

## Construction Management

# Organizing for Loss Control - Supervisory Responsibility

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## Abstract

The key to success in any loss control program is its implementation in the workplace, or, for construction, on the jobsite. Field supervision is one of the main mechanisms used to ensure the jobsite work is accomplished according to specifications and done safely. The company loss control policy and procedures should be well understood by the supervisors and implemented at each jobsite. Through their actions in directing the work, supervisors are the critical link in delivering success. This report addresses the basic responsibilities of construction field supervisors.

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## Introduction

Safe operations are determined on the jobsite, not in the home office. Effective loss control programs are a result of the involvement and commitment of all members of the construction team, from the chief executive officer to the worker on the jobsite. However, in accomplishing the desired objectives, supervisors play the most pivotal role. As the principal representative of management (seen daily by the workers performing the actual construction work), a supervisor has direct control of the activities of the workers.

The supervisor should be thoroughly familiar with the duties and responsibilities of all parties involved in the loss prevention program. It is essential that the supervisor who has overall responsibility for the production, quality, cost, and scheduling of a project also be held principally accountable for jobsite safety. The directions and priorities determined daily set the stage for successful loss control programs.

As the company representative on the jobsite for management, the supervisor should understand the economic impact of accidents and incidents. He/she should understand the mechanics of direct and indirect accident costs, as well as overhead implications for workers compensation and other insurance coverage. A supervisor is in a position to make intelligent decisions in directing the work activities and increasing the awareness of the individual workers on the impact of their actions.

This report discusses the basic responsibilities of construction field supervisors.

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## Field Management

Construction supervisors are the primary project leaders and should be held accountable for the project's safety performance. They should also be the principal implementers of the company loss control policy and procedures. In fulfilling the obligations of this role, the project leaders should:

- Work closely with the safety coordinator (designated by upper management) to gain knowledge and insight into the principles of loss control, as well as the company policies and procedures.
- Require workers of all levels on the jobsite to comply with the established work rules and other applicable loss prevention procedures.
- Continually check the jobsite to determine the level of implementation of loss control procedures and to assess the practices and site conditions. Any unsatisfactory conditions should be promptly reported and corrected.
- Work closely with the crew foreman to be assured that they are leading by example and requiring all workers to follow safe work practices. Continuous communication should help to identify any problems or opportunities to inform site management of actions that might be needed to improve the safety conditions.

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Sufficient authority should be delegated to them along with the responsibility for the performance of their crew.

- Hold periodic group meetings and weekly tool box meetings and promote other means of communications with workers to ensure awareness of site safety. Recognize outstanding performance and promote feedback and involvement of the workers in the loss control program. Communication should flow back to senior management to notify them of areas where help is needed and areas where there was superior performance.
- Require site supervisors of all levels to follow proper pre-job and pre-task planning procedures. Individual workers should be aware of the job requirements and procedures prior to the start of work - "know before you go."
- Maintain jobsite performance records, statistics, and other means to assess the level of implementation. Take corrective action for potential problem areas.
- Establish specific elements of the loss control program, such as emergency evacuation procedures, medical treatment, and site coordination.

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## Supervisors/Foremen/Crew Leaders

The attitude of individual workers toward the company loss control program is dependent upon the attitude of the supervisor. Supervisors are individuals who are relied upon in any safety management program. The foremen and crew leaders must be held responsible for the safe work practices of those they are directing on a daily basis. This is appropriate since safety is intertwined with quality and productivity for which the foreman is also held accountable.

At times, supervisors may not be able to perform what is asked of them because they lack proper training. Regarding safety, many will drift from day to day, unsure of themselves, hoping that nothing goes wrong. They see themselves caught in the middle of an unfriendly situation - between upper management and the work crews. The supervisor or crew leader absorbs complaints, ill feelings, and unreasonable requests from both sides. He or she stands alone, a buffer between labor and management subject to hindsight and guesswork.

On the other hand, properly trained and supported supervisors and crew leaders can effectively guide crews to safe and productive work habits in a positive manner.

To fulfill supervisor/foremen/crew leader's obligations, the following suggestions should be considered:

- Determine the level of knowledge and job requirements of each individual worker. If there is a gap, the foreman should ensure the proper training or support is provided and maintained.
- Give special attention to new or inexperienced workers since they are most "at risk" on the jobsite.
- Get thorough knowledge of the work activities, sources of danger and other hazards, and the means to protect against them.
- Check the job frequently to determine if the proper procedures are being followed. Be sure that potential hazards are being safeguarded and that no new hazards have developed. This includes verifying that personal protective equipment is being worn and used properly and that all other equipment is being properly used.
- Conduct periodic safety training sessions (e.g., tool box meetings) to refresh crew members with safety performance indicators, lessons learned from previous accidents, and other pertinent information which will promote safe work.
- Require that all injuries and incidents be promptly reported and fully investigated. As the most knowledgeable individual working with the crew, the foreman is in the best position to determine what went wrong, why it happened, and how future occurrences can be prevented. This information should be shared with management so that recordkeeping requirements can be met, as well as benefits derived from the insight gained through the investigation.

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- Report and record the performance of the crew and any problems with the implementation of any element of the loss control program.
- Recognize that the safety of everyone on the crew is dependent upon the activities of each individual and those working around them. The foreman must promote the consistent implementation of safe work practices by each crew member and must lead by example.

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## Supervisors/Foremen/Crew Leaders Roles

The main roles of supervisors, foremen or crew leaders are as follows:

- They should participate with upper management in the development of supervisory safety goals.
- They should adhere to company regulations, rules, and procedures.
- They should promote and provide safety training for crew members.
- They should immediately respond to unsafe behavior and working conditions.
- They should conduct incident investigations and safety audits.
- They should communicate back and forth between upper management and the work crews.
- They should encourage worker participation whenever possible.

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## Conclusion

The record for safety is determined on the jobsite through the cumulative effort of all company personnel. The commitment and involvement of each individual is the key factor in creating a good safety record. However, through guidance of the daily activities of the jobsite workforce, site management plays a significant role in determining the final outcome. If site supervisors care about loss control and show this concern through their actions, it will be widely recognized by all workers and the results should be positive. It is critical that all levels of site supervisors recognize the importance of their role and fulfill their duties of leadership to the best of their ability.

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