

MODERN SAFETY AND
RESOURCE CONTROL
MANAGEMENT

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John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Publication

New York / Chichester / Weinheim / Brisbane / Singapore / Toronto

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Published simultaneously in Canada.

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For ordering and customer service, call 1-800-CALL-WILEY.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schneid, Thomas D.

Modern safety and resource control management / Thomas D. Schneid.

p. cm.

“Wiley-Interscience publication.”

Includes index.

ISBN 0-471-33118-X (alk. paper)

1. Industrial safety—Management. I. Title.

T55.S328 2000

658.3'82—dc21 99-29163

CIP

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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PREFACE

There ain't no constants in business because people keep changing.

—Solomon Dutka

We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise we harden.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The safety function has changed significantly since the inception of the Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970 and the per se birth of the modern safety and health professional. The Occupational Safety and Health Act is relatively new at the age of 29; however, the functions of the safety and health professional have evolved and changed significantly during this period of time.

In general, the functions of the safety and health professional in the 1970s were primarily compliance driven with the activities and responsibilities focused on acquiring and maintaining the work environment within the boundaries specified in the Occupational Safety and Health standards. Given the relatively broad scope of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, newness of this type of legislation, impact on the management team, retrofitting of equipment, and time required within the learning curve, often required the full-time efforts of the safety and health professional. In essence, the safety and health

professional was a single-function manager with all efforts focused on the essential work of achieving and maintaining compliance with this new law.

In the 1980s, the functions and job responsibilities of many safety and health professionals were broadened to include peripheral job functions, which often interacted with safety and health such as workers' compensation, security, and environmental compliance. In many organizations, compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act had been achieved through their years of effort and the organizations moved from a reactive to a proactive mode in the safety and health area. However, peripheral functions, especially workers' compensation, began to emerge as a substantial cost item for many organizations. Given the logic that it was the safety and health function that was supposed to prevent the accident and if the accident was not prevented, the injury, and thus the cost, was incurred, the safety and health professional should also assume responsibility for the reactive portion of the process. Although this marriage appeared symbiotic, the actual management was often like oil and water. Many safety and health professionals found that the majority of their time was expended on the reactive management of workers' compensation claims with a minimal amount of time being allotted to the proactive management of safety and health.

With the emergence of the environmental area, many safety and health professionals were saddled with the responsibility of achieving and maintaining the compliance activities and efforts in this evolving area. As one safety and health professional stated, "My management team looked at the environmental regulations. These regulations looked like the OSHA standards so they gave the responsibility to me." Although some of the environmental standards dovetail with the OSHA standards, many other environmental laws require substantial time and effort to achieve and maintain compliance. However, environmental compliance is another cost category for many organizations which required appropriate management and specific expertise, and it was often considered "cost effective" to provide this responsibility to the safety and health professional, rather than incur the expense of hiring another professional. In essence, the management team provided the safety and health professional with "another hat" (more responsibilities) to perform within the organization. With this and additional

responsibilities, the time, and often the nerves, of the safety and health professional were stretched to the maximum.

During the 1990s, the safety and health profession continued to expand and develop in many new areas. The driving force for safety and health for many organizations evolved from a compliance-driven entity to a dollar-driven function. Many companies possessed little or no fear of OSHA because they had achieved and were maintaining the necessary level of compliance. However, the dollars being expended through the workers' compensation and insurance corridor had emerged as a major cost item for many companies. The safety and health function began to be driven to reduce these costs areas through proactive management of these correlating risk areas.

For many organizations, basic compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act was a "given" with the emphasis being placed on expanding and refining the activities that impacted the "bottom line" not only in safety and health but also in the correlating areas. Additionally, the function and responsibilities of many safety and health professionals were expended via the regulatory route to encompass new and emerging risk issues such as workplace violence, tuberculosis, and ergonomics, which do not "fit the mold" of a traditional safety and health program. Given the changing emphasis and regulatory expansion, the boundaries of responsibility for many safety and health professionals metamorphosized again.

We are now at the end of the 1990s looking forward to the twenty-first century. What is the safety and health profession going to look like in the year 2020? Think about how our world has evolved during the past 29 years.

