

New OSHA Initiative Offers Blueprint for Strong Workplace Safety Programs: Should Your Company Participate?

Insights

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Employers looking for help on how to structure their workplace safety and health programs just received a roadmap from OSHA's new Safety Champions Program. The Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA, David Keeling, recently announced the launch of the voluntary, self-guided initiative outlining several core practices employers should incorporate into their workplace safety and health plans. Rather than another compliance checkbox, this program represents OSHA's shift away from harsh enforcement-based compliance toward encouraging proactive risk management and prevention. While participation in the program doesn't guarantee compliance with the law, it can provide a valuable roadmap to help elevate your company's safety culture and reduce injuries and illnesses. Here's everything you need to know about this new initiative and what it recommends.

What Is The New Program?

The Safety Champions Program is a free, self-paced blueprint designed to provide organizations of any size with tools to develop and implement comprehensive safety and health programs. It includes three progressive levels and employers may request an assessment from an OSHA "Special Government Employee" to gauge their progress.



“ Not all employers or employee teams are at the same place in their safety journey. **It is vitally important that we at OSHA meet our constituents where they are.** ”

DAVID KEELING

Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health



Unlike enforcement-driven compliance programs, the initiative is built directly on [OSHA's Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs](#), and provides a practical roadmap for organizations seeking to improve their safety program.

In describing the purpose of the new program, Keeling posted on [LinkedIn](#) that “it is vitally important that we at OSHA meet our constituents where they are.” He described OSHA as “constructively dissatisfied” with their current outreach programs and offerings. As a next step toward more proactive outreach, OSHA introduced Safety Champions.

How Does the Program Work?

The main tenets of the program are drawn from [OSHA's Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs](#). These include:

1. Management Leadership – Management commits to continuous improvement in safety and health, sets clear program expectations, and establishes responsibilities throughout the organization.

2. Worker Participation – Workers are actively involved in all aspects of the safety and health program, from hazard identification to control measure selection and evaluation.

3. Hazard Identification and Assessment – Ongoing processes systematically identify and assess workplace risks and potential hazards.

4. Hazard Prevention and Control – Employers and workers cooperatively identify and select methods for eliminating, preventing, or controlling workplace hazards.

5. Education and Training – Workers receive training on how the program works and understand their role in maintaining a safe workplace.

6. Program Evaluation and Improvement – Control measures are periodically evaluated and refined to ensure their continued effectiveness.

7. Communication and Coordination – For host employers, contractors, and staffing agencies, all parties commit to providing the same level of safety and health protection to all employees.

Three-Step Process

Rather than a one-size-fits all approach, the Safety Champions Program offers three steps that participants can pursue at their own pace and based on their needs:

Introductory Step: Participants can assess their current safety and health practices against [OSHA's Recommended Practices](#), identify gaps, and begin implementing basic safety program elements. This level is ideal for organizations beginning their safety journey or looking to establish foundational safety infrastructure.

Intermediate Step: Organizations implement more comprehensive safety initiatives, enhance worker participation, and develop more robust hazard prevention and control measures.

Advanced Step: At this level, participants have integrated all seven elements into their organizational culture and demonstrate sustained commitment to safety excellence. Organizations at this level typically have strong safety metrics, continuous improvement processes, and worker engagement at all levels.

A Word of Caution

While the Safety Champions Program provides a valuable framework and structure for a safety program, it is important to recognize that participation alone does not eliminate workplace hazards, nor does it ensure compliance with all OSHA standards, or prevent employers from receiving OSHA citations. While the program provides an outline of a comprehensive safety and health program, it's a starting point only. Your safety team must ensure that it translates the program into tangible protection for your workers.

Getting Started: 5 Action Steps for Your Company

If you are interested in participating in OSHA's Safety Champions Program, here is how to begin:

1. Review Your Current Safety Program – Assess your company's existing safety and health policies, practices, and documentation. Fisher Phillips' [Workplace Safety team](#) can also help you in analyzing the current state of your program and identify any gaps. In addition to having attorneys

across the country, our workplace safety practice group also includes non-attorney safety professionals who offer a full range of consulting services, including evaluation of safety programs.

2. Designate a Safety Leadership Team – Assign clear responsibility for program management and implementation. Ensure workers are represented in the process.

3. Visit the OSHA Safety Champions Website – To learn more about the program, access resources and register, [visit its website](#).

4. Determine Your Starting Point – Decide whether to begin at the introductory level or, if your organization already has a mature safety program, consider starting at the intermediate or advanced level.

5. Develop Your Implementation Plan – Create a timeline for addressing each core element, assign responsibilities, establish metrics for success, and plan periodic reviews of your progress.

Conclusion

If you'd like to discuss how the Safety Champions Program might fit into your company's safety strategy, or if you need guidance on developing a comprehensive safety and health program that meets OSHA requirements, Fisher Phillips is here to help. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information directly to your inbox. For further information, contact your Fisher Phillips attorney, the author of this Insight, or any member of our [Workplace Safety Team](#).

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