					
Install warning signs					
Prohibit circulation					
Inform workers					
Etc.					

Figure 9.2
Adapted from *Travail et Santé*, 5 (4), December 1989.

In order to understand how the chart works, let's take the following example: a mobile part of a machine extends over the circulation area and presents a hazard. For the purposes of our discussion, let's propose only a few solutions to the problem. First, the machine could be modified so that the part does not stick out anymore. The machine could also be moved. Another solution would be to put up a sign to warn workers of the hazard. Workers could be forbidden to circulate in the area. Finally, workers could be informed of the situation and asked to exercise caution, which could be done at a safety meeting.

It is fairly obvious that the two first options, modifying or moving the equipment, would have the highest preventive value. But the impact of these solutions on production or product quality should also be considered. Forbidding circulation in the area will impair work, while the other solutions have no impact on production.

Putting up a sign or warning workers are probably the easiest and least expensive options, but they also have the lowest preventive value. The most durable solutions are the two first ones, but they are also the most costly.

The idea, in short, is to evaluate all possible options based on each criteria. This will help the group progress and allow it to find solutions that will satisfy everyone involved. It will also prepare the material to convince the rest of the organization that the solution chosen is effectively the best.

9.5 Adopt a solution

Once it has evaluated solutions, the committee has to make a decision. The objective is to find the best, most practical solution, the win-win option suitable to all parties. The best solution will often emerge in the course of the evaluation process and become more obvious to everyone as discussions progress. But this is not always the case.

The committee should then try to understand why talks are stalling and what disagreements rest on. The problem description may not be clear, the solutions may not be perceived in the same way by all participants, or information may be missing about some of the solutions. The moderator's role of clarification becomes crucial in building a consensus among the group.

It is also possible that some of the preceding steps were not fully completed. For example, the optimal solution may not be listed in the options that were evaluated. The group should then go back briefly to that step and redefine the problem or try to find new solutions. The process is carried out again with the new information until the group agrees on a win-win solution.

9.6 Implement the decision

The committee now has to implement the chosen solution. It has to define its objectives, the steps to be followed and the duties to carry out, as well as the required means.

The work is distributed and the duties of each member is described in detail. An action plan is drawn up to set out priorities, the sequence of actions and deadlines. The people in charge of specific duties become responsible for them before the committee.

9.7 Evaluate the results

Finally, the committee appoints a member to oversee the implementation of the decision. In keeping with the committee's mode of operation, the coordinator responsible for the issues concerned should supervise the application.

Once the decision is implemented it should be evaluated by asking questions such as "Was the solution implemented as planned ? Is it having the expected results ? Has the situation improved ? Is the problem solved ?"

If the problem persists despite the implementation of the solution, the committee needs to analyze the causes of the difference between the expected and the actual situation and modify the solution if required. If the problem is settled, the file is closed and the committee goes on to another issue. This is the way that groups become increasingly efficient.



To find out more

- 1) ASP Fabrication de produits en métal et produits électriques: "Guide du participant: l'animation de réunions". St-Léonard: ASP Métal, 1990.
- 2) PÉRUSSE, M.: "Le choix des mesures correctives", Travail et Santé, 5 (4), December 1989.

Implementation of HSC projects

Chapter summary

Once the HSC has taken decisions, it has to follow a process of implementation.

10.1 Action plan

If there are many steps to the implementation process, the HSC has to structure its actions in a cohesive action plan setting out priorities and deadlines. Carrying out this action plan requires support from the management.

10.2 Appointment of people in charge

Once the action plan is established, specific people are put in charge of each step and informed of their responsibilities.

10.3 Mobilization of people concerned

Measures should be taken to involve the people concerned and to integrate the required preventive actions into job descriptions and day-to-day work.

10.4 Communications

The committee needs to establish an efficient communication plan identifying the target personnel and define its message accordingly. The plan also includes active communication strategies.

10.5 Work teams

Since many people are involved in the implementation process, the HSC should form teams and encourage team work.

