



How clean is your air at work?

What you can do as a

HEALTH & SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE



Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws require the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) to eliminate or minimise risks to the health and safety of workers as much as they reasonably can.

As a Health and Safety Representative (HSR), you represent the members of your work group in health and safety matters. You don't have to 'fix' the health and safety issues in your workplace or be an expert in work health and safety issues, but you can help identify hazards that may put workers at risk of developing an occupational lung disease. This information sheet provides some examples of what you can do as a HSR.

Inspect your workplace

If you have given your PCBU reasonable notice, you can inspect your workplace to help identify any hazards in the air that can lead to occupational lung diseases. This can include:

- Talking with workers about any hazards or unsafe work practices they may have identified.
- Recording any dusts you see in the air or that have settled on a surface, or if you detect a presence of gases, vapours or fumes in the workplace.

It's important to remember that occupational lung diseases are often caused by fine dust particles, gases, fumes or vapours that we cannot see or smell.

- If you notice a hazard during this inspection, it may be an indication that the control measures that are currently used at your workplace are not working effectively.

As a HSR, you can request that existing control measures be reviewed if it affects or may affect the health and safety of a member of your work group. You should report this to your PCBU and discuss the issue with them.



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Know the symptoms of occupational lung diseases

Occupational lung diseases are diagnosed by a medical professional with the use of specialised equipment. Occupational lung diseases do not always develop immediately after exposure. Sometimes they can take many years to develop.

However, you can keep an eye out for more general symptoms such as persistent coughing, wheezing, or other breathing difficulties experienced by workers.

As a HSR, you should encourage your work group to let you know if they are experiencing these symptoms and if they think they are caused by hazards at work. It is important to inform your PCBU if workers are experiencing any symptoms caused by work processes.

Remember to respect workers' confidentiality by only reporting symptoms or the number of workers affected. You should not pressure any worker to provide information if they do not want to.

Consult with your work group

If you work in an at-risk industry for occupational lung diseases, such as construction, manufacturing, agriculture or you work with engineered stone, talk to workers about what they know about airborne hazards and occupational lung diseases, and if they would like to know more.

If personal protective equipment (PPE) is a control measure used at your workplace, ask workers if they understand how to correctly wear, use, and maintain their PPE.

Let your PCBU know if workers request more information or training. It is the PCBU's duty to provide appropriate training and information to workers and protect their health and safety at work.

For more information and resources on occupational lung diseases, go to [swa.gov.au/clearlungs](https://www.swa.gov.au/clearlungs) or Safe Work Australia's webpage on [occupational lung diseases](#) or contact your [WHS regulator](#).

For more information on worker representation and participation in health and safety matters at the workplace, go to [Worker Representation and Participation Guide](#) at www.swa.gov.au.