

How do you feel about your committee?

Post it Colors:
Green = successes
Orange = barriers
Pink = issues

As you settle into the room take a post it from the table and write one to a few words about a common barrier that you face in your committee meetings or a common success that your makes your committee run smoothly. On a separate post it write a common issue that your committee faces.

Once you are done stick it on the respective easel paper for the success/barrier and the issue located at the front of the room.

This can be on anything from how it is running, how it can be improved, what is going well, what is not going well, and anything in between.



Adding Structural Elements: Health & Safety Committees 102

Introductions

Facilitators

Leisa Abraham, Article 18 Co-Chair

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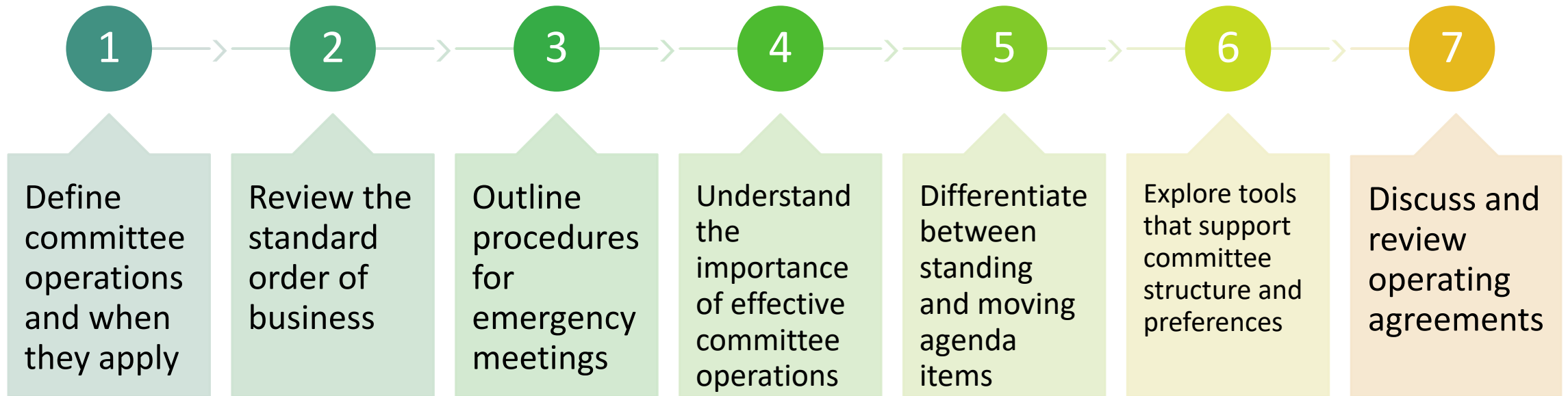
Workshop Captain

Annamarie Malik, PEF Health and Safety Specialist

Committee Operations Overview & Conducting Effective Meetings

SECTION 1

Section Objectives



What Are Committee Operations?