10.6 Evaluation of results

It is important that the HSC conduct an evaluation of its accomplishments in order to raise morale and give the HSC better exposure.

We now have a clear mandate and a committee that is efficient, holds productive meetings and takes the required means to solve problems and find realistic and relevant solutions. This could lead us to believe that we have it all covered, yet there is another element that could put paid to your HSC.

The best way to destroy the enthusiasm of a group is to give it a sense of working in vain, and this will inevitably happen if there is no follow-up on the recommendations, projects and activities of the committee. If members can see no progress, they will start believing that their work is useless and feel no sense of accomplishment. Implementing solutions is a crucial element of success for the HSC, as illustrated in Figure 10.1

The main causes of motivation loss

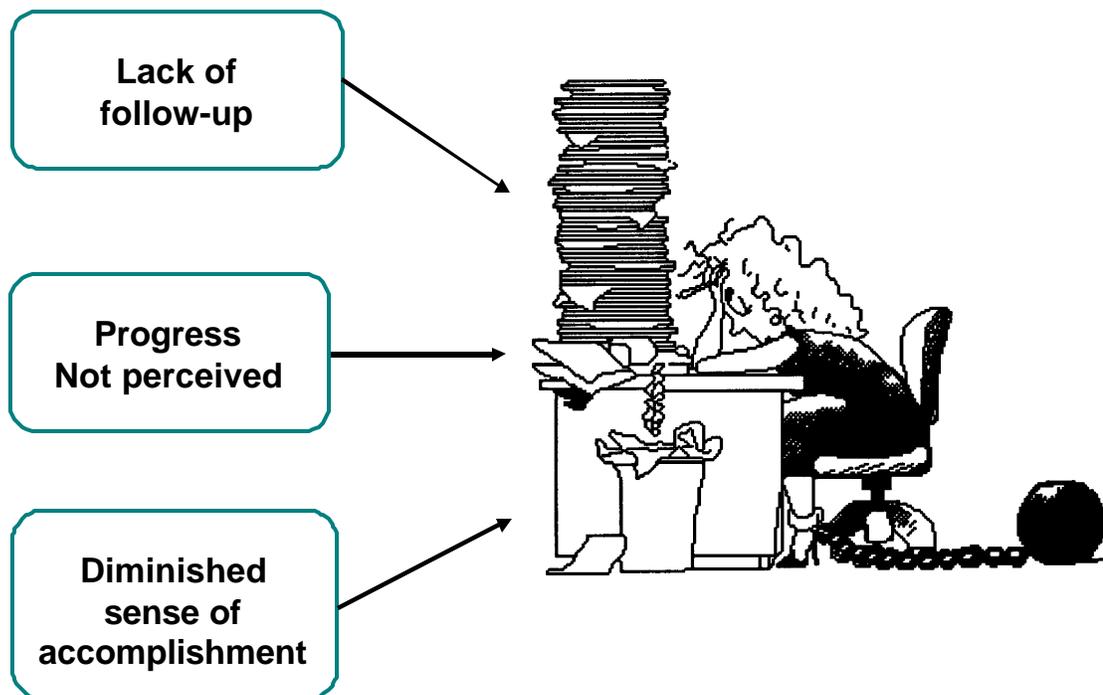


Figure 10.1

Source: Travail et Santé, 10 (2), June 1994

10.1 Action plan

The main difficulty encountered by many committees is the necessity to “sell” series of unrelated recommendations and solutions, one by one, a process that the committee has to repeat every time it makes a new proposal. This can demand considerable energy from the group.

One method to avoid the problems associated with a lack of follow-up is to establish an action plan. At the beginning of each year, the committee sets objectives, priorities and global guidelines, which constitute the action plan for the coming year. This plan is then approved by the management. In this way, the recommendations of the HSC made within the global guidelines of the plan will be perceived as having the prior approval of the management and are less likely to meet with resistance.

