

Innovation Award Nomination (2017)

Process Improvement: Redesigned Program (Accident Prevention Program)

University of Washington Environmental Health and Safety Department

Accident Prevention Plans (APPs) are mandated by the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act of 1973 (WISHA) and must be written and maintained by all University of Washington organizational units ("departments"). APPs are essentially health and safety plans that include the programmatic elements necessary to prevent accident, injuries and illnesses in the workplace. APPs are required to be tailored to address the specific needs of the workplace and the types of hazards.

Health and safety committees, also required under WISHA, must evaluate the APPs and discuss recommendations for improvement. Departmental APPs vary significantly in how current, adequate and effective they are in addressing workplace health and safety. The University is a large, multi-faceted organization with thousands of discrete workspaces accompanied by inherent and often unique health and safety concerns, for example: research labs, hospitals and clinics, training rooms for Husky athletes, restaurants and cafes, and scene and electrics shops in the School of Drama. APPs are critical documents intended to function as the cornerstone of each department's health and safety practices, and describe how employees are protected from occupational hazards particular to their work or role. Each UW department is responsible for developing and maintaining its own APP. There are greater than 150 departments that are impacted by this requirement. This poses challenges for the work of health and safety committees and for Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S), the department charged with managing and overseeing the APP Program. Barriers to successful fulfillment of this function include:

- A burdensome and functionally obsolete template for developing APPs;

- The lack of appropriate training available to those responsible for creating and maintaining APPs including a lack of understanding of hazard assessment;
- Ineffective or insufficient guidance provided to health and safety committees on their review of APPs; and
- The absence of clear consequences for departments that elect not to develop or update an APP.

The EH&S Department proposed a project to address the barriers identified above to improve the effectiveness and compliance of the UW accident prevention program. The project proposed to develop a core APP for the university, excluding the medical centers that would provide:

- Develop an APP that can be utilized "off the shelf" by all departments that cover the core elements of the APP;
- Construct supplemental customizable tools and template to address specific moderate to high risk hazards not covered under the core APP (e.g., confined space, LOTO, PPE and job hazard assessment tools);
- Initiate new education and outreach efforts to facilitate APP creation and maintenance; and
- Create improved guidance for health and safety committees to review APPs.

The APP project was selected by the University's Compliance Department to support their mission to promote compliance efforts around health and safety. The project goals and eventual outcome was shared with the UW Board of Regents.

A project team was created and included multiple Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) subject matter experts and a supporting stakeholder group comprised of more than thirty administrative and

academic staff from all three UW campuses, including, but not limited to, Emergency Management, Facilities Services, Compliance and Risk Services, UW-IT, Housing & Food Services, and Campus HR Operations. The project budget was minimal (< \$5000) and absorbed by the EH&S department. The budget was used exclusively for the communication and outreach portion of the project. Project results are monitored and tracked and the status periodically reported to the UW Board of Regents.

The project included these phases:

Phase 1: Creation of a new core APP

A new 15-page guide to University health and safety resources, policies, emergency procedures, and identification and mitigation of hazards was developed to cover the core elements of the APP applicable to every University work site. The main features of the APP are:

- Core requirements for hazards and safety requirements found in all University work sites (with the exception of UW Medicine, which maintains its own APP);
- Updated supplemental documents, such as the New Employee Health and Safety Orientation Template, First Aid Guidelines, and the General Safety Training Matrix.
- Guidance, templates and tools for departments with moderate to high risks to supplement the core APP with necessary health and safety related information and materials applicable to specific hazards within a workplace.

Phase 2: Communication and outreach

EH&S created a video entitled "[An Introduction to Health and Safety](#)" which provides an introduction and orientation to the roles and responsibilities of all UW community members as they relate to health and safety with specific mention of:

- UW health and safety policies, procedures, practices, and resources for staff, faculty, students, contractors, and others;
- Core APP for basic health and safety needs with encouragement for new employees to contact their departments to address specific job hazards;
- Topics to be covered through an in-person new employee safety orientation;
- How to report a work-related injury, illness, near miss or hazardous condition; and
- Roles and responsibilities related to all aspects of health and safety at UW;

Phase 3: Implementation and Maintenance

EH&S launched the new Core APP on the revised UW EH&S webpage along with the APP video. UW Health and Safety Committee membership were integral in reviewing the core APP and have the responsibility to annual evaluate the APP and make recommendations where improvements are needed.

[UW EH&S Webpage Accident Prevention Program](#)

[UW Core Accident Prevention Plan](#)

Applicability to other institutions

Important to any educational facility, organization or institution, a written Health and Safety Plan describes the potential hazards of the workplace, along with all company policies, controls and work practices selected to minimize those hazards. The most important factor in reducing workplace injuries is implementing the plan. Implementation requires management's commitment to provide

adequate resources for training, accountability, self-audits, and employee involvement.

Although required by some states, OSHA does not require a written comprehensive Safety and Health Plan. However, OSHA does require that employees and their supervisors be trained in the specific hazards and control measures associated with their assigned tasks. The written Safety and Health Plan is a valuable tool in providing this training. The efforts achieved by the UW APP resulted in a cost-effective and collaborative effort to improve the accident prevention program with the expected outcome of reducing incidents, injuries and illnesses, ensuring compliance and providing for a safe and healthy workplace.