- How many safety and health professionals used a computer in 1970? Today most professionals own at least one computer, and the computer has become an essential tool in performing our jobs.
- What was television in 1970? Today, we have virtually instantaneous news through such services as CNN as well as the internet.
- How did safety and health professionals communicate in 1970? In addition to the basic land telephone lines, we now have cellular phones, beepers, teleconferencing, E-mail, and numerous other electronic services.

- Are the hazards different today from 1970? Although the basic workplace hazards can be the same as in 1970, safety and health professionals are now requested to address new areas such as cumulative trauma illnesses, airborne hazards (such as tuberculosis), bloodborne pathogens (such as HBV), laser hazards, new chemical hazards, radiation hazards, and a myriad of new areas.
- Are employees different today than in 1970? The employee of today is more informed and possesses access to substantially more information than the employee in 1970. Employees today are substantially more mobile, less likely to spend their entire career with one organization, and possess expectations for items such as day care, wellness centers, and car pools, which were unheard of in 1970.
- Are employers different today than in 1970? In many circumstances, the employers hired a safety and health professional in 1970 simply to keep OSHA off their back. Today, employers expect a safety and health professional to protect a wide range of resources in a cost effective manner and to reduce or eliminate any risk that may hinder their operations. Additionally employers today are larger because of mergers and acquisitions and function on a “tightened clock,” whereby long-term means tomorrow.

Where is the safety and health professional going to be, and what are his or her duties going to be in the future? The label may be the same, but the functions will be as different as day and night from 1970. As espoused in this text, the safety and health professional of the past will evolve into the safety and resource control professional of the future who will be expected not only to manage the basic compliance functions in the areas of environment and safety but also to be responsible for the proactive management of a broad spectrum of other risks and assets in the workplace, ranging from human assets through efficacy risks, in order to impact the bottom line.

WHY SAFETY AND RESOURCE CONTROL MANAGEMENT?

What is the best title to place on the actual functions and activities that are performed by what is commonly referred to as a safety department? The one consistency our research identified is the lack of consistency in the terminology used in the American workplace.

Traditionally, the safety function was primarily focused on OSHA compliance and activities in the injury and illness prevention area and thus the titles commonly utilized included safety manager, safety engineer, and safety coordinator. As responsibilities in peripheral areas expanded, bifurcated titles such as safety/environmental manager and safety and workers' compensation administrator became commonplace. As additional insurance responsibilities were added to the function, titles such as safety and risk manager and safety and insurance administrator were often utilized. With the emergence of ISO, the title of the function evolved to include safety and quality director and safety and ISO manager. With the responsibilities for security and related areas, the terminology safety and loss prevention and loss prevention specialists became vogue in many industries. And most recently we have seen the development of another hybrid, namely safety and personnel manager or safety and human resources director.

To this end, we attempted to identify as many of the other "hats" that have been placed on the traditional industrial safety function in many companies. These additional duties in general categories include the following:

- Inspection
- Fire protection/suppression
- Security
- Environmental compliance
- Personnel and human resources
- Workers' compensation
- Insurance (e.g., health, property)
- Quality assurance
- Hazardous materials
- Fleet safety
- Industrial hygiene
- ISO
- Labor liaison
- Governmental liaison
- Other governmental requirements (such as HCCP, FDA, etc.)
- Risk management

Given these various and varied responsibilities, a search was conducted to identify the label that best identified the actual job function of this new hybrid entity. While not rejecting the traditional labels of safety manager and safety director as well as the newer terminology such as loss prevention, the term *safety and resource control management* was identified as a better description of the job function today.

Will the label safety and resource control management change the actual job functions in any given company? The answer is probably “no.” However, this “label” does provide more clarity and better describes the numerous and varied job functions that have been or can be housed within the traditional safety function and provides a better explanation as to what modern safety and health professionals actually do in their jobs. The positive label of safety and resource control management encompasses not only the traditional safety duties but also the myriad of control activities for various human, equipment, efficacy, and related resources within the organization. Safety and resource control management manages and controls the various resources and potential risks related to each various organizational resource proactively in a cost-effective and efficient manner designed to achieve optimal results.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to my wife, Jani, and my children, Shelby, Madison, and Kasi, for their indulgence, support, and time during the writing of this text.

My thanks to my parents for their guidance and leadership, which has permitted me to acquire the education and skills to be able to author this text.

And my thanks to Shiella Patterson for her assistance in helping me complete this text on time and my cohort in law, Michael S. Schumann for his thoughts, ideas, and assistance.

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