The involvement of the management is advisable for other reasons as well. In keeping with the integration approach developed in previous sections of this guidebook, the action plan should apply to all members of the company and not only to the HSC. The committee defines an action plan for the entire establishment, it cannot work alone.

The committee will have to delegate some of its duties to other people within the company. But the HSC has no hierarchical powers and in order to make this process work, the management should ideally be made responsible for implementing the action plan, demanding that people render accounts and taking the means to remove obstacles along the way. Only the management has the power to intervene if some people do not fulfill their obligations in terms of prevention.

But before discussing the delegation of responsibilities any further, a final point has to be made about action plans. In addition to appointing people in charge of implementation, a sound action plan also has another important feature: setting priorities.

There is often a great deal of prevention work to do, especially in companies where this matter has not been given enough attention in the past. But it is impossible for the committee to settle everything at once, particularly when the economic situation is difficult. If all the issues seem important, the HSC must decide on the most pressing ones.

In this context, it is recommended that the company, under the initiative of its HSC, develop a chart to define priorities. An example taken from the *Guide d'inspection planifiée des lieux de travail* published by Préventex is given at Figure 10.2.

Each company has to provide its own definition of what constitutes a serious problem (code 1), an average problem (code 2) and a minor problem (code 3). It must also set realistic delays for solving each type of problem according to its specific circumstances.

Identification codes for hazardous situations

Code	Definition
1	Situations or practices likely to cause death, serious disability and/or significant damages to building and equipment.
2	Situations or practices likely to cause injuries, occupational diseases and/or damages to building or equipment.
3	Situations or practices likely to cause minor injuries and/or minor damages to building or equipment

Figure 10.2

Adapted from the *Guide d'inspection planifiée des lieux de travail*, Préventex

It is important that the grid be **integrated**, in other words that problems in the same category, whether related to production, safety or quality, be put on the same level. This means that minor safety problems will be dealt with after serious production problems, but also that serious safety problems will be dealt with before minor production problems. One thing is certain: if the production personnel, the maintenance personnel and the HSC work jointly to adopt the integrated grid, a common frame of reference is agreed upon, which will avoid many difficult discussions in the future.

10.2 Appointing people in charge

In order to have an efficient action plan and productive prevention efforts, the HSC needs to delegate the responsibility for projects to people who are not members of the committee. In addition, people should be made specifically responsible for other activities and projects or for following up on HSC decisions.

The CSST completed an assessment of the prevention activities prescribed by the AOHS and identified some weak points. Two major weaknesses have been defined concerning the element discussed here.

In some cases, the prevention program will include many prevention objectives without specifying who is to carry them out. If no one takes charge, the objectives are simply not implemented.

In some other cases, people have been made responsible for specific objectives, but have not been told about it ! The final result is the same: no one took charge. This makes clear the importance of making specific people responsible for the implementation of each decision, project and activity.

Once the person in charge has been appointed, this should be clearly stated in the minutes of the HSC meeting and in the action plan. The committee should then take appropriate and efficient measures to inform the people concerned of the responsibilities they have been given.

10.3 Mobilization of people concerned

Even if HSC follow this procedure, there is no guarantee that the designated people will accept their new responsibilities. Staff members, especially if they are part of the hierarchical line of command and if the economic situation is difficult, are often overworked and may not be willing to take on additional duties. Supervisors will often say that they would need ten hours a day to accomplish their eight hours of work. Yet their involvement is essential to the success of prevention. So how can that problem be solved ?

Obviously, the HSC cannot force people to get involved: do onto others as you wish be done to you. In any event, the HSC has no hierarchical power except through its members with decision-making authority, and this is how it should be. The HSC has to find other solutions.

Three courses of action are available. **First**, past experience has shown that OHS responsibilities are more readily assumed if they are part of job descriptions and the management should be asked to proceed with this integration. Logically, the worker's performance evaluation, where applicable, should also take health and safety issues into account. If the management proceeds in this way, the people concerned will clearly understand that safety is an integral part of their work and is as much a priority as other aspects.

