

NEW CODE for a healthy public sector
MSDS complies with National Code
WEB site revamped

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WHAT YOU think of WorkSafe

WorkSafe conducted a survey in 2007 asking a broad range of workplaces in Perth and regional towns what they knew and understood about OSH and the role of WorkSafe. The findings in general show a high awareness of OSH, WorkSafe and safety in some industries.

Findings

Over 95 per cent of workers surveyed said they had heard of WorkSafe and both employees and employers agreed that WorkSafe's key goals are caring for the safety of workers and providing guidance and assistance in OSH to WA workplaces.

However, WorkSafe is not widely acknowledged for its inspections and prosecutions role, but people do believe that policing is part of what WorkSafe does.

More than half of those surveyed believe that OSH laws are not relevant to their workplace. This is an area of concern. A key reason for this result appears to be connected with a lack of understanding of the law, with over half of these people revealing that they do not understand OSH laws and therefore assume the laws are not relevant to their workplace.

The research suggests that; 'As perceived understanding of the laws increases, the perception of relevance also increases'.

Both employers and employees place a reasonable priority on OSH in the workplace, with over 75 per cent of both giving it a six out of 10 or more for importance. However only 32.9 per cent of employers rated OSH a nine or 10 out of 10, showing it is not a 'top of the mind' issue for many employers.

A large percentage of employers underestimate the existing dangers in their workplaces. According to WorkSafe definitions of risk level, 37.3 per cent of workplaces operate in low risk environments, while 61.5 per cent of employers report that they perceive their workplaces to be low risk.

The most significant gaps between perceived risk and actual risk in workplaces tended to be in the industry groups of retail; accommodation, cafés and restaurants; and wholesale.

Other findings revealed that around 30 per cent of employers and employees do not have OSH mechanisms in their workplace. For those who do, an incident reporting system was nominated as the main formal mechanism.

In relation to raising OSH issues in the workplace, most employees indicated that they were comfortable with discussing any OSH concerns with their employers/managers.

There was a strong consensus that employees felt their concerns would be taken seriously if they raised them with employers.

Industry-specific statistics show that high risk industries are performing better in terms of OSH knowledge, with the most dangerous industries such as manufacturing, transport and storage, health and community services and construction showing higher levels of awareness, demonstrating that the work safe message is being heard.

Small businesses and the self employed continue to demonstrate low levels of OSH awareness. Survey findings show these groups have the lowest levels of confidence in their OSH performance, the lowest perception of risk and more than 30 per cent have no OSH mechanisms at all.

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Despite the wide reach of the ThinkSafe small business assistance program, the survey demonstrated there is still a low level of awareness of the availability of the program, with less than 15 per cent of eligible respondents being aware of its existence.

WorkSafe will be using the results of the survey to develop safety priorities for action.



SAFETY INITIATIVES in the WA public sector

The public sector is Western Australia's biggest employer and covers occupations as diverse as health carers, teachers, police and office workers. Many public servants face unique hazards. The sector has recorded fatalities.

To promote and encourage improved management of OSH in the public sector the government launched a website and code of practice in September 2007, demonstrating its commitment to the safety and welfare of its employees.

WorkSafe's initiative

WorkSafe has commenced a pilot wellness program to improve the health and welfare of its workers. The program aims to encourage employees to adopt healthier lifestyle options and promotes work-life balance.

As well as the obvious benefits for employees, WorkSafe hopes that with healthy, active employees it can achieve:

- reductions in workplace costs resulting from a decrease in absenteeism, workers compensation, staff turnover, workplace accidents and injury and job stress;
- improved productivity, corporate image, recruitment and retention of quality employees; and
- increased job satisfaction, enhanced motivation, greater commitment and improved employee morale.

The latest initiative is an eating for health, vitality and weight loss program. In the first two weeks of the program participants have lost a total of 39 kilos as a result of making positive changes to their lifestyle and eating habits.

WorkSafe will be hosting a **4thought lunchtime information session** on the public sector code of practice and occupational safety and health initiatives. For more information visit www.worksafe.wa.gov.au → Education → Lunchtime information sessions

Come home safe successful

WorkSafe's *Come home safe* campaign conducted in 2007 aimed to raise awareness of the importance of workplace safety and health through state-wide media advertisements. Overall, the response has been very positive.

The campaign evaluation showed that employers and employees increased their trust in WorkSafe and the organisation's value to workplaces.

As a result of the campaign more employers are acting on safety in their workplace, with increased numbers of people indicating they would recommend contacting WorkSafe for safety advice.

Findings also showed a belief that WorkSafe has made a difference in awareness of OSH, although individuals responded that the message has not changed how they personally go about working safely.



OSH REPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Researchers from Dares, the French labour ministry research institute, have conducted reviews of recent studies and concluded that OSH reps help to improve the quality of prevention policies and programs in the workplace.

They found OSH reps help build worker awareness and improve identification of risks in the workplace. They also found they substantially improve prevention of chemical and biological risks.

The report stated that the combination of safety knowledge and power to require change are the key to improvements delivered when safety and health reps or safety committees are established in the workplace.

(Source: *Workplace* OSH 22/1/2008)

WORKSAFE educational resources

WorkSafe provides practical and up-to-date guidance on occupational safety and health (OSH) for everyone in WA workplaces. There is a wide range of educational resources to help workers and employers understand and meet their OSH obligations.

These resources can be found at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

WorkSafe website

WorkSafe website is a practical resource for employers, workers, and the public. Guidance materials such as codes of practice, guidance notes, WorkSafe bulletins and safety alerts outline the general duty of care and legislative requirements for OSH. The publications are available on the website homepage under Publications.

