

2005-2006 Annual Report Safety in the Workplace Committee

For this academic year, the Safety Committee elected to meet every other month to ensure a full agenda and effective use of membership time. We agreed to evaluate this schedule at the end of the year, as well as add additional meetings as required. This schedule proved effective in ensuring full membership attendance at each meeting.

The following summarizes the work of the Committee for this year, as well as outlines some potential goals for the 2006-2007 academic year:

A. Policy/Procedure Development and Implementation

1. Pandemic Flu Preparation

The Committee closely followed and encouraged the emerging need for planning by the College in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak. Leadership on this initiative is held with Pam Houle, Assistant Director of Health Services. This year was spent on gathering information, the most helpful of which was a white paper prepared by the higher education group within Arthur J. Gallagher. This document created a “how to” for Colleges and Universities, beginning with the creation of a campus-wide team to address the issue proactively. The Committee suggested Pam create a similar type of team and use the summer months for active planning around this topic, and strongly recommended that College leadership support this important planning.

2. Chemical Inventory Automation Project

Although this project did not move through implementation as quickly as we had hoped, it remains on track with the Departments of Art, Biology and Chemistry all of which have made significant progress in automating their inventories. Additionally, meetings held with the SS fire department to advise them on progress made to date have been held, with good and encouraging feedback received. Plans to implement the project to the remaining areas of campus are in development. Carol Schnitzer, has been assigned leadership on this project, and the Committee has been pleased with the success so far. We have engaged a student to assist with the continued data entry for the Chemistry department during the summer to sustain momentum.

3. Hazardous Waste Management Policy Revisions

The Committee encouraged and endorsed a revision to the Hazardous Waste Labels being used at the department level due to continued confusion about how to complete them in compliance with EPA guidelines. In January, 2006, new labels were designed, and a communication sent to all departments by Dan Rodecker, Facilities Management. The Committee will periodically request an update on the level of compliance with the new labels, and re-communicate as necessary. Additionally, a new procedure for lab clean outs was initiated this year to clarify roles and responsibilities when an individual leaves the College or transfers to another location on campus.

B. Regulatory Compliance Activities

1. NYS Fire Inspections

On March 22, 2006, during an annual inspection visit, the NYS Fire Marshall found multiple violations- most notably in Dana Science Center and the Chemistry department. A total of 206 violations were received, the majority of which were classified as minimal. Some significant violations were also noted, including blocked fire exits, inoperative emergency alarms, egress issues, and hazardous materials issues in labeling and proper storage. The College is given 45 days to correct the findings followed by another inspection by the Fire Marshall. This follow up visit is expected in June, 2006. The facilities staff is working with department chairs and directors to correct the issues. Failure to correct the violations can result in fines assessed to the College. The Committee has requested a full report as to the status of the issues at its first fall meeting.

C. Emergency Response Planning

In November, 2005, the Committee supported and recommended the College's participation in a community wide drill designed to test the College's and various community agency readiness in the event of a large scale emergency. The drill was held at Skidmore College, and the scenario created was a "Chemical/Biological and Explosive Device Threat". Participation in addition to College students and staff included the FBI, NYS Police, National Guard, Saratoga Co. Haz Mat team, Saratoga Co. Sheriff's office, the SS Police, Fire, and EMS staff. The drill went extremely well, and the planning group intends to put together a "lessons learned" document that can be shared broadly.

The Committee expects to review that document once available.

D. Worker Compensation Claim Management Activities

The Committee continued its work to actively manage and reduce the number of workers compensation claims among our employees. We continued to review trend data quarterly, and noted several concerning trends this year- increased incidents of back injuries, and increase incidence among dining services staff of knife accidents. Because the trends appeared to be department specific, the Committee has requested correction action plans from the Department managers in response to the increased concerns.

Additionally, we continued to support the monthly drawing to promote and encourage safe work practices among our union employees. This will be the final year for this drawing, as analysis has shown that after some initial, very successful reduction in the number of accidents, the program has lost its effectiveness, and accidents have started to increase. The Committee has charged a subgroup to work with employees in trying a different program for the 06/07 school year, and they will be working through the summer to identify a new program.

A third area of focus in preventing and reducing worker's compensation claims has been in the area of slip and fall prevention. The Committee received a best practices document from our worker's compensation insurance carrier and used it to assess areas where we might use some of the identified best practices to reduce the opportunity for slips and falls to occur. Most of the recommended actions will be initiated in the fall prior to winter weather arrival.

E. Quarterly/Annual Reports

The committee continued to review on a quarterly basis, a number of departmental and program reports including dining services, facilities services, motor vehicle accident trends, campus incident trends, and workplace accident trends.

This year, we added an additional review of hazardous waste disposal- issues and trends.

Additionally, the required annual review of the Radiation Safety Committee activities, and the Security Advisory Committee activities were also completed.

The required annual review of the Chemical Hygiene plan was not completed given the vacancy in that position. This topic will be discussed with the Dean of Faculty during the summer months to identify a solution for the fall semester.