Second, if the committee wants to involve people who are not members of the HSC, it must work on convincing them, which can be like selling or marketing products. The committee should emphasize the benefits of prevention (improvements in quality, increases in production, reduction of downtime, respect for budget and deadlines, etc.). It is important to be well-prepared and consider every alternative to determine the most advantageous solution for everyone,

Third, in order to make the task of appointed people easier, prevention should be truly integrated into daily work activities instead of being superimposed upon them. For example, if supervisors are asked to take part in inspections of the work place along with the person in charge of inspections, they might see that as an additional task and constraint. But they may not feel this way if the inspection has been carefully planned.

Alternatively, they can be asked to pay attention to specific safety points during the course of their normal production inspections so that their work load is not made heavier. If, for instance, they are shown how to apply accident investigation techniques to production or quality problems, they can become more efficient in everything they do and safety will become an attractive added value, a good work habit instead of an additional task.

10.4 Communications

For the committee to accomplish all that work, it should explore additional ways to make the action plan fully operational and adopt a sound communication plan that will bind all the components together.

Initially, the committee must identify its target clientele and consider the fact that the management, the executives, the workers and the HSC may not share the same concerns. The HSC should take these different constraints and concerns into account when establishing communication strategies, by emphasizing the benefits of prevention that apply to the activities of each sector. To be convincing, the committee will base its interventions on specific realities and express them in appropriate language.

The committee should use active communication methods, since written communications remain relatively inefficient. The message should be delivered personally. How many people take the time to read publicity flyers ? About as many who will take the time to read the minutes of HSC meetings. The committee can also apply simple methods such as reporting on the decisions of HSC to supervisors-employees meetings or going to see the people who have been put in charge of activities, not only to inform them but also to explain and justify their appointment. People must talk first if they want to understand each other.

10.5 Work teams

Committees sometimes react in strange ways: they feel threatened if other groups get together to work on prevention and will attempt to centralize everyone's efforts in order to keep control. By taking this attitude, unfortunately, they bring the entire burden of prevention onto themselves. They end up being overwhelmed and members quickly get exhausted.

Team work is one of the most precious instruments in the HSC tool box, for many reasons. First, as mentioned earlier, the HSC has to learn to work together as a team rather than as two opposing parties. True efficiency can only be achieved through team work.

Second, it has often been suggested in this guidebook to involve people outside the HSC in prevention work, so as to avoid overloading the committee. Consulting expert resources within the company, enlisting their help to solve problems, appointing coordinators for specific objectives, delegating responsibilities or creating sub-committees are some of the ways to achieve that. Therefore, in addition to working as a team, the HSC needs to encourage the formation of other work groups and pass on required abilities. Everyone benefits from this approach.

Supervisors -employees meetings and department committees can also become valued allies of the HSC. Instead of feeling threatened, the HSC should consider other groups as partners in a common cause. The committee can make the work of other teams easier and develop ways to collaborate with them. The HSC can then coordinate the global prevention effort, by making sure that the same problem is not dealt with by two teams at once, for instance, or by circulating information about winning solutions or simply synchronizing the work of different groups. The committee can take care of issues that require a wider expertise and those that are of common interest or concern to several teams or departments.

Finally, when a mandate is given to someone outside the committee, the HSC could suggest forming a small group to assist in the work. The person chosen may be initially reticent to take on the mandate but pointing out that the work can be carried out as a team might make it less intimidating. In the same way, if the committee supplies the names of a few potential assistants and offers its support, it becomes even harder for the person to refuse !

10.6 Evaluation of results

A baseball player with .300 batting average will generally get a very lucrative contract. But even committees who are having difficulties rarely have a batting average below .666, which means that they settle over two thirds of the issues they deal with. Their success rate is twice as good as the best baseball players !

The trouble is that committees are generally unaware of their “batting average” and have no idea of how well they are doing. When energies are concentrated strictly on unresolved files, members tend to forget about those that have met with success.

