

# RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

## *Sample Safety Officer Policy*

*Each emergency service organization should have a safety officer to address safety at the agency level. The main purpose of having a health and safety officer is to have a qualified individual managing the department's safety and health program. Another important function of the health and safety officer may be as an emergency incident safety officer. The department may choose to separate these functions and assign an adequate number of incident safety officers. In this position the safety officer should act as a consultant to the incident commander. The safety officer is responsible for identifying unsafe acts or conditions, and then reporting them to the incident commander. The safety officer should also be provided with the authority to stop operations that expose personnel to imminent danger where severe injury or death could occur.*

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Written position descriptions are desirable in most cases and should be specific to the level of authority and responsibility defined. Preferably the safety officer should have both staff and line officer authority. On an emergency scene, the incident safety officer should be provided with the authority to alter, suspend, or terminate activities that present an imminent hazard to personnel. Those organizations which are involved in EMS operations, the safety officer may also be the infection control officer as well.

The department should have a safety committee, chaired by the safety officer. Safety and health committee meetings should be held on a scheduled basis. Meetings should be held at least every 6 months, however enough meetings should be scheduled to meet the intended objectives. Committee meeting minutes should be recorded.

The safety officer should have some specific training in safety activities, commensurate with the level of responsibility. The safety officer should have a higher level of involvement in providing or influencing training activities for other members of the organization. Appropriate data should be collected in order to analyze and help improve the safety and health program. The department should establish a data collection system that maintains records on accidents, injuries, illnesses, deaths or exposures that are, or might be, job related.

In order to document an occupational exposure or suspected exposure to a toxic substance or contagious disease, the department should maintain accurate records on personnel exposures. These records should be maintained individually and confidentially.