

Pennsylvania Workplace Safety Committees and the 5% Workers' Compensation Premium Credit

A practical guide to qualifying for the credit, building a compliant committee, and turning the requirement into a prevention-first risk management tool.

Prepared for Business Owners, CFOs, and Risk Management Professionals

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Note: This white paper is educational in nature and should be reviewed against current Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry guidance before implementation.

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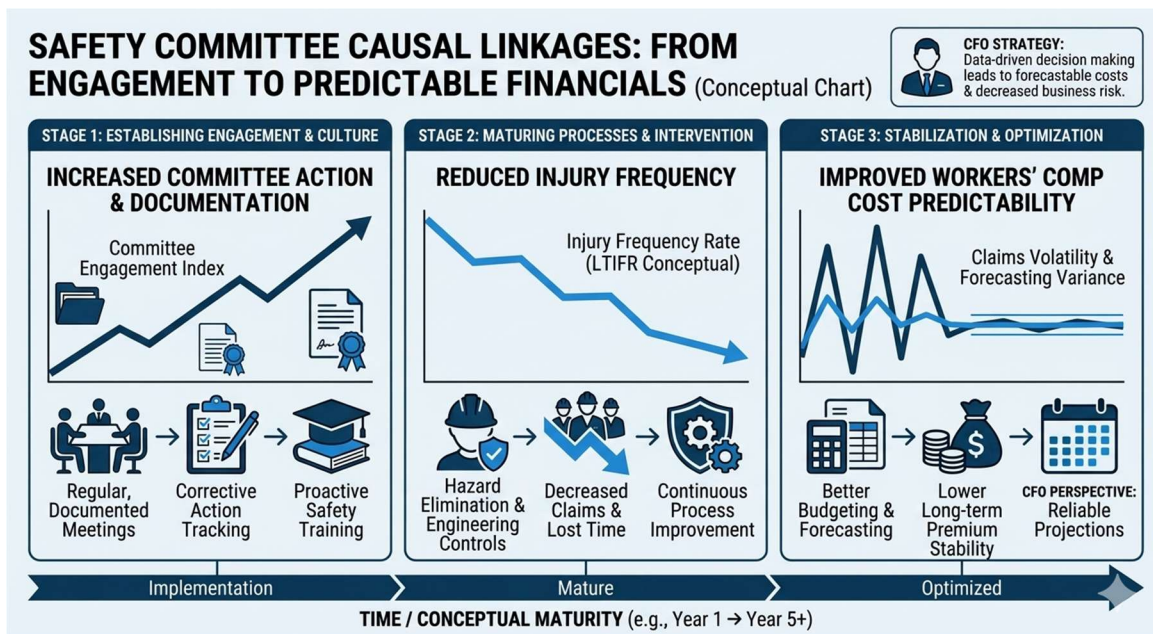
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1. Executive Summary

Pennsylvania offers a 5% workers' compensation premium discount to employers that establish and maintain a state-certified workplace safety committee. The program is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, Bureau of Workers' Compensation, Health & Safety Division. The discount is applied through the employer's workers' compensation carrier after certification is approved and provided to the carrier.

The 5% premium credit is valuable, but the larger opportunity is using the safety committee as a repeatable operating system for identifying hazards, correcting issues, documenting improvement, and proving to underwriters that the business manages risk better than average.

At its best, the program does more than reduce premium. A properly run committee creates a recurring management process for identifying hazards, investigating incidents, correcting unsafe conditions, and documenting that the employer is actively managing risk. That documentation can support better outcomes with claims, regulatory compliance, employee trust, and underwriting conversations.



Key Takeaway

Treat the committee as a small operating system for risk reduction, not simply as a paperwork requirement for a 5% premium credit. The premium credit is immediate and measurable; the larger business value comes from fewer injuries, fewer disruptions, better documentation, and improved predictability.

2. Program Overview: What the Credit Is and Why It Exists

What the program provides

Pennsylvania's State-Certified Workplace Safety Committee Program allows qualifying employers to receive a 5% annual workers' compensation premium discount. Employers must create a workplace safety committee, operate it according to state certification requirements, and apply for certification through Pennsylvania's Workers' Compensation Automation and Integration System (WCAIS).

Who oversees and approves the credit

The program is overseen by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry through the Bureau of Workers' Compensation, Health & Safety Division. The Bureau reviews certification applications and issues approvals. After approval, the employer provides the certification to its workers' compensation carrier so the 5% credit can be applied at renewal.