The structure and framework that guide how a committee functions

The rules, roles, and responsibilities of committee members

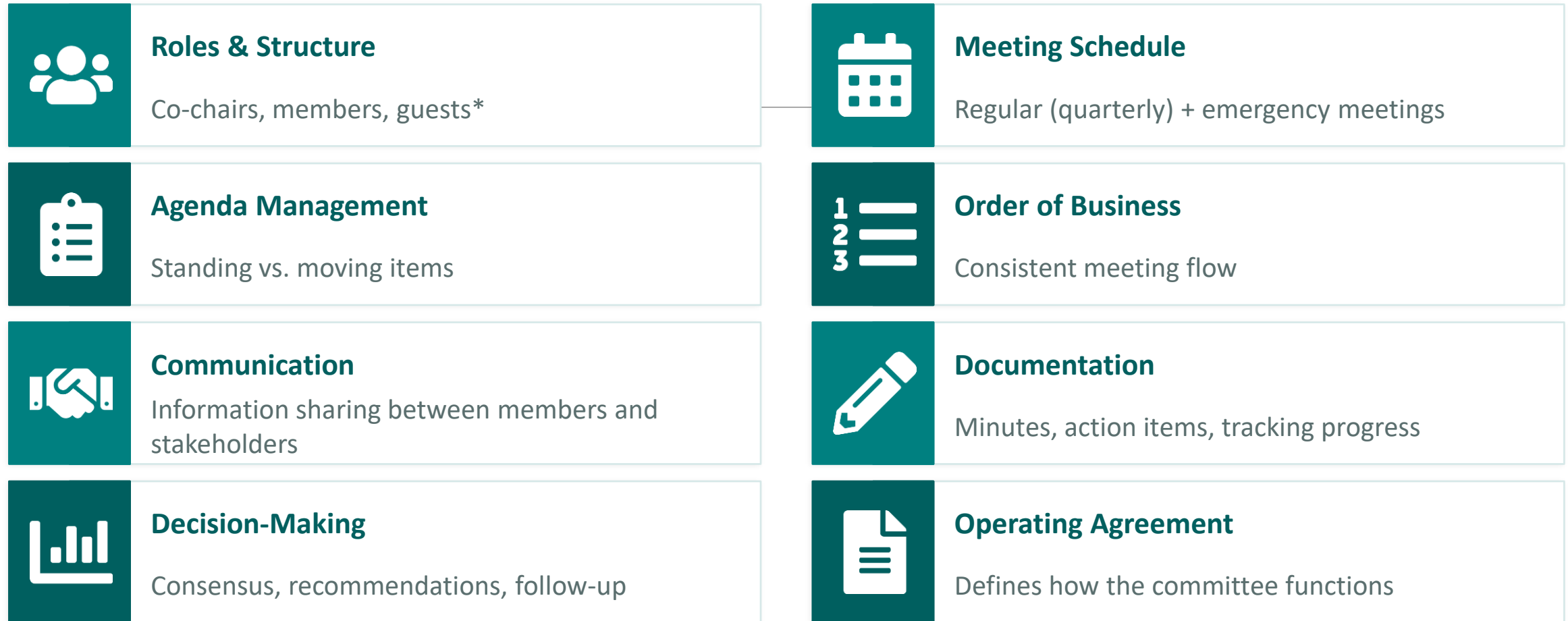
The processes used to plan, run, and document meetings

The procedures for decision-making, communication, and follow-up

The system that ensures the committee works consistently, efficiently, and effectively

Sometimes formalized through an agreement

Key Components of Committee Operations



*A guest is someone invited to participate in that specific meeting and is not a standing committee member. Examples of a guest can include subject matter experts, industrial hygienists, DASNY, mold professionals, pest control specialists, field representatives, PEF executive board members, management or labor designees, H&S staff

Setting Expectations



Not typical LM meeting, all members are expected to contribute 50/50



Discussions are good but actions are better



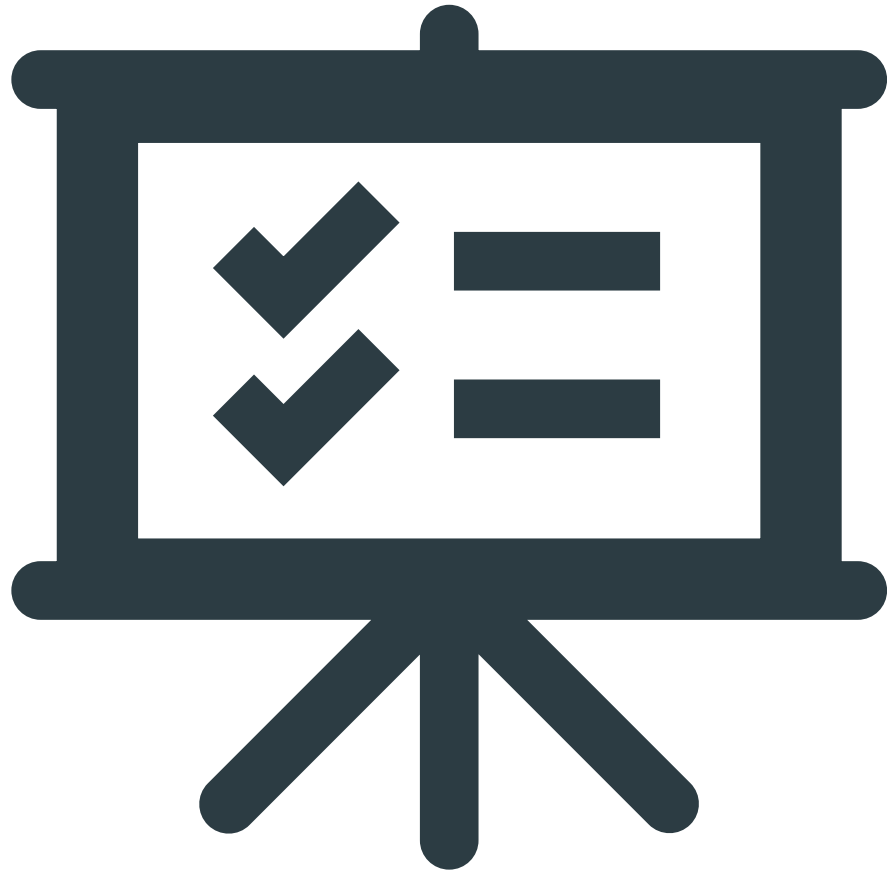
Meetings should be conducted in a good faith effort to help resolve matters of mutual concern in a collaborative and effective manner



