

Section 18

Back at the Plant: Putting Training to Work

Purpose

To choose three priority areas to work on that will help prevent chemical disasters at your plant and develop strategies for making improvements.



Section 18

**What you will find
in this section...**



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Section 18

**What you will find
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Task 1

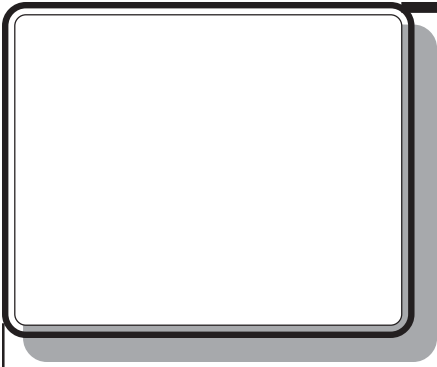
- **Create a Risk Chart for your workplace.**

It's time to think about your own workplace and apply some of the information from this course to it. If you haven't already, your instructor will help you form a small group with other people from your worksite or local.

You are going to create a "Risk Chart" for your workplace. A risk chart is one way of assessing how safe your plant is. In your small group, fill in each of the three charts on the next pages with red or green dots. Use a green dot to show that area is safe. Use a red dot to show risk. A red dot means that item needs some attention to make it safer.

1. The first chart asks what your plant does to **prevent emergencies**. This is the most important issue to focus on.
2. The second chart asks you whether your workplace has the **equipment and supplies** needed to respond if a chemical emergency does happen.
3. The third chart asks whether your workplace has **procedures, training, and job assignments in place**.

If you don't know about the item in question, place a big question mark - ? - in that box. For instance, if you don't know what air monitoring equipment is at your workplace, put a ? in the box. Of course, you will need to know the answers to these questions before you can respond to emergencies at your plant. Feel free to add items to your risk chart.



Risk Chart #2

Risk Chart #1 What Does Your Plant Need to Do to Prevent Emergencies?

Plant Substituting Safer Chemicals or Process	Corrections are Made after an Emergency to Prevent Another	All Tanks have Containment Walls to Hold 100% of Contents if Spilled	Company has Good Preventive Maintenance	Company has Good Program for Tracking and Investigating "Near Hits"	Hazardous Chemicals Stored Safely
Chemical Info, Available to All Workers, All Shifts	Useful Education given on Health Effects of Chemicals (for All Employees)	Valves have Automatic Shut-off to Stop Overfilling	Relief Valves on Pressure Tanks have Safety Back-Up Systems	All Chemicals Clearly and Correctly Labeled	<i>Fill in Your Own Prevention Method</i>
<i>Fill in Your Own Prevention Method</i>	<i>Fill in Your Own Prevention Method</i>	<i>Fill in Your Own Prevention Method</i>			



Risk Chart #2

What Does Your Plant Need to Do to Handle Emergencies in the Safest Way? Equipment and Supplies

Type of Equipment	Adequate Supply for Emergency Team	Right for the Chemicals in Plant?	Properly Stored	Regularly Inspected and Well Maintained	Decon'ed or Disposed of Properly After Use	ER Team Trained in Proper Use	Training includes Regular Drills	Do They Fit? (Fit Tested?)
SCBAs								
Air Purifying Respirators								
Chemical Protective Suits								
Boots and Gloves								
Air Monitoring Instruments								
Decon Supplies								
Spill Control Materials								

Risk Chart #3
Can Your Facility Handle Spills Safely?
Training, Procedures, Job Assignments

Facility has Good ER Plan in Writing	ER Team has enough members, with the right skills and training	Good Medical Exam program for ER Team	Facility has Regular Emergency Drills	Good Communication during Emergencies	Trained Incident Commander on Site
Everyone knows their role in an emergency	Contractors are trained in ER	Evacuation Routes are Free of Hazards	Emergency Alarm Can be Heard/Seen by All Employees	Facility Investigates After Emergencies	H&S Committee or Union Rep Takes Part in Investigation

Task 2

- **Establish goals for your local union by selecting one priority item from each chart.**

Select one priority item from each chart. You will end up with three items all together. Then write down what you want to achieve in each of these areas. These may be your goals when you get back home.

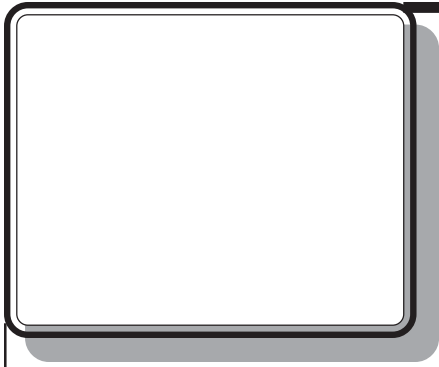
Try to be specific. For instance, instead of saying “We need more spill control materials,” think about where and what type you need, such as “We need drain blocks especially for the paint mix area. They should go on the crash cart that is parked outside the paint shop.”

Be prepared to explain why you chose these items as the priorities for your workplace. Please refer to at least one fact sheet in developing your answer.

1. Priority Item, Risk Chart #1

2. Priority Item, Risk Chart #2

3. Priority Item, Risk Chart #3



Fact Sheet #1

Hazards at Work: What to Tackle First

In the real world of work, workers and unions are faced with a complex set of health and safety hazards as well as lots of other problems. Problems, unfortunately, don't occur one at a time. Instead, union activists are confronted by many issues of varying seriousness all at once. Not only does this strain limited resources, but it also presents great difficulties.

There are usually two kinds of tough issues to consider:

- **Technical Issues:** an example might be deciding if low-level exposure to a cancer-causing agent is a bigger concern than high-level exposure to a material that can cause asthma.
- **Organizing Issues:** Here, we have to consider whether we can win, or how the issue will help or hurt the building of an on-going health and safety movement on the shop floor.

The overall picture, therefore, can be anything but clear. Picking a priority to tackle first and figuring out what concrete measures can be taken is the only way to make sense out of an overwhelming situation.

Fact Sheet #2

What's the Biggest Danger? : The Technical Side

There are four major types of questions you need to answer to establish technical priorities. They are:

- ② Is the situation hazardous? How hazardous?
- ② Is there any chemical exposure occurring or likely to occur? How toxic is the exposure?
- ② How many people have gotten sick or been affected by this situation? What kind of effect?
- ② How many people are being exposed (that is, how many people could be affected by this situation)?

Here are some more questions to help you prioritize the risks in your plant:

A. What is “Highly Hazardous”?

You should consider a substance highly hazardous if any of the following apply:

- It involves exposure to a cancer-causing agent.
- It causes reproductive damage.
- It is a sensitizer and causes an allergic reaction at very low levels.
- It causes acute eye, nose, throat, skin, or lung irritation or burns you at moderate levels of exposure.
- It is a substance which causes serious harm, has poor warning properties, and you are exposed at moderate to high levels.

Fact Sheet #2, continued

B. What is “High Exposure”?

Your level of exposure is affected by a number of factors. An exposure can be high if:

- The ventilation system is inadequate, poorly maintained, or there is none.
- Your work practices create higher exposures.
- You are in contact with the substance for a long time and have little or no protection.

For example: Solvent X causes skin irritation, but not permanent damage. But what if a lot of workers work with it, have developed skin rashes, or have made a lot of complaints? Then doing something about Solvent X should go on your priority list.

Fact Sheet #3

What Do Workers Care About Most?— The Organizing Side

A Health and Safety Committee or local union must also look at the “people” side of the equation when evaluating priorities. Your goal on the organizing side is to involve coworkers in the process of improving health and safety at your workplace. Here are some of the questions to consider:

- Which areas or issues are the workers most concerned about? For example, a chemical that is a reproductive hazard might be of more concern than a chemical that affects more workers, but is less hazardous.
- In which areas do you have a greater chance of getting the company to improve? How quickly can changes be made?
- In which areas do workers have good ideas for solutions?
- In which areas do you have more support from workers? Or in which areas do you want to build more involvement of workers in health and safety?

Sometimes it is easy to get stuck on the technical side of health and safety issues. But, if you don't think about the people issues, you will probably end up alone facing the difficult problems. When it comes to dealing with really tough issues that require expensive fixes or the company isn't very interested in, you must have the support of your coworkers. This is your best hope for making improvements.

Just as there are technical issues and solutions, there are also "people" issues and solutions to consider.

Fact Sheet #4

The Myth of the Split Second Emergency

Most hazardous materials emergencies are a long time in the making. Corporate decisions made over the last decade in the name of profits are often the root cause of future “accidents.” These policies include:

- cutbacks in preventive maintenance
- less frequent equipment inspections
- inadequate training for employees and supervisors
- failure to report and investigate previous near-hits
- longer and longer intervals between maintenance shut downs
- the use of skeleton crews for maintenance and operations
- increased use of untrained subcontractors
- dangerous work taking place on running units
- getting production out counts more than taking care of health and safety.

Do these happen in your facility? If they do, you may be close to an emergency.

Fact Sheet #5

Near Hits: A Warning to the Wise

The best response to an emergency is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Most hazardous materials emergencies can be prevented, if we pay attention to the signs.

Investigate all “near misses” where something almost went wrong but didn’t quite. We’re used to calling these “near misses,” but they are actually **“Near-hits.”** Near hits and serious incidents will usually give you a good warning that changes are needed.

Here are some questions to raise at the next Joint Health and Safety Committee meeting:

1. Have there been any small fires or spills recently? Alarms going off regularly? Have such events become so routine that people come to expect them?
2. Have workers reported any near-hits or unsafe conditions in the last year? What has been the company’s response?
3. Are any units ever run at or above the designed maximum capacity?
4. Are units or equipment breaking down or malfunctioning more often? Is the maintenance staff keeping up with repairs and preventive maintenance work?
5. Has there been an increase in outside contractors coming into the plant? If so, what kind of skills, training, and experience do they bring to this job? Do they follow all standard-operating procedures, obtain necessary permits, and keep the plant contact informed?

Fact Sheet #5, continued

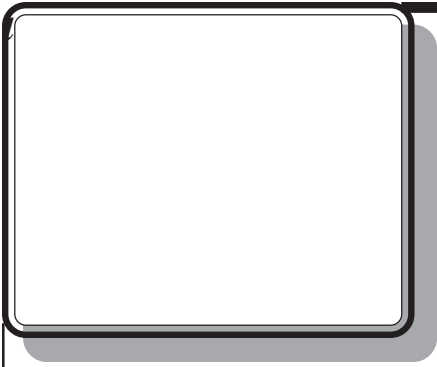
6. Has OSHA, the corporate safety officer, the plant's insurance agent, or the UAW Health and Safety Department conducted a wall-to-wall inspection of the plant recently? Were the recommendations in the report acted on?
7. Has the company done any kind of "hazard analysis" to identify what kinds of emergencies are most likely at your facility? Were union members involved in the process, especially ones from the high risk parts of the plant? Did they figure out a "worst case scenario" to test out their emergency response plan?
8. Do the company and union jointly investigate all near-hits and accidents? Does the company exchange information on haz mat incidents with similar facilities? (Usually this information is shared through corporate headquarters or through trade associations. Local unions from similar facilities could do the same.)

Task 3

- **Develop three steps for your Health and Safety Committee.**

What can you do at your plant to make some improvement in one of your priority areas? Develop 3 steps that the Health and Safety Committee at your workplace can take to make headway on your priority. Try to be realistic and specific.

1. Which priority do you want to work on?
2. Step 1 for Health and Safety Committee to take.
3. Step 2 for Health and Safety Committee to take.
4. Step 3 for Health and Safety Committee to take.
5. What can you do to help the Health and Safety Committee take these steps?



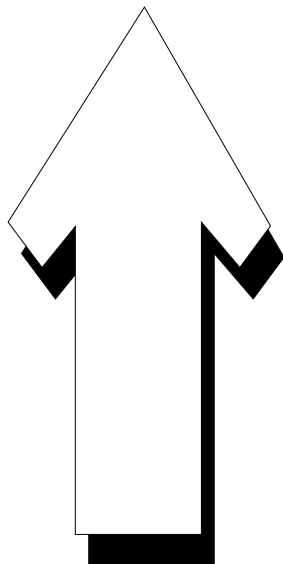
Fact Sheet #6

Hierarchy of Health and Safety Controls

A “**control**” is any measure taken to keep a hazard from hurting you. The most effective controls do something about the source of the problem. For instance, getting rid of lead from paint has reduced exposure to a chemical that can cause serious nerve damage. The controls that often **don’t** work are ones that are a long way from the source of the hazard.

Health & Safety Controls

Most Effective



Least Effective



Elimination or Substitution

(use a hot water and detergent mixture to wash parts instead of MEK or 1,1,1 trichlor.)



Engineering Controls

(ventilation, or enclosures, for example)



Warnings

(signs, horns, alarms)



Training and Procedures

(locking out energy sources)



Personal Protective Equipment

(gloves, respirators, safety shoes)

Fact Sheet #7

Guidelines for Joint Health and Safety Committees

An effective health and safety committee is the best way for workers to help improve working conditions. The joint labor management committee provides a formal and systematic way for workers to communicate with the employer about health and safety issues. To make changes, committee members need to think of this activity as an on-going process.

Here are a few elements that help to make a committee work more effectively:

Structure

- ◆ Equal representation of union and management or co-chairs
- ◆ Worker representatives must be chosen by the union
- ◆ Time and pay provided for meetings, preparation for meetings, and investigations
- ◆ Write up minutes of meetings for all committee members. Also need a way for union to double-check minutes before they are published to make sure everyone agrees on what happened.
- ◆ Participation of management with authority to carry out decisions
- ◆ Participation of local union bargaining committee
- ◆ Establish a procedure for resolving conflicts

Functions

- ◆ Regular meetings (for instance, the third Tuesday of every month)
- ◆ Regular inspections and time to survey workers
- ◆ Investigate accidents, near-hits, and emergencies
- ◆ Review all government and consultant reports
- ◆ Bring in outside consultants when needed

Fact Sheet #7, continued

- ◆ Be involved in training programs
- ◆ Participate in OSHA or investigations or visits by other inspectors

Other

- ◆ Management pays for committee members to get training
- ◆ Invest in collecting resource information for a health and safety library, up-to-date OSHA regulations and New Jersey Hazardous Substance Fact Sheets.

Fact Sheet #8

Road Map for Health and Safety Committees

An effective health and safety committee is the best way for workers to help improve working conditions. To make changes, committee members need to think of this activity as an on-going process. There are several steps in this process.

1. **Reach out to the membership.** Remember, you are on the committee to represent your co-workers. This can only be done by seeking their input.
2. **Develop a list** of health and safety problems and potential solutions. You can do this through surveys, complaint forms, or a suggestion box. The best way is talking one-on-one.
3. **Select priority concerns.** This isn't always easy. Your committee might want to tackle issues that aren't the members' first concerns. Look at the membership's concerns. You will need their support to accomplish much.
4. **Deal with priority issues first.** The health and safety committee has to build the membership's trust in them. Credibility comes through dealing with the members' concerns.
5. **Get workers active.** One of the ways to get co-workers involved is to provide information on the problem on an on-going basis. You can distribute short fact sheets on the issue so that workers become better informed; or you can write articles for your local union's newsletter.
6. **Document your concerns.** Write down what the priority issues are and why. Be specific. You might have to do some leg-work. For instance, you might analyze the injury and illness records from your facility to show that skin burns are one of the most common problems. Or your survey of the membership might show

Fact Sheet #8, continued

that half of the workers in a certain department have the same kind of symptoms when product X is used.

7. **Choose which steps to take** to convince management that a problem is serious. Use actions that involve the membership.
8. **Win some changes.** Attempt to solve smaller or easy problems first before you tackle major changes. Build your credibility on small changes to begin with.
9. **Build toward larger and more comprehensive changes.** From small beginnings, tougher issues can be solved. The membership and management see that your committee is serious about making improvements. Slowly you will be able to tackle touchier issues, like getting rid of a dangerous chemical from the plant. A well-established committee should be working at this level most of the time.

Fact Sheet #9

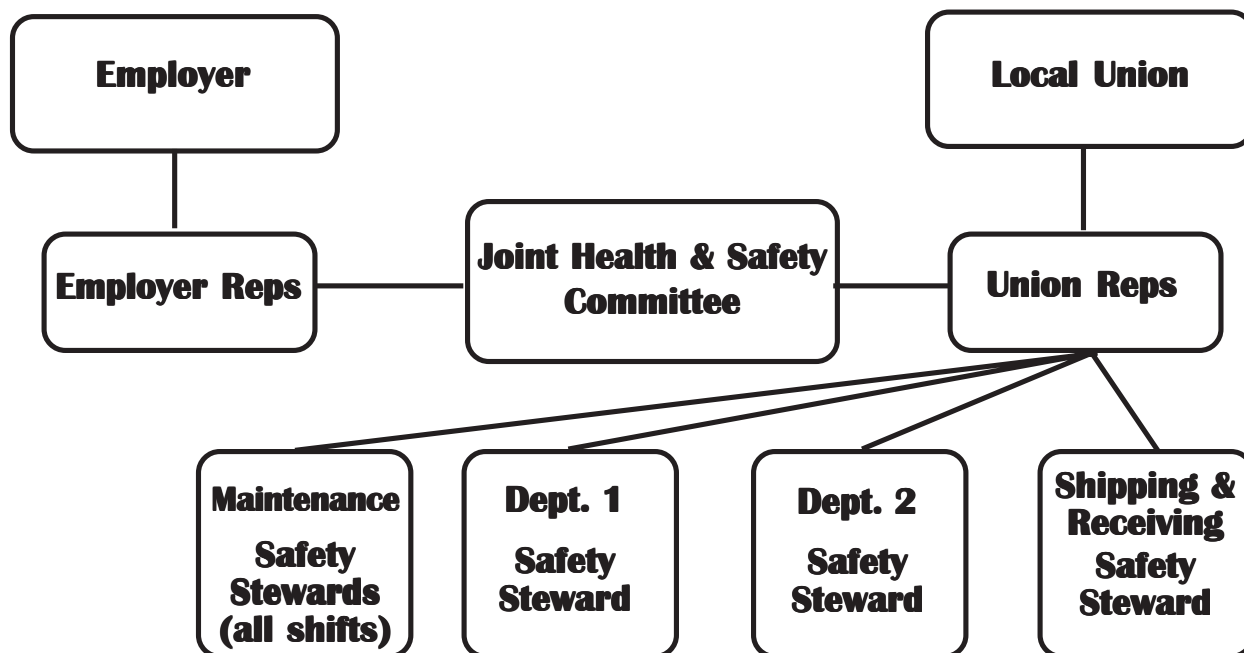
Eyes, Ears, and Voices

The joint labor-management committee should be relatively small, maybe 3 - 4 representatives from each side in order to get things done. The union will need eyes, ears, and voices throughout the workplace. One way of getting this extra help is to form a union health and safety committee with representatives from all major departments, shifts, and work groups.

The union committee can keep the union members of the joint committee informed. This structure is not a new idea. The president or bargaining chair has stewards throughout the facility to help enforce the contract. The union committee members are like safety stewards.

Many larger UAW-represented workplaces have negotiated full-time union safety reps as well as other joint committees that do work related to health and safety. Some of these are: Ergonomics Committees, Hazardous Materials Review Committees, and Lockout Committees. This structure gets many union members involved in health and safety.

In smaller plants or plants with less established health and safety programs, the following structure might work:



Fact Sheet #10

Activities for Health and Safety Committees

There is no set list of activities for Health and Safety Committees. A really effective committee will be limited only by its imagination and energy. You will probably develop many activities not listed in this manual.

Here are a few activities that have worked for UAW locals that have participated in joint labor-management committees.

1. **Talk with and listen to workers.** Keep notes of important details that come up in conversations. Make sure that the bargaining committee knows what's going on.
2. **Get information from your co-workers with a survey.** See the fact sheet on surveys for help.
3. **Communicate with and educate your co-workers.** This is your chance to explain a hazard, what workers can do, or the solution you're aiming for. This is also a golden opportunity to get some valuable feedback from workers. A few ways to get information out include:
 - Reports at union meetings
 - Leaflets or bulletins passed out to all workers.
 - Posters on the bulletin board.
 - Classes conducted by outside health and safety experts, open to all workers.



Fact Sheet #10 (continued)

- A health and safety column in your local union's newsletter.
 - On-the-job meetings on health and safety issues.
 - Post minutes from Health and Safety Committee meetings.
4. **Keep lists.**
- a. Keep a list of **hazardous chemicals** in your workplace and where they are used. You have the right to this information under OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard. Make sure your list stays up to date.
 - b. Keep a list of **workers' symptoms**. Identify workers with symptoms by department, their job, and what they are exposed to.
5. **Review new chemicals, new machines, and new work procedures before they are put in place.** Propose changes. Many UAW locals have had members on hazardous materials committees that review all chemicals before they come into the plant. If the committee doesn't like it, the product isn't used. Other locals have had members on ergonomics committees that reviewed plans for new equipment and assembly lines before they were built. Of course, existing chemicals, machines, and work procedures deserve a lot of attention, too.



