



TIP SHEET 13

EMPLOYEE TRAINING PROGRAM

The development, implementation and maintenance of an effective SQF System are supported by a solid employee training plan. A competency-based training program doesn't have to be elaborate or expensive; at its most basic level it must be well-planned and aligned with the site's food safety objectives. It's only then that it will make employees more confident to do the right thing to ensure a safe product.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- IDENTIFY THE TRAINING PROGRAM NEEDS
- CHOOSE THE RIGHT DELIVERY METHOD
- PLAN AND CONDUCT REFRESHER TRAINING
- DOCUMENT THE TRAINING PROGRAM AND TRAINING CONDUCTED
- VERIFY LEARNER COMPETENCY

APPLICABLE CODE ELEMENTS

- 2.9.1.1
- 2.9.2.1
- 2.9.6.1
- 2.9.7.1

KEY TERMS

- **COMPETENCY**

The knowledge, skills and abilities to complete one's assigned job effectively.

- **REFRESHER TRAINING**

Training in which an employee reviews the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform a task or a job.

- **TRAINING PROGRAM**

A program that encompasses the training the site needs to conduct to ensure their food safety program is carried out against the SQF Code requirements.



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○ TRAINING SKILLS REGISTER

A file of training records. Training records must identify the individual, the training applied, skills gained, and the assessment applied to ensure the competency was acquired.

○ WORK INSTRUCTIONS

A tool describing how a specific job task is to be performed.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS STEPS

1. Identify the training program needs
 - a. A training needs analysis must be conducted to identify the skills required for each role in the SQF system. This will be based on the job descriptions (refer to 2.1.2.8), procedures and work instructions (refer to 2.1.3). It is important to ensure that all relevant positions are covered and that shift employees and relief employees are included to ensure that there are no gaps in the training requirements. Staff in supervisory, management or technical roles must also be included. The training needs analysis will form the basis for the training program (refer to 2.9.2).
 - b. Another important factor to consider is your timeline and budget. Dreams of a custom, integrated online training program can be dashed by a scant budget and a tight timeline. Be realistic with both and consider the long-term training needs of both new and existing employees.
 - c. Consider the following topic areas in your employee training plan. Determine who needs which topic, when and at what level of competency.
 - i. Job/task performance
 - ii. Company food safety policies and procedures
 - iii. Good Manufacturing Practices, including regulatory compliance
 - iv. Cleaning and sanitation procedures
 - v. HACCP overview, and specific roles within the HACCP plan
 - vi. Bio security and food defense
 - vii. Chemical control
 - viii. Hazard communication
 - ix. Foodborne pathogens
 - x. Allergen management
 - xi. Emergency preparedness
2. Choose the delivery method
 - a. Any training delivery method is perfectly acceptable if used properly. Work instructions are the most simple and cost-effective method for training employees, but electronic delivery methods such as videos and online training courses are appealing for their added value in record-keeping tools and repeatability of delivery.
 - i. The SQF Code requires that work instructions be available for all employees who carry out tasks that are part of the SQF System, for example if they



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contribute to meeting regulatory compliance or if they are assigned to monitor a CCP.

- ii. Instructions can be provided in a number of ways such as:
 1. Written work instructions may be useful when a particular task is complicated (i.e., requiring skilled operators) or repetitive (e.g., mundane work that generally results in a high turnover of staff and requires a constant training effort). These instructions can serve as a valuable training reference when staff needs to check the correct way of doing a task. Written instructions can be in the form of pre-requisite programs (refer to 2.3.1 i) and will be available (if practical) where the task is performed.
 2. Simple paper photos and diagrams can be particularly useful to overcome language barriers or when a task involves a number of different steps.
 3. Downloadable tip sheets are useful tools when basic information is needed. They provide a starting point for the development of critical food safety system-related programs and are often handy overviews of key topics.
 4. A variety of online or electronic training tools are available for purchase by the site. To determine the right training program for your site and your employees, look back at your training needs analysis; this will tell you what topics need to be covered, who needs to be trained, and when. It is helpful to recall your training budget and timeline since these tools can be costly to purchase and maintain and time-consuming to implement.
 5. Tried and true instructor-led training is only as good as the trainer. Reflect on your training needs analysis, budget and timeline when choosing a training provider. Whether the training is conducted in-house by your training team or team leads or by an outsourced training provider, be sure the trainer has the demonstrated skills - sometimes known as competencies to conduct effective training.
3. Plan and conduct refresher training
 - a. The site must provide refresher training as appropriate. This may be on an annual basis, start of a new season, or as changes occur to the product, process or SQF System, or if the site through their monitoring identifies if the process has gotten off track.
 - b. Consider using on-going coaching in addition to single-event training to ensure employees are on track at all times.
4. Document the training program and training conducted
 - a. The training program
 - i. Document your needs assessment, the identified competencies, job duties and training methods applied.
 - ii. If you developed your training program in-house, you will want to document what you did to develop the tools and keep a copy of the training materials; if you use an outside training resource, again, document the process you used



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to decide on them and have on hand where you can access the course agenda and training materials.

- b. Training skills register
 - i. A training skills register is a file of training records. Training records must identify training applied, skills gained, and the assessment applied to ensure the competency was acquired. The training register must comply with the training program (2.9.2), which meets the requirements of the training needs analysis (2.9.1).
 - ii. The site is required by the SQF Code to prepare a staff training skills register and document who is trained and when they were trained to do a particular task. This may be in the form of a formal training file for permanent staff detailing training undertaken and signed and dated by the subject employee, or a training matrix may be used to keep track of large or rotational labor teams. Whichever form is used, the training register should identify:
 1. The trainee participant;
 2. The skill or knowledge applied;
 3. The type of training provided;
 4. Date of training;
 5. Training provider (e.g., internal or external);
 6. Competency assessment (generally by the immediate supervisor).
5. Verify learner competency
 - a. Just because the employee was trained doesn't mean they are able to perform the task. This is why it's critical to verify the employee's competency, or ability to perform the task consistently. Witnessing the employee conduct the task on the job is one way to assess competency. To ensure they do it correctly all the time, consider re-evaluating the employee over time and provide coaching as necessary.

RELEVANT RESOURCES

- Association for Talent Development
<https://www.td.org/>
- Workable – How to Build Your First Employee Training Program
<https://resources.workable.com/tutorial/employee-training-program>