Provide advanced notice regarding any member changes and invited guests



Provide annual list of membership representatives



50/50 Work Examples

- Draft safety bulletins
- Review requested data and provide a report
- Identify applicable PESH standard(s) pertaining to an item
- Complete committee training and other training on a H&S topic of concern

Effective Committee Meetings



Start with a clear purpose and agenda



Begin and end on time



Ensure balanced participation from all members



Keep discussions focused and on track



Encourage open communication and respect



Capture key decisions and action items



Assign responsibilities and timelines



Follow up to ensure accountability and progress



Setting a Goal to Elevate your Committee

- Discuss goals with other committee members
- Find common ground
- Develop a plan

Committee Order of Business

- Provides a consistent structure for running meetings
- Helps keep discussions organized and efficient
- Ensures important items are not missed or rushed
- Supports accountability and follow-through
- Creates a predictable flow for all members

Example of Standard Order of Business

1	Call to Order
2	Introduction of Visitors/Guests
3	Review & Approve Previous Meeting Minutes
4	Old Business (items carried over)
5	New Business (new topics and add-ons)
6	Review Action Items & Assign Updates
7	Confirm Next Meeting Date/Time

Managing Agenda Items

Agendas help keep meetings focused, organized, and productive

Items are typically grouped as standing or moving

Helps prioritize discussions and manage time effectively

Ensures ongoing issues are consistently reviewed

Allows flexibility to address new or emerging concerns

Co-chairs moderating the meeting to ensure the agenda is followed

Co-Chair Responsibilities

- ❖ Prepare items including the context prior to meeting
- ❖ Assign designees to discuss topic matters on the agenda
- ❖ Guide discussion to solutions and maintain focus
- ❖ Maintain a non-adversarial environment
- ❖ Propose potential action items and solutions
- ❖ Ensure follow-up communication to appropriate parties, for example members, management officials, other employees

Standing Agenda Items

Recurring items reviewed at every meeting — ensure consistency and track ongoing priorities

Topic Reports	Review of Reports	Training
Workplace Violence Prevention	Quantitative reports on Statistics, accidents, and incidents	Review of annual programs
Ergonomics	Qualitative reports on SH 900 logs, accident analysis reports, workers' compensation claims	Development of new programs
Safe Patient Handling	Subcommittee Reports	
Building/Environmental Concerns		
Action Item Updates (status and follow-up)		

Having a Good Agenda Includes



Provide context and information for agenda items



Discuss suggested solutions to agenda items that you bring up



Send the agenda ideally two weeks before committee meeting without prompting



Agenda items should be exclusive to the committee

Scheduling & Preparing for Meetings



Establish a regular meeting schedule

e.g., quarterly or monthly



Hold pre-meetings (labor & management)

to prepare and align



Exchange agendas in advance of the meeting

give members time to review and ask questions



Avoid last-minute additions

except in urgent situations



Hold brief co-chair check-ins

to set the agenda (not full meetings)

Calling for Emergency Meetings

When to consider having an emergency Health & Safety Committee Meeting — examples but not limited to the following:

Serious incident, injury, or fatality

Imminent danger or life-threatening hazard

Workplace violence incident or credible threat

Hazardous exposure (known or unknown)

Fire, evacuation, or major safety event

Building safety issue (e.g., gas, air quality, structural)

Regulatory inspection or citation (OSHA/PESH)

Significant operational change impacting safety

Pattern of incidents or urgent member concerns

Situations should be handled at the lowest level possible, including the fewest number of people necessary, it does not need to be the full committee, but will be communicated to the full committee.