Why the program exists

The policy goal is accident and illness prevention. By encouraging employers to create joint employer/employee safety committees, the state incentivizes a structured process for identifying workplace hazards, reviewing incidents, improving communication, and correcting unsafe conditions. The program is designed to move safety from informal reaction to formal, recurring prevention.

3. Evidence and Practical Injury-Prevention Impact

Available program data shows significant employer participation and premium savings. Pennsylvania's 2026 impact reporting identified approximately \$958.8 million in total employer premium savings, 5,529 currently certified committees, 13,608 cumulatively initially certified committees, and approximately 1.68 million employees represented by certified committees.

However, the most important risk-management distinction is that the credit itself does not prevent injuries. The committee prevents injuries only when it functions as a real operating discipline. A RAND evaluation of Pennsylvania's certified safety committee program found that participants overall did not show greater injury-rate reductions than similar nonparticipants. But among audited participants, better compliance was associated with better injury-rate outcomes than poor compliance.

That finding is highly practical: a committee that merely meets and files minutes may qualify for a credit but fail to create operational value. A committee that inspects, investigates, assigns corrective action, tracks completion, and follows up can become a meaningful prevention tool.

Practical interpretation

Committee Type	Typical Behavior	Likely Business Impact
Paper committee	Meets monthly but does little beyond minutes.	May preserve the credit, but weak injury-prevention value.
Compliance committee	Meets requirements, keeps training records, performs inspections.	Better documentation and lower risk of certification problems.
Prevention-first committee	Uses claims trends, near misses, inspections, root-cause reviews, and corrective-action tracking.	Stronger chance of reducing injuries, improving predictability, and supporting underwriting outcomes.

Table 1. The committee's business value depends on the quality of execution, not merely certification.



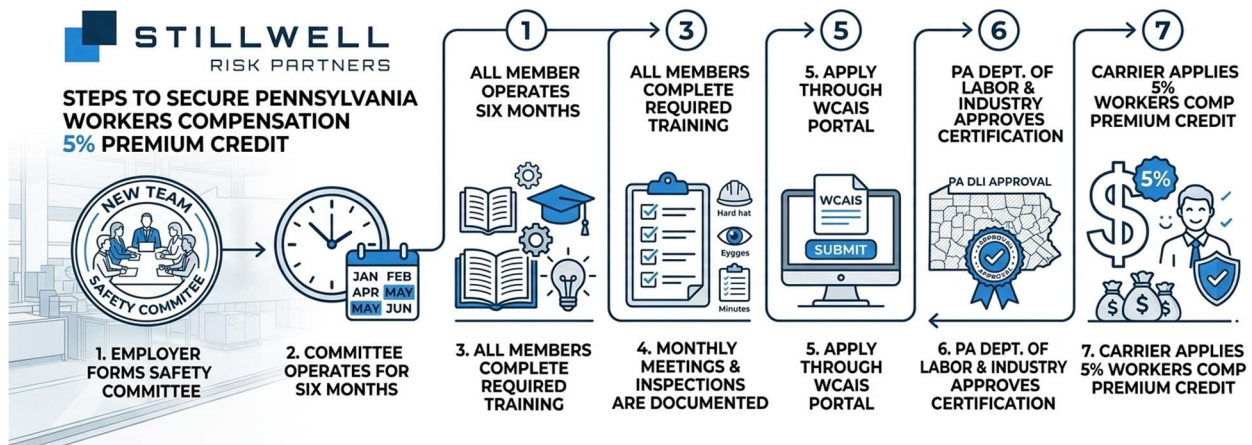
4. Qualification Requirements at a Glance

The following summary is intended as a practical implementation reference. Employers should verify details against current Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry guidance before applying.

1. **Establish a workplace safety committee.** The committee must represent the employer's Pennsylvania workplace operations.
2. **Operate for six full consecutive calendar months before the initial application.** The application should not be submitted until the required operating period has been completed.
3. **Maintain required committee composition.** The committee generally must include at least two employer representatives and two employee representatives, with representation from the primary operations of the workplace.
4. **Hold monthly meetings.** Meetings should have quorum present and should be documented with agendas, attendance, and minutes.
5. **Train committee members annually.** Training should cover required safety committee topics and workplace-specific hazards.
6. **Maintain documentation.** Keep bylaws, rosters, agendas, attendance records, minutes, training records, inspection forms, incident reviews, hazard reports, and corrective-action tracking.
7. **Submit through WCAIS within the required window.** Initial applications generally must be submitted between 90 and 30 days before the workers' compensation renewal date.
8. **Provide approval to the workers' compensation carrier.** The carrier applies the 5% credit at the next renewal following approval.

