Employee Rights and Responsibilities

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Abstract

This paper explores the rights and responsibilities of employees in regards to safety in the workplace (U.S.Department of Labor, 2005). It focuses somewhat on the public school environment. The results were gathered from research conducted online (Internet), and offline (non-Internet) through interviews with safety and other personnel. Employees were also interviewed to assess their knowledge of employee rights and responsibilities. The employees interviewed understood that they had certain rights and responsibilities, however, their knowledge level varied greatly. Employees were fairly knowledgeable about their rights concerning safety rights in the workplace. However they seemed to be more confused when the discussion turned to the responsibility side of the issue.

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During the course of this research, two major points were revealed. All employees have certain rights regarding safety in the workplace. In having these rights, there are also certain responsibilities that employees must adhere to (U.S.Department of Labor, 2005). Twenty-one states and the territory of Puerto Rico, have State run workplace safety and health agencies. The State of Kentucky maintains a State run program (Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Program, 2011). Most employees are unaware of the state run agencies. These agencies are required to have regulations that are at least equal to Federal OSHA regulations (U.S.Department of Labor, 2011).

Workers have the following regarding a safe and healthy workplace (Goetsch, 2011). Employees have the right to complain to an employer, union, OSHA, or any government agency about job safety and health hazards. They have the right to file safety grievances. Personnel also have the right to receive safety and health training, and to be kept informed of safety and health issues on the job. They have the right to contact OSHA regarding health and safety issues and participate in inspections and other activities.

In Kentucky the Division of Employee Benefits, which falls under the Office of Employee Relations, is in charge of managing Health and Safety Programs in accordance with OSHA standards.

These rights are afforded to all employees, however, if employees do not exercise their right to safety these regulations and standards are futile, and do not serve their intended purpose. Workers have the responsibility of complying with set regulations. According to the OSH Act of 1970, Although OSHA does not cite employees for violations, the OSH Act requires that each employee "shall comply with all occupational safety and health standards and all rules, regulations, and orders issued under the Act" that are applicable. According to Federal, State and local regulations, employees have the responsibility to report any safety and health issue to their supervisor and/or safety and health authorities without the fear of retaliation from employers. One of the main responsibilities an employee has is that of reporting safety and health issues to their supervisor. Of the employees that I interviewed only 50% were aware of this responsibility. The other employees simply thought that it was the Supervisors responsibility to report the incident.

Employees in public schools have the additional responsibility not only for the safety of themselves, but also for the safety of the students (EMG Revised 4-19-10, 2010). Section 4 of this publication outlines the specific responsibilities of faculty and staff in regards to the safety of the students. All faculty and staff are required to complete annual safety training using an online course available to them through the National Alliance for Safe Schools website (National Alliance For Safe Schools, 2011). This website helps to ensure that employees are familiar with situations that may arise in the school environment. The online courses serve as a training guide and instruct personnel of the proper procedures that should be followed in various circumstances.

In conclusion, the guidelines for safety are there for employees to use. The responsibility for ensuring that these procedures are followed is in the hands of the employee. It is also the employees responsibility to know and understand these rights and responsibilities in regards to safety and health regulations.

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National Alliance for Safe Schools

<http://safeschools.org/>