That is why the committee should set some time aside to evaluate its progress and measure the distance it has covered. This can be an opportunity to compile a list of achievements, successful initiatives and files settled by the HSC. Such an exercise has two main benefits: it allows members of the committee to realize that even if every issue was not resolved, progress is being made and their work is not fruitless. Also, a list of achievements can become a useful tool to publicize and justify the work of the HSC within the company.

A word of advice, however. We have said that the HSC cannot carry out all the prevention work alone, and therefore it should not take all the credit for results such as decreases in the number or gravity of accidents. Conversely, the HSC cannot be held responsible for an increase in these figures. The principle is simple: statistics about accidents are a measure of the company's global OHS performance, an indication of the degree of responsibility taken by all employees about prevention. The HSC should avoid evaluating its performance only on the basis of these indicators. It should instead base its self-evaluation on factors such as the efficiency of its operating mode, the percentage of objectives reached or projects implemented, and the number of files settled.

The results of the evaluation can bring the committee's work full circle and serve to determine new objectives, new priorities, a new action plan and zones where the committee's action will be directed so that it may continually improve itself.



To find out more

- 1) PRÉVENTEX: "Guide d'inspection planifiée des lieux de travail". Brossard: Préventex, 1992.
- 2) PÉRUSSE, M.: "Enquête et analyse d'accidents. II Découvrir pourquoi est survenu l'accident", Travail et Santé, 4 (4), December 1988.
- 3) PÉRUSSE, M.: "Les comités de santé et sécurité. Partie 2: Aide-toi et le ciel t'aidera !", Travail et Santé, 10 (2), June 1994.
- 4) PÉRUSSE, M.: "Suivi, contrôle et évaluation: pour boucler la boucle...", Travail et Santé, 8 (4), December 1992.
- 5) CENTRE PATRONAL DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ DU TRAVAIL: "Faites de votre comité de santé-sécurité un meilleur partenaire en prévention". Montréal: CPSST, 1995.

Conclusion

In closing, we must point out two traps into which HSC can fall. First, some people might think that if they need to do everything that this guidebook says in order to set up an efficient committee, they will never manage. It is true that the committees that work best are those where most of the principles presented here are applied. After all, this book was inspired by the successful formulas developed by such committees. But there is no need to feel discouraged. These committees did not succeed without time or effort. As the saying goes, Rome was not built in a day.

To avoid the risk of getting discouraged, committees can use the stairs approach: taking it one step at a time. The HSC cannot expect to accomplish everything at once. Committees that have difficulties related to operation will address the situation progressively, by identifying and settling priority problems first. In fact, the problem solving technique described at chapter 9 can easily apply to the operation of a committee. Every difficulty that is overcome by following the advice presented in this guidebook will become a victory that will encourage members to go further and settle more problems.

This is where the second trap threatening HSC comes in. Some committees might be tempted to do everything themselves and consider asking for assistance as a sign of weakness. On the contrary, admitting that we do not have the answer to everything is a sign of maturity. The committee should not hesitate to consult with expert resources both inside and outside the company. In addition, no committee can be successful if members have no training, and this training should be followed jointly. In this way, members all receive the same information and start from the same basis, which makes consensus building considerably easier. There is no lack of resources for training: sector-based association, CEGEP, consultants, etc. The HSC need only use them judiciously.

In short, the most highly performing committees apply the advice presented in this guidebook. They will achieve success progressively and by relying on training.