Implementation Timing Warning

The application window and the six-month operating requirement create a timing trap. Employers should start well before renewal. A practical planning rule is to begin at least 8 to 9 months before the workers' compensation renewal date.



5. Step-by-Step Implementation Guide

Step 1: Confirm the workers' compensation renewal timeline

Identify the policy renewal date and work backward. The committee must operate for six full consecutive calendar months before the initial application is submitted, and the application must fall within the state's pre-renewal submission window.

Step 2: Choose the committee structure

For one location, one committee is usually sufficient. For multiple Pennsylvania locations, consider whether separate committees or a centralized committee best represents the operations. Larger or higher-risk operations may benefit from local committees plus a central safety steering group.

Step 3: Select committee members

Include both employer and employee representatives. Select people who understand the real work: operations, production, warehouse, field crews, fleet, HR, maintenance, and supervision. Avoid a management-heavy committee that limits employee voice.

Step 4: Adopt simple committee bylaws or operating procedures

Document the committee's purpose, membership rules, meeting schedule, quorum, officer roles, inspection responsibilities, incident review procedures, hazard reporting process, corrective-action tracking, and recordkeeping responsibilities.

Step 5: Complete annual committee training

Train all members on hazard detection, workplace inspections, accident and illness prevention, incident investigation, safety committee structure and operation, substance abuse and opioid-related issues, and safety topics specific to the business.

Step 6: Establish monthly meeting discipline

Use a recurring agenda. Review prior action items, incidents, near misses, inspections, employee reports, training needs, and upcoming risks. Assign responsible people and due dates for every meaningful issue.

Step 7: Implement periodic inspections

Create inspection checklists by area and risk type. High-risk areas may require monthly inspections; lower-risk office areas may be reviewed quarterly. Document findings and corrective actions.

Step 8: Create a hazard reporting channel

Use a paper form, email inbox, QR code, safety app, or text-based tool. The system should be easy for employees to use and should support non-punitive reporting.

Step 9: Review incidents and near misses

Investigate work-related injuries, illnesses, near misses, and safety complaints. Focus on root cause rather than blame. Ask what work condition, process, training issue, equipment issue, or management system failure allowed the incident to occur.

Step 10: Track corrective actions to closure

Maintain a live corrective-action log. Every finding should have an owner, due date, completion status, and follow-up verification where appropriate.

Step 11: Maintain records for five years

Keep all committee, training, inspection, hazard-reporting, incident-review, and corrective-action documentation in a central file. Treat the file as audit-ready.

Step 12: Submit the certification application through WCAIS

Complete the initial certification application through Pennsylvania's WCAIS system. Monitor for approval, denial, or requests for additional information.

Step 13: Send approval to the workers' compensation carrier

Once approved, provide the certification documentation to the carrier so the 5% premium credit can be applied at renewal.

Step 14: Renew annually and keep operating

Do not stop after certification. Continue monthly meetings, annual training, inspections, incident reviews, and documentation. Renewal requires attesting that the committee continues to operate properly.

6. Documentation Checklist

The committee should be managed as an audit-ready documentation system. The following checklist can be used as a practical file structure.

- **Committee formation:** Bylaws or operating procedures; committee roster; employer and employee representative designations; workplace/location representation.
- **Meeting records:** Monthly agenda; attendance sheet; minutes; prior action item review; management responses; next meeting date.
- **Training records:** Training date; member names; trainer name and qualifications; training organization; training method; duration; topics covered; proof of completion.
- **Inspection records:** Area inspected; date; inspector names; hazards found; severity; recommended correction; owner; due date; completion date; before/after photos where useful.



- **Hazard reports:** Employee reports, committee reports, supervisor observations, anonymous reports if used, and disposition of each item.
- **Incident and near-miss reviews:** Event description; root-cause analysis; corrective actions; training implications; equipment or procedure changes; follow-up verification.
- **Corrective-action log:** Central tracker showing open, completed, overdue, and verified items.
- **Certification records:** WCAIS application, approval letter, renewal affidavit, carrier correspondence, and annual recertification file.