Developing Operating Agreements



Why have one?

Ensures all members understand expectations and roles

Reduces confusion and inconsistency over time

Formalizes agreed-upon processes and meeting practices

Strengthens the labor-management partnership

Helps to establish structure and provide a framework for conducting business



When are they implemented?

When forming a new committee

When roles, structure, or expectations are unclear or inconsistent

After changes in membership, leadership, or operations

When there is a need to improve accountability or communication

Every committee is different — members must discuss, adapt, and agree on the practices that work best for them.

Summary: Key Takeaways Section 1

What to carry forward into your next committee meeting



Understand Committee Operations

Committee operations define how the committee conducts its business through agreed-upon roles, structures, and communication pathways.



Follow a Standard Order of Business

Every committee meeting should follow a standard order of business, including standing agenda items, old business, and new business.



Have an Agenda

Moving the agenda requires preparation: exchange agendas in advance, hold pre-meetings, assign clear action items, and elevate unresolved issues appropriately.



Hold Emergency Meetings as Needed

Emergency meetings may be called for serious incidents; co-chairs coordinate the process and the committee determines what qualifies.



Utilize Operating Agreements

A Committee Operating Agreement (MOA/MOU) formalizes how the committee functions.



STRETCH BREAK

Common Barriers and How to Overcome Them

SECTION 2

Section Objectives

- Recognize Common Barriers
 - Identify the most frequent obstacles that prevent effective labor-management collaboration on H&S Committees
- Understand Root Causes
 - Understand why these barriers arise – including trust defects, history, personality dynamics, and bad-faith behavior
- Apply Overcoming Strategies
 - Use practical strategies to move past barriers and restore productive working relationships between labor and management
- Navigate Impasse
 - Know how and when to escalate unresolved issues through the committee network
 - Local -> Agency -> Article 18 Statewide

Common Barriers to Good Labor-Management Relations

What gets in the way — and why it matters for your H&S committee



Lack of Trust

Without trust, every action is interpreted through suspicion. Committees stall when neither side believes the other is acting in good faith.



Inability to Overcome History

Past grievances, prior conflicts, or failed agreements can make it nearly impossible to approach new issues with fresh eyes.



Personality Conflicts

Strong personalities — or simply different communication styles — can turn substantive discussions into personal confrontations.



Taking Each Other for Granted

When either side stops making an effort — stops listening, stops following through — the relationship deteriorates quietly.



Getting Caught Up in Petty Issues

Fixating on minor procedural disputes instead of the committee's actual mission — employee safety — wastes time and erodes goodwill.



Acting in Bad Faith

Showing up without intention to collaborate, making commitments you won't keep, or using the committee as a political tool.



Seeing No Value in Working Together

If either side believes the committee is pointless, their disengagement becomes self-fulfilling. Purpose must be re-established.



Failure to Follow Established Agreements

Ignoring the operating agreement, skipping meetings, or not following through on action items destroys the committee's credibility.

Top Ten Mistakes of H&S Committees

Common failures that prevent committees from fulfilling their mission

1



Lack of Purpose

2



Poor Communication

3



Improper Committee Size

4



Absence of Top Leadership

5



Ineffective Training

6



Inconsistent Follow-Up

7



Unresolved Items

8



Limited Funding or Personnel Resources

9



Domination from One Party

10



Minimal Membership Participation

Don't Let Your Committee Get Hijacked!

Poor labor-management relationships are the #1 threat to an effective H&S committee



When two sides are in conflict, the committee's mission — employee safety — suffers.

Signs Your Committee Is Being Hijacked

- One party dominates discussion and/or decisions
- Meetings become platforms for airing grievances unrelated to H&S
- Action items are repeatedly ignored with no accountability
- The same issues appear on the agenda meeting after meeting
- Members stop attending or send low-level substitutes
- Personal attacks replace substantive debate
- The committee's outputs are never implemented



Why "Top Ten Mistakes" Undermine Committees

- Poor labor and management relationships create a toxic foundation
- Lack of purpose means no one knows what success looks like
- Insufficient resources sends the message: "This doesn't matter"
- One party domination violates the joint structure required by Article 18
- Lack of membership participation drains the committee of legitimacy
- A committee that doesn't function protects no one

Overcoming Barriers

Practical strategies for restoring productive labor-management collaboration



Get to Know Each Other

Relationships are built between people, not positions. Take time to understand your counterpart's role, pressures, and motivations — not just their formal stance at the table.



