

BEST PRACTICES IN PROMOTING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Background

The Occupational Safety and Health Center recognizes establishments, government institutions, micro-enterprise and individuals who not only comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Standards (OSHS) but also have exemplary and innovative programs and policies through Gawad Kaligtasan at Kalusugan (GKK). This research is a follow-up study of the GKK program. GKK is a national award given in recognition of the outstanding achievements of establishments and individuals in terms of responding to the safety and health needs of workers and their workplaces. Several factors that affects the manner of designing and implementation of occupational safety and health (OSH) related policies were identified. These are OSH policies and programs that are behavior-based, include outsourced workers in the principal's OSH programs, use technological improvements to disseminate information and are evaluated by third parties.

Objective

To identify the exemplary programs and strategies of companies in promoting safety and health in the workplace.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study that utilized a semi-structured face-to-face interview with key informants from participating companies. A total of 26 GKK winners from 2010 to 2016 were invited and 8 companies agreed to participate in the research. The company key informants discussed the programs which they consider exemplary. Exemplary programs are those that enabled the companies to ensure active participation of workers as well as compliance to OSHS. Qualitative method was used in the analysis of collected data.

Results and Conclusion

Absence of fatal and/or disabling injuries & severe work-related illness are some of the qualifications for a GKK winner. The study identified different approaches employed by the respondents to improve OSH conditions in their respective workplaces. Each company has their own technique for the implementation of their policies and programs. For the creation or designing of their programs, all the companies have similar strategy which is the application of Hazards Identification, Risk Assessment and Control. From the results thereof, they would create a program that would respond to the hazards and risks existing in their company. This helped the companies prevent or control the risks and hazards in their workplaces.

One of the innovative strategies identified was the use of information technology to enhance reporting of incidents by all the respondent companies. These reporting techniques include the use of group chats in social media, electronic mail using a prescribed form and creating their own app-based reporting system. The strategy enabled the respondents to level up an already established mechanism because accessibility and availability of real-time reporting is present. Consequently, respondent companies see the increase in number of reports as an indicator of a higher level of awareness of workplace safety and health among employees. This is because workers not only are encouraged to report possible safety and health concerns in the workplace but also there is accessibility as to the tolls used for reporting. As such, the respondents indicated that

occurrence of OSH-related incidents are minimized. These reports helped them identify root causes of the problem which in turn enabled them to provide the appropriate solution. Another is third-party assessment of the system of all the respondent companies. Third-party assessment guarantees the independence and neutrality of the auditors and their reports. Such assessment ensures the commitment of the companies to their responsibilities because it may affect their business. In turn, they can oversight on the OSH policies and programs of those they engage with contracting or sub-contracting certain project. All respondents emphasized their company's commitment to having a "safety culture" at work which for them is more than just compliance to what is demanded by law because when it comes to safety and health, quality and value of life are of paramount importance.