Fact Sheet #10 (continued)

6. **Keep records.** The three most important things to remember in trying to make health and safety improvements are: document, document, document! Don't get bogged down in government or technical forms. But there's nothing like data to back up your concerns. Make sure that you present your case to the company in writing.
 - a. Collect and analyze injury and illness records for your work place.
 - b. Collect any monitoring data for your workplace.
 - c. Write down what people tell you, when, and where.
 - d. Keep your own notes at meetings.
 - e. Surveys are a very good way of documenting information.
7. **Keep posted on legal issues.** Every committee needs one or two people that try to stay up on changes to OSHA regs. If you are involved in filing an OSHA complaint or in an inspection, make sure you follow what happens. Your local should file for "3rd party status" so that you get copies of letters between OSHA and your company.
8. **Do inspections.** You can do this by department or on a plant-wide basis. The inspections should involve committee members from the union and the company. Ask workers about the areas being inspected.
9. **Build a health and safety library or resource center.**
10. **Investigate accidents and near-hits.** Take steps to keep it from happening again. Avoid trying to pin blame on any one person. This is not a witch hunt.

There are many, many more ideas. This is just the start of what you can do as a Health and Safety Committee.

Fact Sheet #11**Information is Power**

Health and Safety Committees need to be informed to be able to function. Knowledge of the laws, health effects, and standards relating to exposure, chemicals, and health and safety will give the committee credibility. They might even help provide some solutions to problems. Often getting this information means having access to resources. It also means having help in finding the right resources and interpreting the information.

Here are some examples of information resources:

- UAW Health and Safety Department in Detroit (313-926-5563)
- Local Committees on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH groups)
- Poison Centers
- National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH: 1-800-35NIOSH)
- OSHA or your state OSHA (see phone book for your area office)
- Company work rules and policies, such as those on lock-out or confined space entry.
- Injury and Illness Records from your workplace.
- Local universities with industrial health or public health departments.
- Libraries

But most importantly, know your collective bargaining agreement and laws governing it. Keep your own notes at all meetings.

Fact Sheet #12

Worker Surveys

Several kinds of worker surveys can be done, depending on the need. There are simple surveys with just a few questions, to very complicated ones conducted by health and safety professionals. There are three general types of surveys:

1. **Worker-to-Worker Surveys.** Written and conducted by a committee or a few members to identify workplace hazards and solutions. This type of survey is best if used as part of an on-going health and safety program.
2. **Everyday Surveys.** Perhaps the most important type of survey. This is the informal “surveying” that happens through talking with and listening to co-workers. Pay attention to this shop talk — it’s where you will find some of your best clues.
3. **Research-based surveys.** For example, a mortality study to understand if cancer is a problem at your workplace. These kinds of studies can be done with the assistance of the UAW Health and Safety Department or a local university.

Surveys can be short and simple, or longer and more detailed. There are some examples of a survey and a complaint form that could be used to collect information from workers on the next few pages. The bottom line - any survey will generate ideas and help to involve workers in health and safety. If the resources are available, do a more detailed survey. Do a survey that fits your resources and needs.

What will you do with the results?

There’s nothing worse than answering a bunch of questions, then never finding out what happened with your answers. Think about ways you can summarize the results of the survey and get them back to the membership. Design your survey in a way that makes it easier for you to put together the results.

Fact Sheet #12, continued

On the next two pages are examples of surveys you can use or adapt:

Bare Bones Survey

1. What are the biggest health and safety hazards in your work place and/or work area?
2. What do you think should be done to improve the hazards you listed in question #1. Be specific.
3. What could the health and safety committee do to help workers in solving these problems?

Summary

Back at the Plant: Putting Training to Work

- ★ The best way to prevent an emergency is to design it out of the system at the start. Next best is to install engineering controls that keep the chance for an emergency to a minimum. The worst approach is to hope it won't happen and then run around in chaos when there is an emergency.
- ★ For every deadly and destructive accident there are often many warnings that precede it. Minor accidents and “near-hits” almost always come before a major accident.
- ★ An important tool for prevention is careful reporting and investigation of health and safety problems, especially near-hits.
- ★ There needs to be a formal and systematic way for workers to communicate with the employer about health and safety issues. One of the best mechanisms to do this is through a joint labor-management committee.
- ★ Reach out to the membership to:
 - develop a list of health and safety priorities;
 - help identify emergencies waiting to happen;
 - come up with solutions to health and safety problems;
 - educate members about health and safety issues;
 - gain support for strategies to improve problem areas.
- ★ When your committee is planning what to do, take on small, easier issues first and build toward larger and more comprehensive changes. You might not want to tackle getting the \$1 million

Summary

continued

Back at the Plant: Putting Training to Work

exhaust ventilation installed until you have a few successes under your belt.

- * Your company and local union need to invest in the health and safety committee through:
 - regular meetings with published minutes
 - training and education for committee members
 - appointing members that have the authority to get things done
 - giving enough paid time to investigate issues, prepare for meetings, and hold meetings.