See Things from the Other Side

Management faces budget constraints, regulatory pressure, and staffing challenges. Labor faces workload, safety risk, and member concerns. Acknowledging these realities builds empathy.



Recognize Each Party's Valuable Role in Helping to Protect Employees

Both labor and management bring expertise and perspective that the other side needs. Neither can achieve lasting safety improvements alone.



Listen and Be Willing to Learn

Active listening — not just waiting for your turn to speak — is the foundation of productive dialogue. Seek to understand before seeking to be understood.



Recognize External Pressures

Each team and individual carries pressures from outside the meeting room. Be willing to acknowledge these — and help where you can — rather than treating obstacles as excuses.



Accept That Solutions Won't Always Be Equal

A good outcome doesn't require identical results for both parties — it requires that both sides can live with the outcome and see it as fair in context.

Potential Pitfalls



Numerous agenda items



Too many committee members



Types of minutes



Holding concerns until next meeting



Asking for data without providing a subsequent report



Choosing emails rather than discussions



Maintaining Ground Rules

- Come prepared
- Adhere to agenda topics and time schedule
- Respect others' opinions and perspectives
- Maintain a collegial demeanor and respectful tone
- Turn camera ON
- Allow one speaker at a time
- Exercise common courtesy and refrain from distracting or disruptive activities
- Avoid making accusations or claims which are not based on fact or take inflexible positions
- Remain in meeting until adjourned

Building Trust in Labor-Management Relationships

Trust is the foundation — everything else depends on it



Compromise on Small Issues First

Build a track record of mutual accommodation on lower-stakes issues. Each small agreement creates momentum and demonstrates good faith before tackling bigger challenges.



Examine Your Own Actions for Fairness

Before blaming the other side, ask: Am I being consistent? Do I follow through on my commitments? Am I applying the same standard I expect from them?



Don't Assume the Other Party's Intentions

Resist interpreting actions through the lens of your own fears or past experience. Give the benefit of the doubt — then address the behavior directly if needed.



Give "Heads Up" on Important Issues

Don't blindside your co-chair. Share concerns privately before the meeting so both sides arrive prepared — not defensive. Co-chairs should preview sensitive topics together.



Celebrate Wins Jointly

When the committee resolves an issue or improves a safety metric — acknowledge it together. Shared credit for shared success reinforces the joint mission.



Follow Through on Every Commitment

Nothing destroys trust faster than unmet commitments. If you said you'd do something — do it. If circumstances change, communicate before the deadline, not after.

Moving Past Impasse

When the committee reaches a deadlock — how to escalate appropriately

What Is Impasse — and When Have You Reached It?

Impasse occurs when an issue cannot be resolved at the current committee level after good-faith discussion. It is not a failure — it is part of the process. The committee network exists precisely to handle these situations.



Step 1

Local Health & Safety Committee

First — exhaust all options at the local committee level. Document attempts, decisions made, and why resolution was not reached.



Step 2

Agency Level Health & Safety Committee

Escalate to the Agency Level Health & Safety Committee. Issues impacting multiple locations should come here. This committee provides mentorship and facilitation. If not resolved, the concerned party should raise to the next level.



Step 3

Article 18 Statewide Committee

Final escalation: Article 18 Statewide Committee if needed.

Positive Strategies for Good Labor-Management Relations

The flip side of every barrier is a productive strategy

What does good LM look like in practice?

Lack of trust	▶ Build trust through small, consistent wins and follow-through on every commitment
Inability to overcome history	▶ Acknowledge the past, then agree to start fresh — focusing on today's shared safety mission
Personality conflicts	▶ Focus on issues, not individuals. Keep the conversation on the data and the impact
Taking each other for granted	▶ Show respect for your counterpart's time, effort, and expertise — every meeting
Getting caught up in petty issues	▶ Return to the mission: employee safety. Ask — does this agenda item serve that goal?
Acting in bad faith	▶ Act in good faith yourself, consistently. Name bad-faith behavior directly when it occurs
Seeing no value in collaboration	▶ Document and share wins that only happened because both sides worked together
Failing to follow agreements	▶ Honor every commitment. Review your Operating Agreement at the start of each year

Keeping Perspective: Shared Goals, Different Paths

What to remember when things get heated at the committee table

Your agency's safety mission and employee safety are NOT competing goals — they are the same goal.