Indirect costs of work-related accidents

NAME OF VICTIM:	
DATE OF ACCIDENT:	
CATEGORY OF ACCIDENT:	a) No downtime <input type="checkbox"/> b) With downtime <input type="checkbox"/> With With
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-aid <input type="checkbox"/> • Physician <input type="checkbox"/> • Material damages <input type="checkbox"/>

PART I - SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

- 1- Damages to material and equipment
Brief description: _____

- Rental of equipment of material required: yes (), no ()
- Number of hours required by maintenance workers to repair damages: _____
- Number of employees: _____
- Average duration of work: _____ hours _____ minutes

- 2- How many hours did the victim lose on the day of the accident?
_____ hours _____ minutes

- 3- How many workers (non victims) devoted time to assist the victim, provide support, etc. when the accident occurred? _____
How much time did they spend on average? _____ hours _____ minutes

- 4- How many non victims lost time because their duties are related to the work of the victim or the damaged equipment/material? _____

- 5- How many hours did the following people spend on average dealing with the accident?
 - First-aid worker _____ hours _____ minutes
 - Safety representative _____ hours _____ minutes
 - Union delegate _____ hours _____ minutes
 - Others _____ hours _____ minutes

- 6- How much time did the supervisor spend helping, investigating, writing reports, reorganizing production, training a replacement or taking other measures as a result of the accident?
_____ hours _____ minutes

- 7- If operations are delayed or the machine has become inoperative, will overtime be necessary to catch up with lost production time?
Yes () no ()

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR _____

NOTE Please forward to safety or accounting department no later than the day following the accident.
CSST / DIM-236 (88-04)

PART II - INDIRECT COSTS

I COST OF REPAIRS TO MATERIAL				Coût
1-	Net cost of repair, replacement or reinstallation:			
	• material			_____
	• tools			_____
	• machines			_____
	• individual protection equipment			_____
2-	Rental cost of equipment or machinery			_____
3-	Expenses resulting from temporary interruption of equipment or machinery (estimation of cost resulting from production stoppage)			_____
4-	Cost of first-aid material			_____
	TOTAL COST:			_____

II SALARY COSTS (Work stoppage)		Hours	X	Hourly rate + Social benefits	= Cost
1-	Victim				
	a) Lost hours on day of accident	_____		_____	_____
	b) Differential in compensation and social benefits (private insurance)	_____		_____	_____
	c) Hours lost at return to work (first-aid care, physician, investigation)	_____		_____	_____
2-	Other workers				
	a) Time devoted to comforting the victim:				
	_____ Number				
	_____ Average time spent				
	_____ Hours and minutes				
	TOTAL				
	b) Hours lost by employees whose work is affected by the work of the victim or by the damaged machinery:				
	_____ Number of workers				
	_____ Average time lost				
	_____ Hours and minutes				
	TOTAL				
	c) First-aid workers (time spent)	_____		_____	_____
	d) Assistance to victim (safety representative, union representative)	_____		_____	_____
	e) Manpower costs for repairing damaged material	_____		_____	_____

PART II - INDIRECT COSTS (continued)

III ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS				Hours	X	Hourly rate + Social benefits	= Cost
1- Supervision (Supervisor)							
Time spent dealing with accident (assistance, investigation, report, reorganization of production, training of replacement worker)				_____		_____	_____
2- Human resources (Personnel department)							
a) Hours spent dealing with accident (forms and follow-up, payment and reimbursement of compensation, medical control and follow-up)							_____
b) Hours spent hiring replacement worker							
• Professionals				_____		_____	_____
• Office personnel				_____		_____	_____
IV INCREASE IN PRODUCTION COSTS				Hours	X	Hourly rate + Social benefits	= Cost
1- Hours of overtime to make up for delays				_____		_____	_____
2- Duration of training for replacement worker				_____		_____	_____
3- Decrease in production:							
a) Due to reduced efficiency of victim at return to work				_____		_____	_____
b) Due to reduced efficiency of other workers following return to work							
_____ Number							
_____ Average time				_____		_____	_____
c) Due to lesser experience of replacement worker							
4- Penalty for delays in delivery (if applicable)				_____		_____	_____
				_____		_____	_____
V OTHER COSTS				Hours	X	Hourly rate + Social benefits	= Cost
1- Transportation (taxi, ambulance)							_____
2- Medical evaluation							_____
3- Others (specify)							_____
TOTAL COST (I +II + III + IV + V)							_____