Sample corrective-action tracker

Finding	Recommended Action	Owner	Due Date	Status	Verification
Extension cord across walkway	Reroute cord or install overhead drop	Maintenance	5/15	Open	Photo after completion
Forklift/pedestrian near miss	Refresh traffic plan and retrain employees	Warehouse supervisor	5/30	In progress	Review after 30 days
Back strains in shipping	Evaluate lift assist and revise team-lift procedure	Operations manager	6/10	Open	Track strain reports

Table 2. Example corrective-action tracker. The core discipline is assigning ownership and verifying completion.

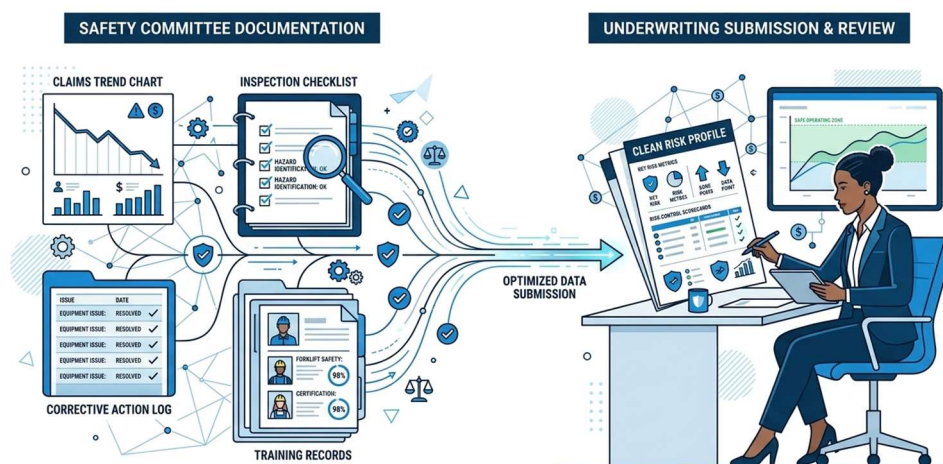
7. Best Practices Beyond Minimum Compliance

The following practices help transform the committee from a premium-credit exercise into a stronger risk management process.

- **Tie the agenda to loss trends.** Use claims, OSHA logs, near misses, and incident reports to prioritize committee work.
- **Track leading indicators.** Measure inspections completed, hazards reported, corrective actions closed on time, training completion, near-miss reports, and supervisor observations.
- **Use near misses as free lessons.** Review serious near misses before they become claims.
- **Require written management responses.** Each recommendation should be accepted, modified, deferred, or declined with documented reasoning.
- **Rotate inspection teams.** Pair employee and management representatives, and rotate areas to create fresh perspective.
- **Connect findings to training.** When repeated hazards appear, assign training and review whether job design, staffing, equipment, or supervision also need to change.
- **Set annual safety goals.** Examples include reducing lost-time claims, closing corrective actions faster, increasing hazard reporting, and reducing repeat findings.
- **Use documentation with underwriters.** Clean safety committee records can support the story that the business manages risk better than average.
- **Evaluate whether corrective actions worked.** After a fix is implemented, follow up to determine whether the hazard was actually reduced.

Underwriting Value

A mature safety committee creates credible proof of risk control. That proof can be useful when telling the employer's story to carriers, especially when the employer has complex operations, loss activity, growth, or pricing pressure.



8. Selected Sources

The following sources were used to support the program description, qualification requirements, and injury-prevention discussion.

Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry - State-Certified Workplace Safety Committee Program FAQs.

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dli/resources/for-employers-and-educators/workers--compensation-for-employers/workers--compensation-compliance/workplace-safety-committee-certification-faqs/state-certified-workplace-safety-committee-program>

Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry - Apply for a Workplace Safety Committee Certification.

<https://www.pa.gov/services/dli/apply-for-a-workplace-safety-committee-certification>

Pennsylvania Code, Chapter 129, Subchapter F - Workplace Safety Committees.

