

University of Utah

COLLEGE SAFETY COMMITTEES

The purpose of this document is to establish the requirements, justification, objectives, scope, and structure of University of Utah college safety committees.

All colleges at the University of Utah are required to establish, support, and maintain active safety committees. The primary goal of these committees is to promote a *culture of safety* across campus. Safety is a broad topic that encompasses research, field work, and day-to-day operations. The work of the safety committees is intended to eliminate or minimize workplace injuries and illnesses and ensure regulatory compliance by involving students, employees, and managers in the process of creating and maintaining a safe work environment. Following safe practices in every environment, in the field, in the lab, in the office, and even during personal time, leads to greater efficiency, improved productivity, higher quality research, and an enhanced sense of well being.

University Commitment to Form Safety Committees and Policy Basis

The University of Utah committed to establishing safety committees in direct response to the State of Utah audit findings contained in “*A Performance Audit of the University of Utah’s Laboratory Safety Practices, (Report No. 2019-04)*.” The specific audit recommendation and the University official response are below:

Audit Recommendation V-2: *We recommend the use of safety committees made up of faculty for individual departments or colleges to provide peer-reviews and technical knowledge.*

University of Utah Response: *Agreed. The University is committed to establishing a system of safety committees within all colleges and departments, as appropriate. These committees will be made up of technical peers and experts, with assistance from EHS safety professionals.*

The to-be-established Laboratory Safety Sub-Committee of the Health and Safety Committee will include representatives from the college and department safety committees.

In addition, the University of Utah Lab Safety Culture Task Force released a report in June 2019, also recommending the formation of safety committees:

Committees: *We recommend that the University should establish a committee structure that supports communication and review of safety policies and procedures from the faculty to the President.*

We recommend a committee structure based on the traditional management structure at the university (department-college-university)...

These recommendations recognize that the use of safety committees in complex organizations is considered a “best practice” and a proven way to encourage a culture of safety and improve safety performance.

The formation of safety committees is directly addressed in University of Utah Policy 3-300 *University Health and Safety Policy*:

Section III.B.4 Safety related (sub) committees may be established by individual organizational units and/or by the Campus Health and Safety Committees as required to achieve the objectives of this policy.

Establishment of College Safety Committees and Reporting

All colleges must establish, support, and maintain active safety committees. In recognition of the differences in size, complexity, research, and inherent hazards amongst colleges, flexibility is afforded as to how this requirement is implemented, as outlined below.

- Safety committees are required at the college level with reporting responsibilities to the Dean
- Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) personnel will provide technical staff support to college safety committees
- For colleges with limited hazards that typically do not exceed those found in a normal office environment:
 - The responsibilities of the college safety committee may be assigned to an individual “safety coordinator” or “safety officer” in place of a committee
 - Alternatively, the safety committee responsibilities may be assigned to a previously existing committee
 - In both cases, assignment of safety committee responsibilities to an individual or existing committee must be explicit and documented
- Large or complex colleges with significant hazards (e.g., chemical, biological, radiological, physical in the form of compressed gasses, extremes in temperature and/or pressure, and/or use of equipment that poses high potential for bodily harm) are encouraged to establish safety committees at the School, Department, or Program level, as appropriate
 - The number and organization of sub-college committees should be commensurate with the existing hazards and be reflective of the college structure
 - The intent is for committees to be established at levels that maximize their effectiveness in carrying out the committee responsibilities
 - The chairs of these committees are expected to serve on the overall college safety committee
- The chairs of the college safety committees will be members of a campus-wide “Campus Laboratory Safety Committee,” where appropriate
- The overall safety committee structure is shown below in Figure 1

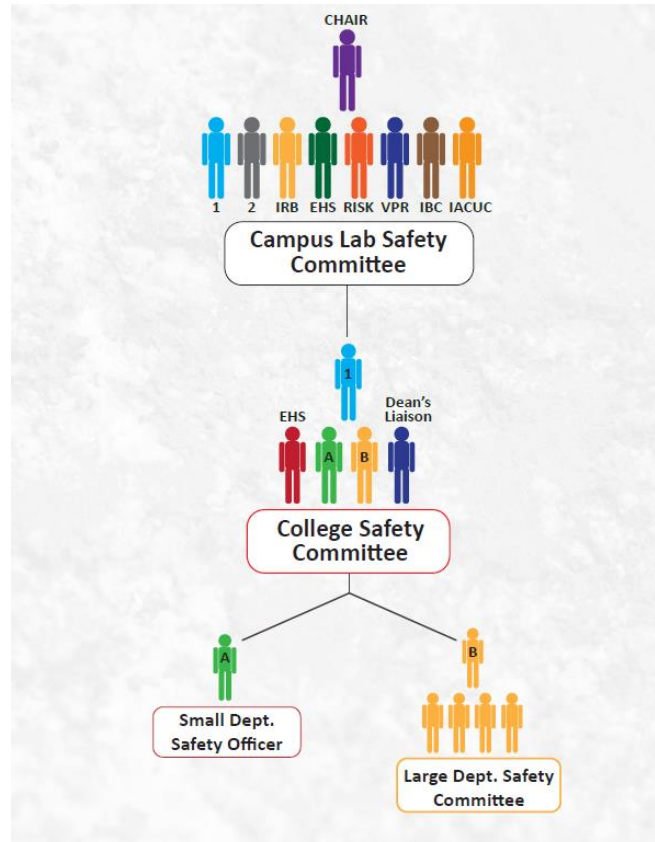


Figure 1. General Organization of University of Utah Safety Committees

Safety Committee Functions and Responsibilities

The primary functions and responsibilities of college safety committees are:

1. Provide assistance to the Dean/Director in fulfilling college/department-level health and safety responsibilities
2. Provide peer-to-peer safety consultation and review of existing or proposed operations with respect to health and safety and compliance with University policies
3. Serve as the primary point-of-contact/liasion with Environmental Health and Safety to facilitate implementation of campus-wide health and safety requirements at the college/department level; also serve as primary contact for campus Emergency Management.
4. Meet routinely, such as quarterly or monthly
5. Provide a local mechanism for faculty, staff, and students to raise health and safety issues and concerns

6. Involve employees and students in achieving a safe, healthful workplace; educate managers, supervisors, employees, and students through awareness and training activities that they are primarily responsible for the prevention of workplace incidents.
7. Promptly review all safety-related incidents, injuries, and illnesses within the college, in coordination with EHS
8. Conduct periodic peer-to-peer workplace/laboratory inspections, identify hazards, recommend methods for eliminating or controlling the hazards, and assist college PIs and laboratories in implementing effective corrective actions for identified deficiencies.
9. Participate with EHS in conducting laboratory inspections and verifying corrective actions
10. Evaluate workplace health and safety processes and recommend improvements

Safety committees are expected to work closely with Environmental Health and Safety in implementing health and safety requirements within colleges, facilitating peer-to-peer safety inspections, and ensuring effective corrective actions. This relationship is shown schematically in Figure 2.

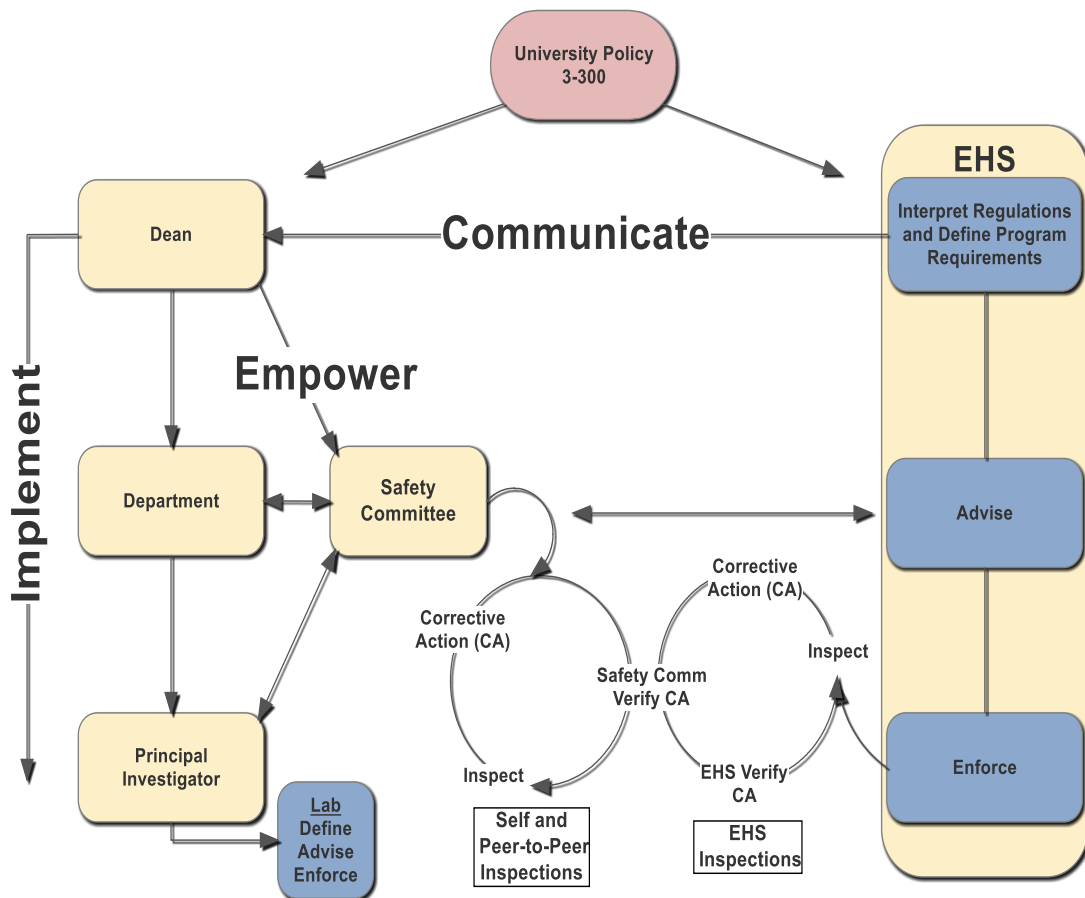


Figure 2. Relationship of Safety Committees and EHS

Safety Committee Membership

The size and membership of safety committees should be commensurate with the risks and hazards that exist within the college and reflect the scope and breadth of work conducted. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Committees should include faculty, staff, and students
- Members should be appointed by the Dean for a set time period, such as 3 years
- The Chair should be appointed by the Dean
- Faculty members should represent the various departments within the college, if departmental safety committee's exist within the College the chair of the departmental safety committee should represent their Department on the College safety committee.
- A management (Dean's office) representative, should be on the committee. This should be a non-voting member of the committee whose purpose is to facilitate provision of needed resources for the committee and provide a direct link to the Dean/Director for support of safety committee initiatives.
- EHS will provide a non-voting representative to all committee meetings

Specific terms of service, roles, and responsibilities should be addressed in a safety committee charter (a template is available from EHS).