

WHAT is a safety culture?
ADOPTING a safety culture in the pest industry
COME HOME SAFE campaign

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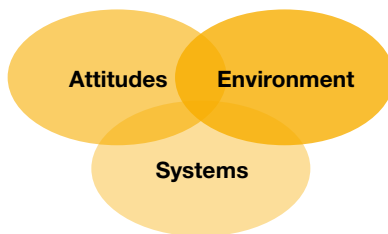
ISSUE 04

WHAT is a safety culture?

A good safety culture in a workplace exists when safety and health is understood to be, and is accepted as, a high priority. Safety and health does not exist in a vacuum isolated from other aspects of organisations such as people and financial management. Safety culture is an integral part of the overall corporate culture.

What factors in the workplace contribute towards establishing a good safety culture?

It is not possible to graft a safety culture onto an organisation, as each organisation is unique, and the best safety systems in the world will fail without a supportive culture.



Attitudes, both personal and organisational, affect the development of a safety culture in a workplace. The environment in which people work and the systems and processes in an organisation also influence the safety culture. Each organisation needs to consider all of these aspects in developing and nurturing a safety culture that suits the organisation and the individuals within it.

A number of factors contribute to a good safety culture:

1. Commitment at all levels.
2. Safety and health is treated as an investment not a cost.
3. Safety and health is part of continuous improvement.

4. Training and information is provided for everyone.
5. A system for workplace analysis and hazard prevention and control is in place.
6. The environment in which people work is blame free.
7. The organisation celebrates successes.

How do I develop a safety culture in my workplace?

To develop a safety culture, change needs to be driven from the highest levels. The extent to which you can influence the organisation largely depends on your place within the hierarchy.

The first place to start is to talk about the issue to senior management through existing communications structures such as:

- team meetings;
- strategic planning sessions;
- safety and health representative networks; and
- safety and health committees.

Use existing information to support your arguments such as:

- accident/incident rates;
- workers compensation costs;
- absenteeism rates;

- numbers of reported hazards;
- the existence (or lack of) OSH supporting structures and programs; and
- budget allocation to safety and health initiatives from annual reports etc.

If you have commitment from senior management then the next step is to plan to move forward from there.

The WorkSafe Plan assists organisations to implement a risk management approach to safety and health in the workplace. Many of the elements contained within the plan are those that make up a positive safety culture in an organisation.

WorkSafe Plan can be used to:

- provide information on desirable safety management practices;
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of management systems;
- provide a measure for safety performance; and
- direct attention to areas that could be improved.

WorkSafe Plan encourages the continuous improvement of safety performance as part of a best practice approach to safety management. The WorkSafe Plan is suitable for organisations of all sizes.

The theme of this year's Perth Work Safe 2007 forum will be **Creating a Safety Culture**. For more information on attending this forum please contact DOCEP's Promotional Team on 9327 8781 or email promotions@docep.wa.gov.au



ADOPTING a safety culture in the pest industry

Statistics have shown that many workers in the pest industry take safety and health risks.

WorkSafe has met with Pest Education Services and Training (PEST) to discuss ways to improve safety in the pest management industry. With education as their focus, risk management and OSH is now a major component of PEST's competency based training.

A recent study highlighted the following most common risk areas for pest control operators.

Chemical hazards

Fifty eight per cent of pest control operators have reported that they have spilt chemical concentrate at least once a week.

Purchasing chemicals in packaging with metered dosage will reduce this hazard. Chemicals should be mixed outdoors or in a well-ventilated area and if possible, low toxicity chemicals should be used.

The risk of chemical exposure increases if a hand held nozzle is used, or if the chemical is sprayed in a small space. Workers must have access to, and be familiar with, the labelling and material safety data sheet (MSDS) of all the chemicals they use.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

According to the study in the last six months, 74 per cent of pest operators had splashed diluted chemicals into their eyes and 48 per cent used the wrong type of gloves, or no gloves.

Of major concern is the lack of knowledge pest control operators have on the life of a filter canister in respirators. Their effectiveness is often only between 30 minutes to a few hours, not days or months.

Most pesticides have a cumulative (long term) effect, therefore it is very important to read the label and the MSDS to determine the best PPE to use and following the manufacturer's instructions for maintaining the PPE.

In general, a respirator with appropriate filter canisters, impervious boots, cotton long sleeved overalls, a broad

rim washable hat (the scalp has large numbers of blood vessels so a hat will decrease absorption of chemicals) and gloves should be used. Workers should use goggles or a face shield when spraying and a full-face shield and rubber apron when mixing chemicals.

Hygiene

It is important for workers to wash their hands after contact with chemicals.

The study showed only 26 per cent of pest control operators wash their hands after using chemicals, and 30 per cent of workers have wiped their face while using chemicals. As some workplaces do not have ready access to running water, it is recommended to keep a 20 litre container of water in the vehicle specifically for hygiene.

Workers should only use overalls for one shift, then soak them for 24 hours and wash separately to other clothes. They should shower with soap and shampoo at the end of each shift. Equipment and tools should be rinsed after use.

Emergency response plan

Workers should have a work procedure for chemical fires or spills.

Working alone

Workers in the pest control industry are reportedly concerned about working

alone. It is important to maintain regular contact with the office and workers should keep a mobile phone or duress alarm on them at all times.

Unsafe workplaces

Careful planning and training in risk analysis can help workers to avoid hazards in the workplace. These include unsafe electrical wiring, lead and asbestos, structurally unsound roof spaces and constrained spaces where it is difficult to maintain a good posture.

Biological hazards

Workers can be at risk of exposure to bites, scratches, stings, allergens, animal excrement and fungal spores. It is important to have regular tetanus vaccines and first aid training to treat wounds and bites.

Physical hazards

Carrying 20 litre containers of chemicals on and off vehicles and from vehicles to buildings is a manual handling hazard. It is also important to avoid jumping from utilities as injuries frequently occur when workers land awkwardly.

Where workers are working at heights, some form of fall arrest system should be in place.

For more information go to www.worksafe.wa.gov.au → safety topics.

SAFETY FOR PEOPLE WITH LANGUAGE OR LITERACY ISSUES

Employers of workers with language and literacy issues are still required under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* to provide a safe system of work in which workers are not exposed to hazards.

The Act does not require people to speak or read English, but it does place a duty of care on the employer to ensure that all workers understand the hazards associated with the jobs being performed and are competent to perform the work.

Consideration of a worker's levels of understanding of written or verbal information should be factored into the induction process. This may mean translating information, such as MSDS's, Job Safety Analysis forms, work instructions etc into the person's first language, multi-lingual or picture signage in the workplace and using interpreters during training and instruction.

WorkSafe inspectors will enforce the provisions of the Act where safe systems of work are not in place for everyone in the workplace.

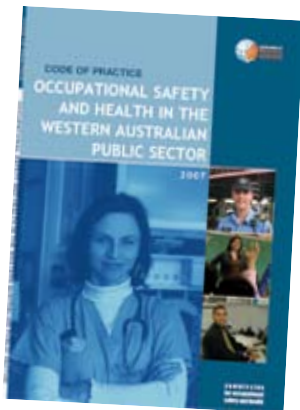
NEW safety code promotes cultural change in the public sector

Australia's first safety code aimed to protect workers in the public sector has been launched by DOCEP Director General, Brian Bradley.

Mr Bradley described the *Code of Practice: Occupational Safety and Health in the Public Sector* as a way to bring about significant cultural change in the public sector.

"The Code allows the State Government to demonstrate its commitment to the safety and welfare of all its employees," he said. "It sets the standards for safety and health management across the entire sector so the Government can lead the way in building a culture of safety in the workplace.

The public sector is Western Australia's biggest employer with more than 120,000 people. The direct cost of compensation claims in the public sector in 2006 was \$54 million – equivalent to the cost of six new primary schools or 326 extra front-line police officers.



Indirect costs such as lost production, medical costs, administration costs and the cost in taxation dollars of injured and sick people leaving the workforce, would push the figure up to \$273 million.

Mr Bradley said workplace culture and safety culture were influenced by senior management. Research indicates the importance of leadership, and employees'

perceptions of their leaders, in the formation of a more positive safety culture and reduction in accidents.

"The compelling reason for raising standards in occupational safety and health, and injury management, is the humane reason. Working towards a culture change which incorporates better occupational safety and health management is another reason why this Code is important."

The code applies to all agencies, including departments, trading concerns, instrumentalities and statutory bodies.

For more information go to www.publicsectorsafety.wa.gov.au

STRONG SAFETY CULTURE AT CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Churches of Christ Homes and Community Services Incorporated has been recognised for its strong OSH culture where safety and health is accepted as a high priority

A WorkSafe Plan Platinum Certificate of Achievement has recently been awarded to two of its aged care facilities, Bethanie House in South Perth and RiverSea Lodge in Mosman Park.

Wayne Belcher, Chief Executive said: "It is a great achievement and we are very proud but we still have more to do across our whole organisation."

Churches of Christ demonstrated a strong level of management commitment to a safe and healthy workplace. As part of this commitment, OSH considerations are fundamental to the operational and administrative functions within the organisation, including the establishment of new facilities.

Key features of the risk management process include regular consultation between colleagues and communication of OSH policies. There is also documentation and review of all incidents and near misses in order to continuously improve control measures. With the most common injury in aged care homes being lower back injuries, the organisation's 'no lift policy' is reinforced by manual handling training and information given to staff.