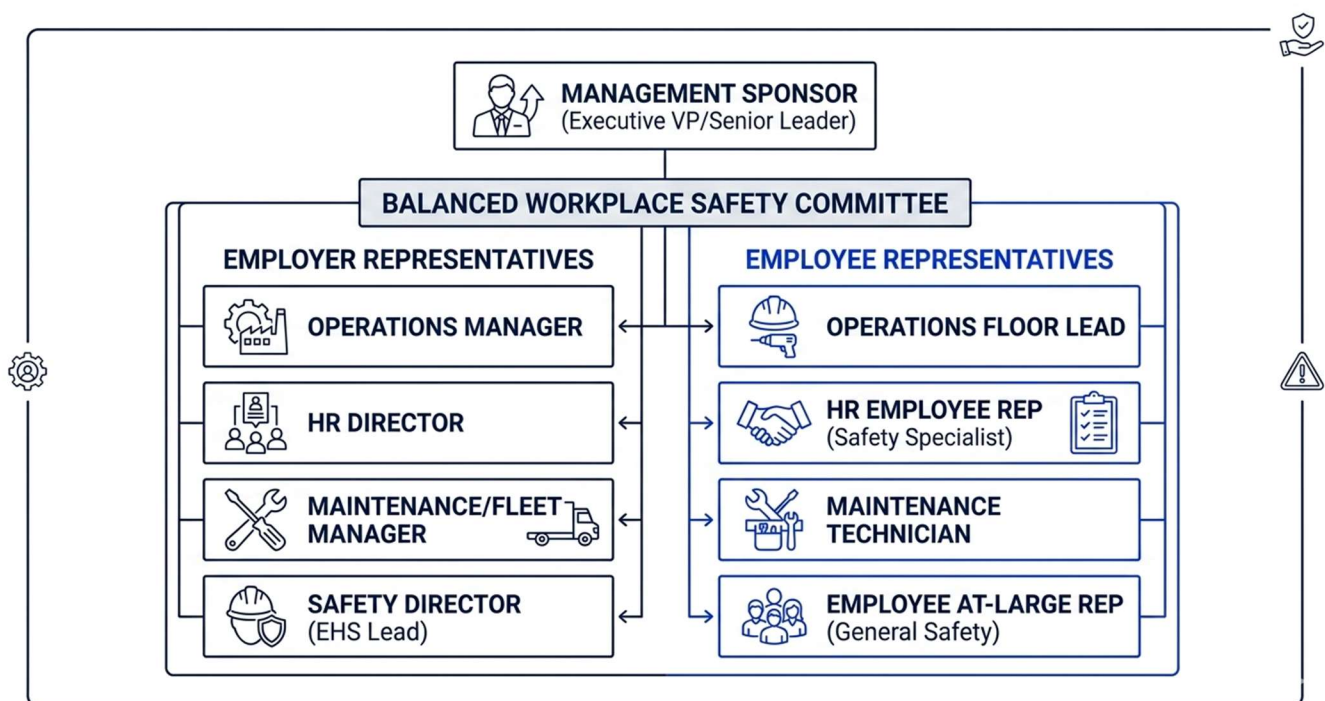
<https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?d=&file=%2Fsecure%2Fpacode%2Fdata%2F034%2Fchapter129%2FsubchapFtoc.html>

Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry - Workplace Safety Committee Certification Impact and

Performance Report. <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dli/documents/businesses/compensation/wc/safety/committee/documents/workplace-safety-committee-certification-impact-and-performance-report.pdf>

RAND Corporation - The Impact of Workplace Safety Committees in Pennsylvania.

https://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/WR594.html



Appendix: One-Page Implementation Checklist

- Confirm workers compensation renewal date.
- Work backward to allow six full consecutive calendar months of committee operation before application.
- Select at least two employer representatives and two employee representatives.
- Confirm committee represents primary operations and Pennsylvania workplaces.
- Create bylaws or written operating procedures.
- Schedule monthly meetings for the full year.
- Complete annual required committee training.
- Create standard agenda, attendance sheet, and minutes template.
- Create inspection checklist and inspection schedule.
- Create hazard reporting process for employees.
- Create incident and near-miss review process.
- Create corrective-action log with owner, due date, status, and verification.
- Maintain records in a central file for five years.
- Submit application through WCAIS in the required pre-renewal window.
- Provide approval to workers compensation carrier for credit application.
- Continue monthly committee operation and renew certification annually.

ROADMAP TO PA CERTIFIED WORKPLACE SAFETY COMMITTEE WORKPLACE SAFETY COMMITTEE

14-STEP GUIDE FOR RISK MANAGEMENT white paper

