It’s that time of the year again! Time to sit down, break out your thinking caps, and set goals that you’ll strive toward for the entire year. However, if you want your safety resolutions to be more successful than your laundry list of abandoned New Year’s resolutions, you can’t approach your safety goals like a wish list.

Here’s how to be more effective in determining yearly safety goals:

Set SMART Goals

The best place to start is by setting SMART goals. Most of us are familiar with the concept, yet all too often, we neglect the details of SMART goals when writing our yearlong objectives.

SMART goals are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

For example, saying you want to have fewer workplace safety incidents isn’t a SMART goal. But you can make it SMART if you narrow down the goal to a specific incident category, state by how much you want the incident number reduced, select a reasonable number for your workplace, and set clear deadlines to check your benchmarks.

Make Them Realistic and Appropriate. Pay careful attention to ensure your goals are achievable (realistic) and relevant (appropriate). It may not be realistic to eliminate all workplace incidents by the end of the year. You can, however, reduce the incident rate by 10%, for example. In addition, make sure that your goals are relevant to your organization and work environment. If your workers don’t use chemicals, for example, it doesn’t make sense to set a goal relating to chemical hazards. Or, to put a finer point on it, if your company is focusing on a specific type of growth, it does little good to set a goal that has nothing to do with that type of growth.

Do not create your safety goals in a vacuum. Involve other people, like your established company safety committee, to help you get others perspectives on the issues. There should also be representation from all levels of the company for varied opinions and viewpoints.

Make the goals measurable. A goal that states avoid soft tissue injuries is too vague to be measured and tracked. A measurable goal would be no more than 4 soft tissue injuries this year.
**Keep trying.** When goals are not met, go back, and evaluate what went wrong. Involve key personnel and discuss what changes could be made to meet the goal in the future. If it becomes clear early in the year the goal is unattainable, adjust that goal for the year so there is still something to work towards.

**Start at the top.** Management needs to know their participation in safety decisions is as important as setting the budget. If employees are to buy into the goals, management needs to lead by example.

**Review injuries sustained over the past year.** Look for any trends in incidents or types of injuries. Once trends have been discovered, these can be used as a focus of upcoming goals.

**At the End of the Day-** Encourage all-around Involvement. Regardless of what goals you set, you need to get the whole workforce involved to successfully implement them. That means everyone. Skipping low-level employees will leave those employees disconnected from the goals. However, lack of involvement from management signals to the larger workforce that management isn’t that interested in seeing the goals come to fruition. The best way to ensure involvement across the board is to get everyone involved in the conversation and to get them in on the game early. Everyone should have a voice and everyone’s voice should be heard. Plus, this helps bolster a safety culture going into the new year, especially if you follow-through on your goals and continue to show that your safety goals are a priority.

**Clearly communicate (and celebrate) successes**
Once you’ve started to meet your organizational goals, it’s critical to celebrate those successes and recognize the key players who helped. This approach not only involves the establishment of meaningful metrics, but the effective communication of them as well. The most successful organizations simply do not send out information, they also measure how well and completely the communication is received, remembered, and acted upon.

**The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)** recommends setting descriptive goals, such as developing and implementing a safety program that controls hazards. Other possible safety goals may include:

- Increasing participation in safety committees
- Developing a written system to document and investigate accidents
- Holding regular safety drills for emergencies
- Performing weekly inspections
- Completing a job safety analysis in each department before every major task
- Creating a plan to eliminate a particular hazard to the lowest level

Setting goals is key to improvement. Setting safety goals that are realistic with a specific strategy that measures progress can help you improve your organization’s safety.

**Should you need assistance setting goals, please reach out to the Loss Control Department who can assist in identifying areas in need of improvement and setting goals.**