



College/Department Safety Advisory Committees -- Guidelines

The formation of college/department safety advisory committees is an integral part of OSU's efforts to eliminate or minimize workplace injuries and illnesses. The primary goal of a safety advisory committee is to promote a *culture of safety*. This is accomplished by developing safety goals and objectives, identifying gaps in performance, communicating needs to upper management and EHS, and implementing strategies for continuous safety improvement. Safety is a broad topic that encompasses research, field work, and day-to-day operations. Following safe practices in every work and learning environment leads to greater efficiency, improved productivity, higher quality research, and an enhanced sense of well-being.

The purpose of this document is to establish the guidelines, justification, objectives, scope, and structure of OSU safety advisory committees.

University Commitment to Form Safety Advisory Committees and Policy Basis

Oregon State University [Policy 07-001 "University Health and Safety"](#) was adopted on 7/16/21. This policy outlines the following:

- Safety responsibilities of supervisors and unit level leadership (section 5.4)
- Establishment of department/unit safety coordinators (section 5.6)
- Formation of Safety Advisory Committees (section 5.7 (k))

In addition, the [OSU Safety Culture Task Force Recommendations \(July 2022\)](#) further supports the formation of a Safety Advisory Committees in each college (recommendation 2a.): *"Institute a Safety Advisory Committee in each College. A Safety Advisory Committee representative from each College should serve on the University Health & Safety Committee (UHSC)."*

These recommendations recognize that the use of safety advisory committees in complex organizations is considered a "best practice" and a proven way to encourage and internalize a culture of safety and improve safety performance.

Establishment of College/Department Safety Advisory Committees and Reporting

Each college/department should establish, support, and maintain an active safety advisory committee, charged by and advisory to the Dean. In recognition of the differences in size, complexity, and inherent hazards amongst colleges, flexibility is afforded as to how this can be implemented:

For colleges/departments with limited hazards that typically do not exceed those found in a normal office environment:

- The responsibilities of the safety advisory committee may instead be assigned to an individual "safety coordinator" or "safety officer" in place of a committee.
- Alternatively, the safety advisory committee responsibilities may be assigned to a previously existing committee.
- In both cases, assignment of safety advisory committee responsibilities to an individual or existing committee should be explicit and documented.

For large or complex colleges/departments with significant hazards (e.g., chemical, physical, industrial, high-risk environments, biological, or radiological) are encouraged to establish safety advisory committees at the unit level, as appropriate:

- The number and organization of sub-committees should be commensurate with the existing hazards and be reflective of the college/department structure.
- The intent is for committees to be established at levels that maximize their effectiveness in carrying out the committee responsibilities.

College/Department Safety Advisory Committee Functions and Responsibilities

The primary functions and responsibilities of a safety advisory committee are to:

- Champion a culture of workplace safety. Possess a charter endorsed by management and meet on a regular schedule, such as quarterly or monthly.
- Involve employees and students in promoting and achieving a safe, healthful workplace; educate managers, supervisors, employees, and students through awareness and training activities.
- Conduct peer-to-peer consultation to evaluate workplace health and safety processes, identify hazards, and recommend methods for eliminating or controlling hazards.
- Serve as the point-of-contact with Environmental Health and Safety to facilitate implementation of campus-wide health and safety requirements at the college/department level, including:
 - Promptly review all safety-related incidents, injuries, and illnesses within the college, in coordination with EHS.
 - Participate with EHS to review workplace assessment, corrective action, and accident data from the UHSC and EHS.
- Support the Dean/Director in fulfilling college/department-level health and safety responsibilities.

Membership

The size and membership of college/department safety advisory committees should be commensurate with the risks and hazards that exist and the scope and breadth of work conducted. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Committee members should be appointed by the Dean for a one- to three-year term and include representative faculty member(s), staff member(s), a building manager, a Department/Unit Safety Coordinator (DUSC) representative, Department or Unit-level representative(s), and graduate student(s) and student employee(s).
- A management (Dean's office) representative should be identified to facilitate provision of needed resources for the committee and provide a direct link to the Dean/Director for support of safety committee initiatives.
- EHS will assign a staff member to each college safety advisory committee as a resource.
- One member should be appointed as the Chair of the committee. The chair of each college/department safety advisory committee, or their designee, is expected to represent their college/department and attend the UHSC.
- Specific terms of service, roles, responsibilities, and meeting frequency should be addressed in a safety advisory committee charter (a suggested template is linked below).

Resources

OSU [Policy 07-001 "University Health and Safety"](#), includes information on:

- Safety responsibilities of supervisors and unit level leadership (section 5.4)
- Establishment of department/unit safety coordinators (section 5.6)
- Formation of Safety Advisory Committees (section 5.7 (k))

[Safety Advisory Committee charter template](#)

Visual #1

The University Health and Safety Committee will be comprised of members from the College Safety Advisory Committees and will work closely together to inform upper management and assist the colleges in pursuit of continual safety culture improvement. Information related to inspections, accident data, and key performance indices will be shared between the groups. This relationship is shown schematically in the figure below:

Target Relationship



Visual #2

Safety advisory committees will work closely with EHS in implementing health and safety requirements within colleges, facilitating peer-to-peer safety assessments, and ensuring corrective actions are being implemented within their college. This relationship is shown schematically in the figure below:

