Introduction to Organizational Behavior – A Safety and Health Perspective: Course Outline and Supplemental Materials

This program was developed by

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Funding for this project was provided by Minerva SAFE Manitoba through a grant from the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba
Introduction

One of the challenges to incorporating safety and health topics into the core curriculum of management and engineering faculties is the question of strategy. Should specialized courses be developed or should the topics be integrated into appropriate areas within the existing curriculum? The approach taken here is the latter approach – we have taken the position that more health and safety information needs to be integrated into existing core courses. One of the key courses where management concepts are taught and where there is considerable research that can be integrated into the course is in the introductory organizational behavior course. This course is required by the large majority if not all Faculties and Schools of Management across Canada. Instructors who are interested in providing more integration still face the challenge of available resource material. The sample course outline provided here, indicates a number of research and practitioner articles that provide material to integrate into the coverage and discussion of the basic organizational topical areas.

A particular text has been chosen to provide the framework for the topics but the articles could be arranged to fit alternative texts and topical formats. A brief description of the topic area is provided and a short explanation of the topics that are covered by the supplemental articles. It is not expected that students would be, in most cases, required to read all the articles but that instructors would use the articles to enhance their coverage of the material from a health and safety perspective. A focus has been placed on research articles to provide the fundamental material for the topics. Application can be encouraged by utilizing suggestions and applying the managerial principles in the chapter to health and safety issues. The example outline follows.
Introduction to Organizational Behavior – A Workplace Safety and Health Perspective

Course Objective:

The basic course in organizational behavior covers a broad range of individual, group and organizational processes. Topics included in the course are: understanding and managing individual behavior (individual differences, perception, emotions, motivation, job and work design, managing misbehavior and work stress); group behavior and interpersonal influence (groups, teams, conflict and negotiations; and power, politics and empowerment); organizational processes (communication, decision-making and leadership); and organizational systems (organizational structure and design, and organizational change). The basic material in this course will be supplemented with case materials, research and exercises on workplace safety and health.

As a result of completing this course students should:

1. Understand the basic concepts of organizational behavior
2. Know the linkages between organizational, group and individual processes and health and safety outcomes
3. Increase their skills to manage organizations in a “healthy” manner, including the applications of policies and procedures that enhance both organizational and individual health, safety and well-being.

Text:

Topic Outline and Supplemental Reading Material

Part 1: Field of Organizational Behavior

Chapter 1- Introduction to organizational behavior
This topic provides the foundation material for organizational behavior, why it is important, levels of theory and practice (individual, group and organizational), fields of study that are relevant to organizational behavior, and a basic description of the topical areas. The supplemental articles illustrate case examples of the costs of accidents and injuries in Canadian workplaces, benefits of health and safety orientations to organizations, provide evidence of the connection between healthy workplaces and organizational outcomes such as productivity and provide an overview of relationships between various organizational factors and the health and safety of the workplace.


Chapter 2 - Organizational culture

Culture is the shared norms and values of the organization. They are driven by the leadership and history of the organization. Material on safety and health demonstrates how a health and safety culture can promote good health and safety practices throughout the organization. The supplemental articles in this section provide evidence of the importance of a safety culture and climate, indicate strategies for how organizations can improve the safety culture, and indicate the importance of this culture at all levels of the organization.


Part II: Understanding and Managing Individual Behavior

Chapter 3 - Individual difference and work behavior
This chapter demonstrates how individual differences influence individual, group and organizational outcomes. Topics include individual attitudes, values and personality factors. The supplemental articles extend the understanding of individual factors to those that have been shown to have an impact on the health and safety of the work environment and that predict good practice of health and safety behaviors.


Chapter 4 - Perception and emotions
Employee perceptions and emotions predict a number of employee attitudes and behaviors. In this set of supplemental materials, the articles demonstrate how accidents can impact employee attitudes, how employees develop safety culture perceptions, employees’ perceptions of empowerment and the relationships with safety outcomes, and how safety attitudes are related to employee responses.


Chapter 5 - Motivation
Motivation is the sustained effort directed towards achieving certain outcomes. Within the safety and health context employee motivation is critical to the practice of good safety and health behaviors. This series of supplemental articles demonstrate how goal setting and feedback has been used to improve safety behaviors at work.


Chapter 6 - Job design, work and motivation
The focus of this topic is how job and work design influence employee motivation. The research has indicated both positive and negative effects to current popular job and work design methods. This series of supplemental readings provide both perspectives. In a number of cases job and work redesign has led to increased pressures for production, increased work hours, less autonomy and more routinization. In these cases negative impacts on accidents and injuries have resulted. These results are consistent with respected theories on job design. In other cases changes in job design have lead to increased motivation to follow good safety behaviors and practices and have led to reductions in accidents and injuries. In the positive instances the job/work redesign has involved more worker autonomy and empowerment. The last article in this series of readings summarizes a number of characteristics and how they can be utilized to develop healthy organization practices.


Chapter 7 - Evaluation, feedback and rewards
The responses from managers to employee behaviors have a strong impact on their future attitudes and behaviors. Some of the above articles on goal-setting have demonstrated positive impacts on employee safety behavior, and is the most common area of research on the relationships between evaluation, feedback and rewards and health and safety behaviors. Two of the other articles looked at the results of safety incentive programs and various organizational practices and their relationships to safety behaviors, accidents and injuries.

(see motivation articles above)


**Chapter 8 - Managing misbehavior**
Employee misbehavior encompasses a wide range of employee behaviors that negatively influence organizational and individual outcomes. Included in this topic is workplace sabotage and workplace aggression. The most common area of research related to health and safety is the impact of workplace aggression on employee attitudes, behaviors and resulting accidents and injuries. The focus on this chapter is to understand the nature of employee misbehavior and develop strategies to reduce it and its negative consequences. The readings in this chapter illustrate the negative impact of incivility and provide suggestions about how to deal with workplace aggression.


**Chapter 9 - Managing individual stress**
Workplace stress is created from the inability of employees to respond effectively to experienced workplace demands. These demands can come from a variety of sources and can have a major impact on employee attitudes and behavior. This series of articles looks at the causes of stress, the relationship between stress and health and safety outcomes, the importance of control in workers jobs in alleviating stress, and how stress can deplete the employees emotional resources and thus make them more subject to accidents, illnesses and injuries.


Part III: Group Behavior and Interpersonal Influence

Chapter 10 - Groups and teams

Groups and teams have become important components of organizations today. There is a lot of controversy about teams and the relationships with health and safety. Autonomous work groups (where members decide on the sequencing and assigned responsibilities for tasks) have in a number of cases resulted in increased accidents and injuries, which have been attributed to high production pressures. Other research has demonstrated effective uses of autonomous work groups. This series of readings provide information on the different applications of groups and teams to production and health and safety issues, and clarifies some of the reasons for positive and negative outcomes.


Chapter 11 - Managing conflict and negotiations
Conflict is actions taken by one person or group of people that interfere with another person or groups attempts to their goals or objectives. A certain level of conflict is viewed as necessary for creativity in organizations. However, the negative impacts of conflict need to be controlled to avoid personal and organizational damage. The negative impacts of conflict are what has attracted the most research attention, but has been rarely applied to the health and safety context. The nature of conflict and its application to health and safety needs to receive more research attention.


Chapter 12 - Power, politics and empowerment
Power is generally defined as the ability of one person to influence another to do something he or she would have otherwise not done. Politics is the use of power in organizations to achieve outcomes that might not have been achieved through normal organizational processes. Empowerment is the ability of employees to make decisions and feel that they have control over their work environment. These are important topics in health and safety because research has generally shown that overt exercise of power is less effective in gaining employee compliance with health and safety behaviors than more subtle/participative/shared power. If the
employees adopted the organization’s health and safety objectives and feel empowered to make health and safety decisions at work they are more likely to have better health and safety behaviors and fewer accidents and injuries. This series of articles reinforce this generalized position and provide case study information to illustrate the importance of employee empowerment in achieving health and safety objectives.


Part IV: Organizational Processes

Chapter 13 – Communication
Communication or the transfer of information is crucial to the implementation of health and safety initiatives, to understand the nature of hazards in the workplace and to enhance employees’ safety oriented skills and behaviors. A couple of critical communication related topics are included in these two articles. They examine the role of communication in facilitating learning from accidents and factors related to employees’ willingness to raise safety issues with their supervisors and others.


Chapter 14 - Decision-making
The role of decision-making is critical to effective actions within organizations. The current article examines a number of factors related to ethical decision-making using compliance with safety standards as the decisional context.
Chapter 15 – Leadership

The actions and behaviors of top management and supervisors are amongst the most important factors related to safety behaviors and accidents and injuries in organizations. Leadership has been the focus of a large number of studies and these supplemental readings provide broad coverage of the information that has been gained from the research studies. The range from practical articles (Geller) to articles that provide evidence for the type of leadership and behaviors that are more effective in reducing accidents and injuries. Top management that establishes a safety oriented vision and set of values and who support the development and administration of a comprehensive health and safety plan and the effective operation of joint safety and health committees has been most effective in influencing supervisor safety oriented behaviors. Supervisor behaviors including the close relationships established with subordinates, participative and open styles are most effective in influencing work unit safety and health behaviors. One of the articles (Zohar, 2002), reviews a training program that lead to improvement in supervisory behavior. The number of articles on the leadership topic reinforces the importance of leadership in establishing a safe and healthy organization.


Part V: Organization Structure

Chapter 16 - Organizational structure and design
Organizational structure and design take a more macro or organizational level view of health and safety. The supplemental reading related to this chapter focus on the partnerships between various organizations and how they reconcile their different health and safety standards and practices within these partnership arrangements. The article by Gaba illustrates some organizational level perspectives in high hazard industries. The work on high hazard industries draws on effective organizational level approaches that have been developed in a number of high hazard industries. The supplemental readings also include a study on employee ownership as a structural arrangement and the relationship to health and safety policies and practices.


Chapter 17 - Managing change, innovation and creativity – The final chapter in most organizational behavior texts is on managing change. In the case of research
that has been conducted on this topic in the health and safety area, most studies have focused on the impact of organizational change on the safety behaviors, accidents and injuries. The supplemental readings included here illustrate the stress and outcomes related to a number of organizational changes. The articles provide good materials for students to discuss and provide strategies for alleviating the negative effects that many times accompany organizational change.


RESOURCE GUIDE
Publications


Developing your Safety and Health Program: Suggestions for Business Owners and Managers, Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division, http://www.orosh.org


OHS Resource Guide, Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba


Video Catalogues

University of Manitoba Libraries


See No Evil, National Film Board of Canada, Montreal, NFB, 1988
University of Manitoba: Classroom and Media Services AV Catalogue

Managing Pressure at Work, BBC, 1991, #VH1240

Ergonomic Economics, Q1VIDEO, 1995, #VH0683

Westray, National Film Board of Canada, Dir.: Paul Cowan, 2001 #VH196027

Workplace Safety and Health Division Video Catalogue


Example:

Making It Work, 1992 re: Joint Health and Safety Committees

On-Line and Organizations

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)
Academic Support Program
[http://www.ccohs.ca/education/asp](http://www.ccohs.ca/education/asp)

Various Provincial OHS Acts
[http://www.ccohs.ca/legislation](http://www.ccohs.ca/legislation)

Workplace Safety and Health Division
200-401 York Avenue
Winnipeg Manitoba
Canada
[www.gov.mb.ca/labour/safety](http://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/safety)
[www.safemanitoba.com](http://www.safemanitoba.com)
Phone: 204-945-3446
Fax: 204-945-4556

IAPA Information Centre
[http://www.iapa.ca/resources/information_centre.asp](http://www.iapa.ca/resources/information_centre.asp)
Canadian Standards Association (CSA)
http://ohs.csa.ca/

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health - (NIOSHTIC-2)
Department of Health and Human Services
Parklawn Building
5600 Fishers Lane, Road 1401
Rockville, MD  20857
http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/database.html

Association of Worker’s Compensation Boards (Canada)
http://www.awcbc.org

OSHA Training Institute
1555 Times Drive
Des Plaines  IL  60018
United States of America
Fax: 708-297-4810
http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/ote/oti.html

American Society of Safety Engineers
1900 E. Oakton Street
Des Plaines, IL  60016
http://www.asse.org/

Worker’s Compensation Research Institute (WCRI) (USA)
955 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts  02139
www.wcrinet.org

Case Studies

See  www.safetymanagementeducation.com and articles listed under topics above

**Integrative Case:** Seven Oaks General Hospital – available at: