

MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS

"PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT: FOR MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS"

Part of the "GENERAL SAFETY SERIES"

Quality Safety and Health Products, for Today...and Tomorrow

Outline of Major Points Covered in the "Preventing Sexual Harassment... for Managers and Supervisors" Course

The following outline summarizes the major points of information presented in the course on "Preventing Sexual Harassment...for Managers and Supervisors". The outline can be used to survey the course before taking it on a computer, as well as to review the course when a computer is not available.

- **You've probably heard about fines and lawsuits being brought against companies that ignored sexual harassment.**
 - This isn't something that you or your employer wants to go through.
- **As a manager/supervisor you are one of the first lines of defense in preventing sexual harassment incidents at your company. But recognizing sexual harassment can be difficult.**
 - Conduct that you might at first think is harmless could be harassment to others.
- **Any form of sexual conduct in the workplace is inappropriate.**
 - It may be considered sexual harassment if the actions or comments are unwanted or threatening to someone.
- **Most forms of sexual harassment can be broken down into three categories:**
 - Verbal.
 - Visual.
 - Physical.
- **"Verbal" sexual harassment can include:**
 - Sexist remarks.
 - Foul language.
 - "Off-color" jokes.
 - Talking about sex.
 - "Propositioning" someone.

- **"Visual" sexual harassment can include:**
 - "Pinup" pictures.
 - Magazines that have sexual content.
 - Sexually oriented objects.
 - Pornographic websites.
 - Making obscene gestures.

- **"Physical" sexual harassment includes:**
 - Purposefully brushing up against someone.
 - Groping.
 - Sexual assault.

- **For a situation to be considered harassment, there usually has to be a pattern of offensive conduct. However, a single incident can be deemed sexual harassment if:**
 - It involves blatantly touching someone with sexual intent.
 - Forcing someone to put up with sexual advances to retain or advance their job.

- **Sexual harassment can often start out with what appear to be innocent remarks or jokes that escalate to more hurtful actions as a harasser "tests" the victim's boundaries.**
 - When a worker is repeatedly subjected to this type of conduct it can slowly tear down their self respect leaving them feeling powerless.
 - As a result, sexual harassment victims are often reluctant to report the situation.

- **The best way for you as a manager to prevent sexual harassment is to observe how employees interact, and discourage your workers from engaging in any type of sexual conduct.**

- **According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC), "sexual harassment is a form of sexual discrimination."**
 - As such, it violates the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which protects all American workers from racial, ethnic, age and sexual discrimination.

- **To prevent sexual harassment, your company must have a written sexual harassment policy in place that will help managers and workers to recognize inappropriate behavior and report actions that may constitute harassment.**
 - In addition, most states have regulations regarding sexual harassment that companies and managers must follow.
 - A number of states, including California, Connecticut, Vermont and Maine even have comprehensive sexual harassment training requirements.

- **As a manager or supervisor, you have to fully understand your company's sexual harassment policy. You should also:**
 - Be on the lookout for signs of sexual harassment in your facility.
 - Make sure that your employees know they can come to you if they feel that someone is harassing them.

- **Most importantly, since you are in a supervisory position, you need to ensure that your own actions and comments are never inappropriate.**
 - You are subject to far more scrutiny than most employees. Just one "slip of the tongue" or inappropriate action can put your job on the line.
 - So think before you speak!
 - And make sure that you don't do anything that may be construed as sexual in nature.

- **Just because an action or comment is not upsetting to the person it was directed towards doesn't make everything okay.**
 - A bystander can be a victim of sexual harassment as well.

- **As a manager you must be especially careful to avoid physical contact with employees.**
 - Even tapping someone on the shoulder, or trying to help them adjust clothing or equipment, could be misinterpreted as a sexual advance.

- **Above all else, you must ensure that sex is not being used as a "condition of employment."**
 - By definition, an employee is being sexually harassed when they must endure unwanted sexual advances for fear of not being promoted, not getting pay raises, facing some type of disciplinary action or losing their job.
- **Using a management position to obtain sexual favors from an employee is clearly wrong.**
 - But a problem can exist even if it appears as though an employee is willingly participating in a relationship.
- **For example, a supervisor asks an employee to go to the movies with him and she agrees.**
 - Over the next few months he sees her often and a sexual relationship develops that the man believes is consensual.
 - But one day, the supervisor is shocked to find himself the subject of a sexual harassment complaint by the woman that he felt cared for him!
 - Although it appears to the supervisor that he is being falsely accused, an investigation concludes that the woman agreed to the relationship for fear that she would not be promoted if she "turned her boss down."
- **Many companies forbid managers from dating employees.**
 - But even if your company doesn't have a "dating policy," it's a good idea not to get romantically involved with the people who work for you.
- **One of the most important aspects of a manager's job is to help set the tone in the workplace.**
 - Managers who turn their back on sexual talk and conduct help create "hostile work environments."