The systems that exist support each other and also address other people affected within the workplace. For example, the Managing Visitor's policy is directed towards clients, their families and anyone else entering the workplace.

On being acknowledged for their proactive safety culture, Mr Belcher said: "Recruitment and retention of staff is an issue in our industry and having good OSH management means that staff feel that they are cared for and listened to, and that increases job satisfaction and retention of valued staff members."

More information on establishing safe systems of work and a copy of the WorkSafe Plan can be downloaded from our website at

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au → Resources → Publications → Additional Publications → the WorkSafe Plan Workbook

COME HOME SAFE campaign

The most important reason to make your workplace safe is not at work at all.

On average 57 Western Australian people are injured at work each day.

To raise awareness of the importance of workplace safety, WorkSafe is launching a state-wide television and radio campaign in September and October 2007. The campaign supports the State strategic plan priority of Safer Communities.

The campaign focuses on the importance of arriving home safely from work and features children and family members waiting for loved ones to come home from work.

It aims to make workplaces safer by achieving a positive change in workplace safety culture and practices. The campaign has a website, www.worksafe.wa.gov.au/comehomesafe, printed campaign posters and other information products.

Contact WorkSafe on 1300 307 877 to receive a campaign pack.



REGIONAL inspectors assist bakeries

WorkSafe will be inspecting bakeries in regional areas with the aim of reducing the rate of lost time injuries and diseases in the industry.

WorkSafe inspectors will be focussing on the following OSH legislation requirements:

- Guarding of machinery including dough mixing machines.
- Manual handling.
- Slips, trips and falls – falls on the same level.
- Provision of training and induction of new and young workers.
- Hazardous substances – provision

of material safety data sheets (MSDS), risk assessments, and training for the range of chemical products used by all staff.

- Provision of personal protective equipment.

To assist bakeries to meet their OSH obligations WorkSafe has released a bulletin focusing on safety issues in this industry. For a copy, go to www.worksafe.wa.gov.au → publications → bulletin



CHROME PLATING workplaces to establish a safety culture

The OSH hazards associated with chrome plating include exposure risks from carcinogenic and corrosive substances and the risk of injuries from slips, trips and falls, electrical hazards and forklift work.

In general chrome plating firms are small to medium size businesses without specific OSH resources and are generally focussed on production.

WorkSafe recently visited 17 electroplating workplaces, primarily chrome platers, in order to assess OSH management in the industry with particular reference to hexavalent chromium exposure control, hazardous substances management and other areas such as use of forklifts, personal preventative equipment and guarding.

Some workplaces were managing their OSH issues well. Generally these workplaces had some form of consultation with employees occurring through elected safety and health representatives or tool box meetings with all staff, and conducted weekly

clean-ups and weekly or monthly walk-through inspections. Their safety culture resulted in higher OSH compliance levels and an expected decrease in injuries and illnesses with potentially lower workers' compensation costs. However, the general level of OSH awareness and management throughout the electroplating industry needed significant improvement.

The main issues identified were:

- inadequate identification, assessment and control of hazardous substances hazards – workplaces were not conducting the required health surveillance (medicals) for people exposed to hexavalent chromium;
- that 'brown-out' events where chromic acid mist is released in high levels due to failure of controls, occurs from time to time in workplaces without local extraction ventilation;
- trips, slips and falls, including potential falls into chemical tanks;
- use of forklifts; and
- the use of personal protective equipment.

The highest potential exposures to hexavalent chromium occur in the hard chrome plating industry followed by decorative chrome plating and to a lesser degree, zinc electroplating.

Key recommendations from WorkSafe inspectors for chrome plating employers include:

- Developing systems eg workplace inspections or toolbox meetings to manage OSH issues in consultation with employees.
- Chrome plating workplaces to note that local extraction ventilation in conjunction with automatic surfactant dosing and temperature control systems dosing represents best practice in control of atmospheric chromium. Where possible, workplaces should implement all of these controls.
- Where a local extraction ventilation system is installed, air flow is tested to ensure the capture velocity is adequate.
- The need for a plan to deal safely with a 'brown-out' event or loss of control when chrome mist levels in the breathing air are likely to be high.

For more information, refer to the guidance material *Controlling Hazards in the Electroplating Industry*, WorkSafe's website

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au or contact WorkSafe on 9327 8777 for further advice on OSH issues in the chrome plating industry.

SAFETYLINE 

Articles in SafetyLine are intended to stimulate discussion and/or provide information on OSH issues. They do not necessarily reflect the policy of WorkSafe or the Commission for Occupational Safety and Health.

This publication is available on request in other formats to assist people with special needs.