

A Snapshot in Safety and Risk

Self-Inspections: An Ongoing Safety Improvement Process

The best accident is the one that never happens. At the heart of any good safety and health program is a methodical process for identifying and correcting workplace hazards. Regularly conducting self-inspections for your facilities and grounds is one of the most important safeguards that your organization can take to keep the property safe. The ultimate goal of inspecting any property is to minimize the risk of loss and personal injury due to unsafe conditions.

The Benefits of Self-Inspections:

Self-inspections provide a number of useful benefits and further help to create a culture of safety.

These benefits include:

- Raising the level of awareness for workers and staff
- Improving the understanding of jobs and tasks
- Determining the level of compliance with local, state, and federal regulations
- Identifying and addressing any potential issues before an incident/accident occurs
- Providing an opportunity for site-specific training by identifying potential issues within the operation and then training personnel to look for these issues
- Serving as a regular health and safety check of facilities and operations
- Providing an opportunity for staff to express safety concerns
- Monitoring corrective actions to ensure effectiveness

In addition to providing a healthier and safer work environment, inspections can reduce legal liability by identifying potential issues, and training personnel to look for and correct potential issues.

Who Should Conduct Inspections?

Staff that are both knowledgeable in the subject matter and have the ability to recognize unsafe conditions should conduct inspections.

Can any employee conduct a self-inspection?

Employees can be trained to conduct informal self-inspections in their work areas to help bolster overall operational safety. Checklists are also a useful tool to equip employees with the tools necessary to conduct a successful inspection. A competent and qualified individual should always conduct inspections on more complex equipment and machinery.

A Snapshot in Safety and Risk

When to Conduct Self-Inspections:

Self-inspections should be conducted no less than on an annual basis, however more frequent inspections will lead to a safer work environment.

Factors that may affect increasing or reducing inspections:

- Policies and guidelines for planned formal inspections
- The possible risk of work environments, operations, and equipment used
- The number of worker shifts
- Any time there are new methods, pieces of equipment, workers, or regulations
- At-risk activity and past incidents or near-miss records

What Should Self-Inspections Cover?

Weekly Inspections:

- Conducting a weekly walk-through inspection can help identify and correct immediate issues, such as:
 - Weather-related hazards, such as snow or ice on sidewalks and wet entryways without mats
 - Walkway obstructions
 - Improperly set up work areas
 - Missing safety equipment
 - Other liability or property hazards

Monthly Inspections:

- A knowledgeable person or team within the facility (such as the safety and security team, safety committee, or leadership team) should conduct monthly inspections by following an established checklist.
- The following areas should be inspected:
 - Parking lots
 - Sidewalks
 - Building exterior
 - Entrances and exits
 - Interior walkways
 - Interior rooms
 - Mechanical, electrical, and storage rooms
 - Kitchens

Annual Inspections:

- Annual inspections should consist of a more in-depth inspection of the overall operation and safety compliance. In addition to the areas inspected monthly, special attention should be paid to electrical, HVAC, plumbing, and fire protection systems, as well as water penetration and building structure integrity. Periodic consultation with professional

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A Snapshot in Safety and Risk

contractors and/or local fire officials is recommended in conjunction with the annual inspection process.

Self-Inspection Checklists:

Checklists can be a valuable tool when dealing with self-inspections. All too often items are missed for days, weeks, and months, because no one stopped to check a specific area, tool, or piece of equipment. Checklists help ensure that inspectors don't miss anything important and can make inspections possible for any employee to complete.

Safety managers should take the time to create high quality checklists to help identify exactly what types of things need to be looked at in each area. They should be unique based on the facility that is being inspected, and even the different parts of each facility may need their own custom sections. These checklists can then be used by the safety manager, or anyone delegated, to perform an inspection that gathers valuable, actionable data.

Corrective Actions:

For all inspections, a process should be in place to correct defects noted. If a defect cannot be corrected immediately, place or mark the area as "out of service" until repairs can be made. These actions prevent future incidents, injury/illness, or property/equipment damage.

Inspection Records:

Accurate inspection records are important. They serve as evidence of the program, provide documentation of necessary corrective actions, and provide a method of follow up to assure completion. One of the easiest methods to record an inspection is to use a checklist.

Resources:

- [Tribal General Safety Survey](#)
- [Tribal First Resource Library](#)
- [OSHA's Small Business Safety and Health Handbook](#)

For additional information contact:

Tribal First Risk Control Solution Center Toll Free Help Line: (888) 737-4752.