

## SAFETY TRAINING FOR CLEANERS

Each training program should have some simple goals you want to accomplish by the time the training session is completed. These goals may be as simply stated as, "At the end of this program, I want my people to be able to know the proper steps needed for cleaning our restrooms," or "My people will be able to tell me which cleaning chemicals require special clothing or other personal protection equipment."

Develop a simple multiple choice or true-and-false quiz covering areas of importance on the subject. For example, for a quiz on safety issues, refer to your product manuals for the equipment that your people use every day. In the section on safety precautions, note the areas that are mentioned.

Equally important as safety is the section on recommended routine maintenance. It is a near certainty that there will be some area of expected routine maintenance that will be important to the life and overall operation of an important piece of equipment that your people will have overlooked. Build a question around all of this information.

For example, if an owner's manual for an extractor recommends running a gallon of water with three ounces of vinegar through the system, phrase a question in this manner:

"How often do we need to flush a gallon of water mixed with three ounces of vinegar through our extractor? Choose one - weekly, monthly or quarterly."

You may find that no one on your team had any idea they were supposed to do this at all, never mind on a monthly basis. If this step is necessary to remove buildups of residues inside your machine to prevent damage, you now have an excellent opportunity to discuss the importance of machine maintenance and how important the machine is to your department.

Each chemical supplier to your facility is required to supply your department with up-to-date material safety data sheets (MSDS) for every product that they sell to you. However, while each MSDS has certain sections that are similar to every other company's sheets, there may be many differences between different manufacturer's information sheets. Some companies have the required ten blocks filled in with important product data, while others will have many more additional sections pertaining to areas such as disposal and toxicological information.

Make sure your people are familiar with the MSDS's for the chemical products they are using.

### **Fire and other disaster concerns:**

What sort of disaster plan does your building have in place? How does it involve or affect your department? Review your department's written plan and incorporate some of that information into your quiz and your ongoing training.

For fire safety, you could make a list of substances in one column on one side of the paper and another list of approved fire-extinguishing materials on the other. Have your people match the proper fire-fighting material with each substance.

Do they know the four classifications of fire: A, B, C, and D. If not, make sure they know what they are and how to fight them.

Class A fires are ordinary combustibles such as wood, paper, cloth, carpet, upholstery, etc., and can be extinguished with water.

Class B fires are flammable liquids and gases, kitchen greases, paints and thinners, oil, gasoline, acetylene, propane, etc. They should be extinguished with a foam extinguisher.

Class C fires are live electrical equipment such as motors, power tools, appliances, etc., and require a powder agent to be extinguished. Obviously, you don't want to use water on an electrical fire.

Note: The key word here is 'live.' If the material involved is not energized, it is considered to be a Class A or Class B fire, depending on the materials involved. However, all electrical equipment should be treated as 'live' unless you are absolutely sure the power has been disconnected.

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Class D fires are combustible metals such as magnesium.

Note: Since most combustible metals are highly reactive with water (some violently), fires involving these materials must be extinguished with special dry-powder extinguishers. Combustible metals are not generally found in office buildings, schools and homes, though they may be found in metal shops or in other industrial areas.

It should be noted that there is no single extinguisher suitable for all four classes of fire.

### **Involve your leaders:**

One of your responsibilities as manager of the department is to see that your staff is properly trained in all aspects of their jobs. This does not mean you have to conduct all the training that occurs in your building, but neither should you constantly use outside representatives and suppliers to perform all the training duties for your department.

If you have several lead people in your department, be sure to involve each in the training of your entire staff. This accomplishes two tasks in one. First, you will personally need to spend individual time with each lead person prior to using him or her in a training class. This is important to ensure that they will be presenting the proper information during the session.

Second, while you are with each person in these one-on-one sessions, you have an excellent opportunity to observe each person as they prepare for the upcoming class. You will see how they organize their thoughts and their working materials in preparation for your program. You will also have an excellent chance to teach them how to give important presentations.

Work together with them to determine presentation issues such as whether to use audio-visual equipment and which kinds. For example, you may have to choose whether to use a VCR and monitor, or just a flip chart and easel for writing notes during the class instead, or both. Other important considerations are how to begin and end the program, what maintenance equipment should be used, as well as how the flow of the program should go.

As you conduct training programs throughout the year, you will be able to judge which of your people handles this added responsibility of leadership better than the others. You will see how your entire team reacts to each person in a position of authority, which will be extremely useful for you at a time when you have to choose someone to move up the ladder within the company.

Think back to the time before you were promoted to your current position. Did you have a mentor looking out for you or did you have to look out for your own self as you were coming along. Think how valuable it would have been if someone had spent extra time with you reviewing some of the simple things like getting on your feet in front of a group to conduct training programs.

Not only does it help you by giving you someone on your team you can rely on to conduct future training programs, it also is a great learning experience for them.

A national sales manager at my previous company told me that he wished he could cycle everyone in the company through the training department. When I asked him why, he told me that you learn more as a trainer in preparation to train, than you ever would in any other position. He was right. In order to teach it, you have to know it. Many people will learn more as a teacher than they would as a student.

At the same time, you will learn valuable information about your people and their individual knowledge about the material they are about to present. It is quite possible that there may be a certain part of the program that your lead person isn't as 'qualified' in as you might have originally thought.

If this happens while preparing for a training class, you now have a decision to make. Do I replace this person with someone else, or do I use this time for one-on-one training and make it a valuable learning experience for my team member? The answer is obvious.

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You will now be able to see a side of your lead person that you may not have seen in several years, since the time she started with your department. You will be able to compare this lead person with your other supervisors. They will be showing you how well they learn new ideas, how well they take direction, and how eager they are to perform well. Each of these issues will be helpful for you when you have to decide which of your people deserve to be promoted. Your future within the organization may depend on it.

### **Find and train your replacement:**

A company may delay promoting its better managers if upper management feels there is no one who is equally qualified elsewhere within the department to take over for the manager or the person who will replace the manager. One of your responsibilities is to find and train your replacement. Using each of your lead people or supervisors to help you conduct department training programs is an excellent management development tool.

In this manner, you will know if your training has had an impact toward changing the behavior of your staff. Otherwise, you will need to reevaluate your method of conducting training to insure that changes will be implemented or that proper procedures are being adhered to.