Same Goals, Different Paths

Labor and management often want the same outcomes — they may just see a different path to getting there. Getting stuck on the "how" prevents progress on the "what."



Respectful Disagreement Is OK

We don't always have to agree — but we do have to be respectful. Strong disagreement expressed professionally keeps the committee functional. Personal attacks do not.



Strong Emotions Are Normal — Manage Them

Emotion is natural when discussing safety. It's OK to take a break when things become intense. Neither side should steamroll the other when feelings are running high.



Don't Take It Personally — But Acknowledge It's Hard

It is genuinely hard not to take criticism personally. Acknowledge that difficulty — and then focus on the issue, not the person. This takes practice.



Prepare Co-Chairs for Hot-Button Topics

If a particular topic is likely to be emotionally charged, co-chairs should speak privately before the meeting to understand where each side is coming from — keeping "heat" lower during the full meeting.





Tips

- Establish good working relationships
- Seek guidance from your Agency's and PEF's professional H&S staff as all work to help keep employees safe
- Always be respectful, even if you disagree on approach to resolve an item
- Work in good faith and take a collaborative approach
- Share responsibility of solutions

Activity: Working Past Barriers

Applying what you've learned — from barrier to productive conversation



We will break you in to small groups. Follow the steps below.

Step 1 — Choose a Common Barrier

- Lack of trust
- Inability to overcome history
- Personality conflicts
- Taking each other for granted
- Getting caught up in petty issues
- Acting in bad faith
- Seeing no value in working together
- Failure to follow established agreements

Choose a yellow post it from the front board as a barrier or one from the list above.

Step 2 — Choose a Common LM Meeting Issue

- Staffing levels / updates
- Change to policy or procedure
- Training program updates
- Vacancy updates
- Recent injuries or near-misses
- Change to facility operations
- Environmental concerns
- Safety concerns

Choose a red post it from the “issues” side of the front board.

Step 3 — In your group, have a mock conversation using your chosen barrier and issue. Apply the strategies from this module to model turning the barrier into productive dialogue. When roleplaying swap roles/perspectives — have labor be management and management be labor.

Activity Debrief

Reflecting on what emerged from the practice conversation



How did it go?

- ▶ What felt natural? What felt awkward?
- ▶ Did your pair reach a productive outcome?
- ▶ What made that possible — or difficult?

What did you learn?

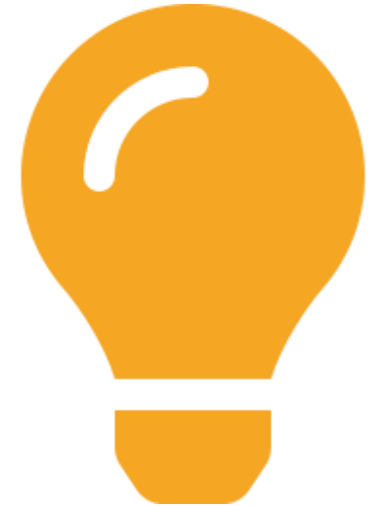


- ▶ Did you see the barrier differently after taking the other side's perspective?
- ▶ Did any strategy from this module make a visible difference?
- ▶ What surprised you?



What challenges came up?

- ▶ Were there moments where the barrier felt genuinely hard to overcome?
- ▶ What would have helped — more time? Different information? Different roles?
- ▶ What would you do differently in a real committee meeting?



Summary: Key Takeaways Section 2

What to carry forward into your next committee meeting



Trust Is the Foundation

Without trust, no strategy, structure, or process will sustain an effective committee. Build it intentionally — through small wins, consistent follow-through, and good-faith behavior.



Communication Is the Key

Barriers rarely come from bad intentions — they come from miscommunication, assumption, and silence. Listen actively, give heads-up on sensitive issues, and speak directly.



Experience Is an Asset

Personal experience — including negative experience — builds the instincts to recognize when a conversation is going sideways and how to redirect it productively.



Emotion Is Normal — Channel It

Emotion is a signal, not a problem. Strong feelings about safety matters show people care. The skill is learning to channel that energy into productive advocacy rather than conflict.



You Have a Support Network

You are not alone. If local-level impasse occurs, agency level committee members are available to support, mediate, and escalate. Use the network.



Questions?
Comments?
Survey
Evaluation