Mailing lists

Employers and workers can add their email address to a mailing list and receive the latest information and updates on issues. WorkSafe has several mailing lists available for subscribers. Go to

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au → Publications → Mailing Lists

SafetyLine newsletter

SafetyLine newsletter is a publication with editions for safety and health representatives, small business and occupational safety and health professionals. Go to

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au → WorkSafe → Services → How to subscribe

Safety Institute

The SafetyLine Institute provides learning guides, readings and resources to help workers develop competencies in key units of the new national qualifications of *Certificate IV in Occupational Health and Safety* and *Diploma of Occupational Health and Safety*.

General readings are also available, providing additional information on OSH topics. These are available from www.worksafe.wa.gov.au → Education → Safetyline → Courses → General Training

Library

The WorkSafe library is well stocked with an extensive collection of material

on OSH including over 10,000 books, reports and journals, 400 videos and DVDs, online databases and legislation (Western Australian Acts, Government Gazettes, and Hansards).

The library catalogue can be viewed online at

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au → Services → Library, or contact the Library on (08) 9327 8755.

Community Education Officers

Community Education Officers can visit your workplace and talk about the role of WorkSafe, explain the obligations of employers and employees under the Act, and the role of Safety and Health Representatives. To contact a Community Education officer phone (08) 9327 8777.

MSDS TO COMPLY WITH 2003 NATIONAL CODE

Under changes to the Occupational Safety and Health regulations, manufacturers and importers preparing Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) in Western Australia will have until 24 April 2008 to develop and provide MSDS which meet the content requirements of the 2003 National Code: *National Code of Practice for the Preparation of Material Safety Data Sheets (NOHSC: 2011 (2003))*.

Many materials used in the workplace are classified as hazardous substances because they are a safety risk. The law requires suppliers and manufacturers of hazardous substances to provide employers, self-employed people, workers and other safety and health representatives with the necessary information, in the form of MSDS and labels, on how to safely manage risk and avoid harm when using hazardous substances.

It is important that all MSDSs are kept up to date and everyone in the workplace knows how to read and understand the safety and health information.

The Western Australia Commission for Occupational Safety and Health has now revised its guidance note *Provision of information on hazardous substances at workplaces Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)* to reflect this change. The guidance note explains in detail what manufacturers and suppliers need to do to ensure compliance with the requirements of the 2003 version of the national code.



NEW CHECKLISTS

WorkSafe has updated its risk management checklists for the areas of manual handling, forklifts, slips and trips and other common hazards. The checklists are useful tools to help spot workplace hazards and assess risks and can be adapted to the needs of your workplace.

Included is a new checklist to help you set up an OSH management system. This checklist itemises the systems and processes that should be in place at the workplace.

The checklists are free to download from the website www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

WEBNEWS

New look website

In February the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection launched its revamped website. The new-look website brings together a consistent approach across the DOCEP portfolio, which includes WorkSafe, Resources Safety, EnergySafety, Labour Relations and Consumer Protection.

The WorkSafe homepage contains quick links to high profile services such as reporting an incident or applying for a licence.

The website is located at the same address, www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, and maintains much of the previous framework with industry and safety topic areas. Changes to the site include:

- improved search capabilities; and
- access to related material directly from the index page.

What do you want?

If there are resources you would like to see on the Safety and Health Representative section of the new website site, such as printable posters, short 'toolbox' presentations or incident investigation checklists, email worksafersvp@docep.wa.gov.au with your suggestions and we can tailor the website to meet your needs.

Other websites

There is a lot of information on the internet that may be useful to you in your role as a safety and health representative. Other sites within Australia and internationally can be accessed from the WorkSafe website by selecting Services → Useful links. Some recommended sites are listed below.

www.hse.gov.uk The Health and Safety Executive 'WorkSafe' website for the United Kingdom, which has similar OSH legislation to WA. It has excellent resources for safety and health representatives and areas of the site that are fun as well as educational.

www.worksafe.vic.gov.au The Victorians have a great website which is really easy to navigate. Check out 'popular downloads' for wallpaper, screen savers and posters.

www.ccohs.ca/ This is the Canadian Centre for OSH. The Canadians have done some innovative work in OSH management. The website can seem overwhelming but check out 'OSH answers' which leads you to information on a wide range of topics.

FALLS PREVENTION in construction

A campaign focussing on falls prevention in construction is under way across Australia and New Zealand. Inspectors checked construction sites for appropriate falls prevention measures.

This Trans-Tasman campaign was initiated by the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities as falls from height continues to be a hazard causing a significant number of deaths and injuries within the construction industry each year. The campaign involved visits to at least 900 sites Australia wide.

The construction sectors being targeted are housing and small-scale general construction sites with a project value of up to \$3 million.

During the campaign, inspectors focussed on finish and fit-out work, roof work, bricklaying and rendering as well as work associated with stairways or balconies.

All detected instances of immediate risk or other non-compliance with falls prevention requirements will result in appropriate compliance and enforcement action.

Advice on preventing falls from height on construction sites is freely available from WorkSafe Western Australia's website and includes:

- Code of practice: *Prevention of falls* at workplaces
- The National standard for construction work and fall prevention in domestic housing – Frequently asked questions
- Safety priorities for working at heights
- Falls from heights – Frequently asked questions

Inspector visits have been conducted by the following workplace safety authorities:

- ACT WorkCover
- ComCare
- Department of Labour, New Zealand
- NT WorkSafe
- SafeWork, SA
- WorkCover NSW
- Workplace Health & Safety, Queensland
- Workplace Standards Tasmania
- WorkSafe Victoria
- WorkSafe Western Australia

For further information contact WorkSafe's Customer Service Centre on 1300 307 877.

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.

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