

# Creating a Lasting Safety Awards Program



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You can use a safety awards program to promote employee involvement and improve your safety and occupational health management system (SOHMS). A safety awards program encourages employee buy-in using incentives and awards to motivate your workforce and increase participation in safety and health (S&H) and the SOHMS at your organization. Developing a safety awards program requires planning and collaboration – a successful program identifies individuals and rewards behaviors going beyond job requirements. At times, organizations invest resources into a safety awards program only to find the money spent on incentives and awards does not drive SOHMS improvements. This one pager contains ideas for effectively establishing an effective and lasting safety awards program.

## LEARN ABOUT SERVICE GUIDANCE, SOHMS EXPECTATIONS, AND WORKPLACE NEEDS

First, determine if your Service/Agency or SOHMS criteria requires a safety awards program – if so, use this guidance as you begin creating your safety awards program. Then, review SOHMS-related goals and ensure alignment with your organization’s mission and any SOHMS-related expectations. Next, look at your SOHMS and decide where your organization can improve (e.g., increasing safety culture, reducing injuries/illnesses, expanding self-inspections, conducting more effective training). You may need to adjust your goals based on your workplace needs. Understanding your organization’s needs and expectations is crucial in an effective safety awards program.

## GAIN LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Meet with leadership and discuss a safety awards program, how it drives SOHMS improvements, your ideas for the program, the resources required, and a path forward. Leaders must understand their support and engagement is vital to the program’s success. Inform leaders how they can help throughout the development, communication, and execution of the awards program. Ask leadership to publicly issue awards and incentives to highlight the program and shows the leaders care about S&H.

## INVESTIGATE DETAILS FOR THE SAFETY AWARDS PROGRAM

Form a safety awards program team composed of different organizational representatives to:

- Define program goals and document how to use the program to improve the SOHMS
- Solicit the workforce to identify meaningful awards and incentives
- Examine the S&H budget and decide which incentives and awards are feasible
- Discuss the nomination process and consider forming a nomination evaluation team
- Establish who is eligible to participate in the program and can receive an award or incentive
- Determine who to award or incentivize – those who go above and beyond S&H requirements; individuals, teams, or groups; and those who contribute to the SOHMS
- Decide when and how to issue awards and incentives.

## CONSIDER AWARDS AND INCENTIVES TO INCLUDE IN THE PROGRAM

Use Service/Agency guidance, employee input, and available resources to choose the types of awards and incentives in your program. Discuss the program and possible awards and incentives with the Legal Office and verify there are no conflicts within the program or with the incentives offered. Some example safety awards include:

Time off	Cash or gift cards	Merchandise premiums	Mystery prizes
Trophies or plaques	Certificates	Parties	Recognition by leadership

## ESTABLISH A WRITTEN SAFETY AWARDS PROGRAM

Develop a written program detailing the program requirements. A written program specifies roles and responsibilities, defines eligibility requirements and the terms of the program, and other key information to successfully execute the program at your workplace. Be sure the written program supports Service/Agency-specific guidance, SOHMS requirements, and organizational needs. Document issued awards and incentives to track the numbers of and types of distributed awards and incentives.

Make sure your safety awards program does not promote underreporting S&H concerns.

Rewarding employees for not reporting injuries, illnesses, or hazards promotes undesired behaviors at your workplace.

**OSHA DISAPPROVES**

## PROMOTE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION

Employee participation makes your safety awards program successful. Periodically ask employees for feedback on the safety awards program, the nomination process, the types of awards and incentives included, and how to make the program better. Continually think of ways to make the safety awards program more appealing to your employees. Use your safety awards team or administer a perception survey to gain this information.

## MARKET YOUR PLAN

Market your safety awards program to receive maximum employee participation. Identify ways to communicate your program to all levels of the organization. Assign responsibility, as needed, and use posters, flyers, emails, leadership briefings, and supervisor safety talks to publicize the program. Use the same methodology to highlight when an employee(s) receives an award or incentive and discuss why they received it. The more employees know, the more likely they are to participate!

## EVALUATE THE PROGRAM

Evaluate your program annually, at a minimum, to make sure it is meaningful to your employees, aligns with organizational expectations and needs, and is improving your SOHMS.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smscx.org/>.