



**4 Fool-Proof  
Strategies  
To Improve Your  
Safety Inspection  
Program**

Thorough inspections are vital for pinpointing problems that could lead to hazardous situations.

According to OSHA:

***“Self-inspection is essential if you are to know where probable hazards exist and whether they are under control.”***

In order to create an inspection program that really uncovers the problems in your organization, you need to think beyond compliance.

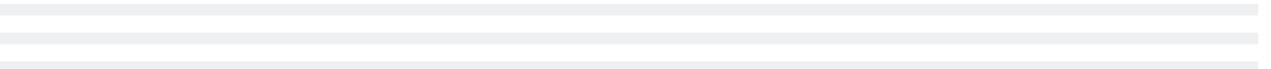
Instead, internal inspections should be done to keep your team on their feet, to discover new methods to improve your processes and to reduce potential problems in your workplace.

A top-level organization is going to welcome the identification of issues, including nonconformances, hazards and problems with implementation. Managers in a high-level program should welcome regular and targeted inspections that will help them implement best practices in the field.

This mentality should **lead to an attitude that strives for continuous improvement of the inspection program to identify any important issues.**

Your inspections aren't going to mean much if they themselves aren't carefully scrutinized and adjusted.

Inside this quick-read guide, you'll discover the **top four key factors in improving your inspection program.**



# 1) Optimize Inspection Checklists

Einstein once said that the definition of insanity was doing the same thing over and over, but expecting a different result.

If you aren't changing up your inspection checklists, then you will continue to measure the same things and miss the same things every time.

The checklists you use are only as valuable as the questions being asked.

- **Don't get stuck on the details and miss the big picture**

While checklists are great for easy, on-the-spot reminders for inspection, they can also inadvertently encourage the inspectors to get stuck in a rut and miss potential hazards that are not on the list.

Your inspectors need to consider what hazards they may encounter that are not listed in the criteria and then add those items to the checklist.

- **Remove yourself from the situation**

You may even need to consider outside eyes, but getting yourself to think objectively is a key element to reconsidering your inspection checklists.

You need to get yourself outside of the motivations, excuses and expectations of your own business to create a better checklist that focuses on the highest priority issues.

- **Remove subjective measurements from your checklist**

Your inspectors have to be pushed to think objectively as well, since subjective judgments may lead to problems or inconsistencies. Don't make your inspectors make judgment calls.

A pass/fail decision will improve the accuracy of your findings and pinpoint areas that need attention.



## 2) Prioritize Your Risks

Inspections should be risk-based in order to prioritize how inspection-related activities are viewed.

This requires that inspectors look at the combination of probability and consequence to consider what issues are most high risk.

While this Risk-Based Inspection (RBI) methodology is most often used in oil, gas and chemical industries, it can be useful in every industry.

- **Identify your concerns to organize your priorities**

Start by identifying what parts of your inspection checklist are associated with high risk nonconformance and which ones are lower risk.

Also identify how you ensure the resolution of more important hazards are prioritized above other problems and how long an appropriate time period for resolution is for your company.

Then, you will need to determine if you are actually inspecting often enough and if more frequent inspections would help in avoiding incidents.

Areas of greatest return should be among the top priorities for your company, so you will need to consider how expensive each type of problem is to see what it might cost you if it is not among the first problems solved.

- **Reduce incidents and costs with inspections**

Companies that completed inspections saw workplace injuries decline by 9% and injury costs decline by 26% according to research published in Science.



- **Realize that compliance doesn't mean best practices**

Your company might be meeting every compliance standard in your industry, but that doesn't mean you are doing the best thing for your employees or your customers.

Regulations are often put in place without scientific proof of their outcomes.

If you treat compliance as a checklist, then you are going to be sure to miss problems that actually endanger your workers or hinder your productivity.

- **Research your industry's top priorities**

If you know what to prioritize as top importance, you can proactively reduce risk.

Know what is going on in the world around you.

Become familiar with which violations are most commonly cited in your area or industry. Then, adapt your program to focus on those issues as well as your other top internal priority issues.

### 3) Identify Your Trends

Your company is going to have shifting goals and trends, so your inspection checklist should be aligned with those changes.

You need to see what your company tends to do in a given situation so you can better identify expectations and necessary changes to meet your goals.

- **Report key metrics from inspections**

Utilize your inspections to create reports so you can better see trends in your company. Gather metrics to take advantage of a key opportunity to improve your performance.

- **Work to create real and lasting solutions to problems found in inspections**

Once you've identified your trends, you will start to notice key problems that come up again and again even after being identified. Consider whether issues are occurring across the entire company or just specific locations.

Also, note if issues are happening at a certain time and may be related to conditions surrounding your company. Graphs and charts may help provide an even clearer picture into how locations, personnel, training, equipment or timing may be influencing performance.

- **Connect your findings**

As you work to create a more comprehensive understanding of your company's performance and compliance, you should work to connect various results.

The more you are able to accurately draw conclusions from your reporting, the better you will be able to identify key factors and implement changes that really improve the root of the problem.



## 4) Improve Your Reporting Methods

If you are working to identify key trends in your company, you will want to work with technology to increase your effectiveness.

Paper and spreadsheets are error-prone and take inordinate amounts of time to track and report your findings.

Shift away from paper-based systems to increase your organizational abilities and allow your company to act quickly on new data.

- **Real time reporting**

Great technology can help your company immediately track and report in real time. This means your inspectors enter data only once and the information will be organized and ready for analytics immediately.

- **Look for trends**

One of the benefits to digitizing your reports is that trends are recorded immediately and can be identified faster.

Look for trends that will form as you complete inspections and don't wait until your inspectors recount their data and redo their reports to find the trends that are holding your company back.

- **Keep your detailed reports available for third-party inspections**

If your documentation is incomplete, third party inspectors are likely to require you improve your record-keeping.

To avoid problems with third party inspectors, digital record keeping can ensure faster and easier reporting that is backed up for increased security in your database.

Historically, OSHA handed out multi-million dollar fines to a few large manufacturers all because of poor recordkeeping.



- **Issue corrective actions to fix key problems found through inspections.**

If your system is updated and you are tracking your reports digitally, then trends discovered can also be addressed through your mobile system.

By reducing all snags in your process, you can inform your company faster of new policy changes and implement vital processes that can save both time and money.

You need to keep your team informed if you are going to address issues with changes that make a difference.

You also will want to have a system in place to make these adjustments as simple as possible with educational materials that help your employees implement change.

## Conclusion

As you make these changes, you will likely find that your inspectors are better able to help catch problems in your process and then implement the changes needed to reinforce better practices.

With better policies in place, your company is less likely to make mistakes, face workplace injuries, suffer from unnecessary gaps in productivity or send customers subpar products.

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