- **It is imperative that you:**
 - Inform your employees about your company's sexual harassment policy.
 - Periodically remind them to avoid offensive behavior.
 - Warn them that they will be held accountable for their actions.

- **The best approach is to discourage employees from all behaviors and actions that are sexual in nature, including:**
 - Foul language.
 - Sexist remarks.
 - Sexually explicit jokes.

- **Any conduct that you feel is inappropriate should be dealt with immediately, even if it is not specifically addressed in your company's sexual harassment policy.**

- **Make sure everyone understands that conversations they have, telephone calls that they make, websites that they visit and emails that they send are never truly "private."**
 - Take immediate disciplinary action if you find sexually explicit materials in an employee's work area, locker or on their computer.
 - Don't tolerate explicit graffiti on company property either.
 - If someone writes or draws something on a wall have it removed and try to find the culprit.

- **You also need to pay attention to your workers' appearance.**
 - Is a low-cut dress or pair of tight jeans really appropriate for your workplace?
 - How about a T-shirt with a sexually-oriented graphic on it?
 - Revealing and explicit clothing can be sexually harassing to some people.

- **Most importantly, you need to look at the ways that workers interact, to make sure that their conduct does not constitute sexual harassment.**
 - For instance, what is innocent flirting to one person can be unwelcome sexual advances to another.
 - If a worker appears to be overly friendly, you may have to step in before the situation becomes a real problem.

- **Spreading rumors is another way that people can sexually harass coworkers.**
 - It is important that everyone minds their own business, and doesn't gossip about someone else's sex life or sexual orientation.

- **But conversations about sex aren't always bad.**
 - Talking about what people find offensive is one of the best ways to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace.

- **Use staff meetings or training sessions to remind employees that sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and encourage workers to talk openly about how sexual harassment can affect them.**
 - A good way to "break the ice" is to have each employee anonymously write down something that they would find sexually harassing to them.
 - Then randomly draw the answers from a hat and read them.
 - In this way employees learn where their coworkers "draw the line" on actions and comments, and will be less likely to say or do anything that could be considered sexual harassment.

- **Sometimes employees don't speak out about sexual harassment because they are afraid that the harasser will retaliate against them in some way.**
 - A sexual harasser relies on their victims being too scared or embarrassed to come forward.
 - You need to keep an eye out for indications that sexual harassment may be taking place.

- **Sexual harassment typically involves coworkers.**
 - However customers, clients, independent contractors, vendors, even the spouses of people who work at the company could be harassers or victims.
 - When this occurs, workers may be afraid that reporting the harassment will negatively impact the company or their jobs.

- **Although males harassing females is the most commonly reported type of sexual harassment, many of the unreported cases involve men who are harassed by women and men or women who are harassed by people of their own gender.**
 - One of the reasons that men are often reluctant to report being sexual harassed is that they are afraid of how others will view their "manliness."
 - In fact, being concerned about what friends and family might think is a big reason why sexual harassment victims of both genders don't want to step forward.

- **As a manager, you should never assume that your facility is free of sexual harassment.**
 - Be observant and keep an eye out for situations that your employees may find harassing.

- **Often there are telltale signs that someone is being harassed, such as:**
 - A sudden change in mood.
 - Erratic work performance.
 - Being absent for no apparent reason.
 - Avoiding certain people.

- **Sexual harassment is serious.**
 - Your company could face lawsuits and fines if an incident is not handled properly.
 - It is absolutely critical that you understand your responsibilities and know what to do if an incident occurs.

- **Never ignore or belittle a situation that could be sexually harassment, even if the harasser is a valued customer or someone else who is important to your company's business.**
 - The incident must be dealt with firmly.
- **If you feel that sexual harassment is taking place in your facility, it is vital that you consult your company policy to determine what actions to take.**
 - The most important thing is to immediately file a report with your Human Resources Department or a manager who has been specifically trained to conduct a proper investigation.
 - While this investigation is taking place, it is critical that the names of the people involved and details of the incident remain confidential.

*** * * Summary * * ***

- **It's easy to see how sexual harassment can create an intimidating or even hostile work environment. Let's review what you should be doing to help prevent sexual harassment at your facility.**
- **Know your company's sexual harassment policy and make sure that it is strictly enforced.**
- **Always be aware of your own conduct. Don't say or do anything that could in any way be interpreted as sexual harassment.**
- **Encourage open discussions about sexual harassment at staff meetings and training sessions.**
- **Remind your employee's of conduct that they should avoid.**
- **Be aware of the signs of sexual harassment.**
- **Never ignore a sexual harassment incident.**

- **Report allegations of sexual harassment to your Human Resources Department or senior management immediately, so that they can handle the situation.**
- **Sexual harassment can occur without warning. But by knowing the telltale signs of harassment... being observant... and encouraging your employees to come forward if they know of an incident... you will help create a "harassment free" work environment.**