GOVERNMENT LEADERS
SAFETY LEADERS

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HOW GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS CAN BE OHS LEADERS

An effective and efficient safety, rehabilitation and return to work culture within an organisation sends a very clear message to all staff that they are respected, valued, and important to the success of that organisation.

Developing a strong safety and injury management culture within an organisation relies on commitment and leadership from senior management. Government organisations have the potential to champion change beyond their own organisations by leading by example.

In leading by example, governments can demonstrate the advantages of excellent OHS and injury management performance. They can also encourage performance improvement in industries with which they deal, either as employers or clients.

A model of best practice has been developed to assist government organisations in better practice OHS and injury management, This model is based on the government leading by example.

THE MODEL OF BEST PRACTICE INCLUDES:

> commitment
> systems review and improvement
> accountability measures
> executive information, and
> incentives.

HOW GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS CAN LEAD BY EXAMPLE

COMMITMENT

Senior management commitment to OHS and injury management is vital to OHS improvement. In order to achieve ongoing improvements in OHS and injury management commitment must extend beyond satisfying minimum regulatory requirements.

Setting targets – OHS and injury management targets that are aligned to, or exceed, the targets set by the *National OHS Strategy 2002-2012* are benchmarks that can be adopted by senior management.

Practical tips for setting targets

> As a starting point, adopt the *National OHS Strategy 2002-2012* injury and fatality targets and add targets that drive improvements in areas of identified risk in your workplace.

> Compare your organisation's performance annually against the *National OHS Strategy 2002-2012* targets.

> Add targets that drive improvements in return to work performance and review these annually.

> Set baseline data so that performance improvements can be quantified.

> Develop positive performance indicators (PPI's) at organisational or business unit level.

> Include OHS and injury management data as part of the organisation's performance measurement framework and repeat this in the quarterly and/or annual reports.
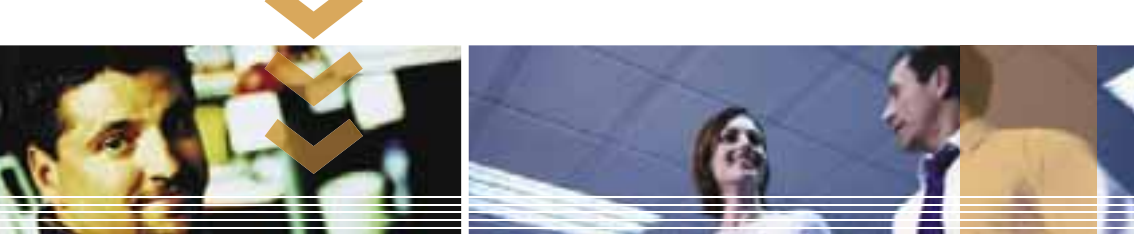
Executive Focus – Discussion of better safety and injury management issues at high-level meetings helps to raise the profile of OHS. Raising an organisation's OHS profile assists in shifting perceptions of workplace health and safety from 'regulatory compliance' to 'strategic management'.

Practical tips to getting OHS and Injury Management on the executive agenda

> Make OHS and injury management a standing item on agendas of executive meetings.

> Have a senior executive who is accountable for the effectiveness of the organisation's OHS and injury management systems.

> Consider OHS and injury management implications when developing organisational change, and human resource and performance management strategies.

> Allocate resources to identify, assess and remedy areas of risk.

> Require line managers to report to the executive on workplace injuries, steps taken to prevent further injury, and the rehabilitation support provided to injured employees.

> Report on progress in quarterly and/or annual reports.

> Invite the claims insurer and/or injury management service provider to address the executive meeting on your organisation's injury and claim trends and costs.
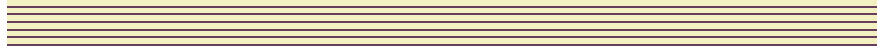
SYSTEMS REVIEW AND IMPROVEMENT

Improving safety at work and efforts to return injured employees to work, as quickly as possible, are examples of good OHS practice. Leaders need to satisfy themselves that management system are in place that support:

> prevention

> notification of unsafe work practices

> early intervention, and

> safe, sustainable and timely return to work of injured employees.

Practical tips for developing better practice systems

> Ensure workplace OHS and injury management policies and procedures are current, effective, understandable and available to everyone. Make sure leaders in your organisation are familiar with them.

> Review OHS and injury management systems and audit tools.

> Engage objective, suitably qualified professionals to conduct in-house audits or reviews, with appropriate employee and employer involvement.

> Incorporate the scheduling of these reviews into agency corporate governance or audit plans.

> Include in your staff or organisational climate surveys, questions that help to measure and track employee perceptions of safety culture, including perceptions of safety leadership.

> Develop a plan to remedy deficiencies identified in the audit processes.

> Seek professional expertise where needed to diagnose or address areas of risk.

> Set up a steering committee that includes senior management representatives to drive improvement.

> Build into the management culture of the organisation the understanding that all managers are responsible for the safety and injury management of the people reporting to them.

> Recognise that cultural and attitudinal change may be necessary to improve performance – and that this takes time.

> Use the Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) benchmarking kit within your organisation.

> Establish performance benchmarks at organisational or business unit level.

> Establish benchmarking partnerships and/or mentoring arrangements with public sector agencies with similar functions or injury risk profiles.

ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

A range of strategies are needed for changing leadership commitment into action. These strategies include establishing activities which make both the organisation and the people who work in it accountable. Personal OHS initiatives include having OHS and injury management performance outcomes in individual contracts. This includes having a senior manager responsible for management systems review and improvement. Government organisational initiatives also include establishing parliamentary and annual reporting requirements and communicating financial accountability for workers' compensation to business units.

Practical tips for developing better practice accountability measures

> Report organisational OHS and injury management performance in your Annual Report, including the organisation's performance against the *National OHS Strategy 2002-2012* targets.

> Clearly specify management's OHS and injury management responsibilities in organisational OHS and injury management policies and procedures.

> Consider using collective or individual workplace agreements, performance development frameworks and job descriptions to improve management's accountability for OHS and injury management.

> Introduce financial accountabilities for workplace injury to business units (including for example, through premium devolution).
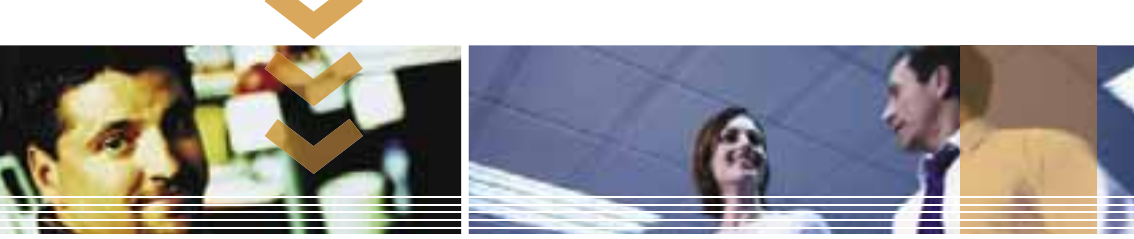
EXECUTIVE INFORMATION

To make an informed and effective contribution to OHS and injury management, leaders require an understanding of the relevant legislation and regulatory frameworks, as well as including accountabilities and workplace safety risks. Education and training of management in OHS and injury management issues is vital to the success of better practice OHS. Better education and training contributes to an improved understanding of OHS and injury management and alerts management to emerging health, safety and injury management issues.

Practical tips to communicate requirements under OHS regulation

> Request briefings on your role and responsibilities in relation to OHS and injury management.

> Ask your OHS and/or workers' compensation authority for information on OHS and injury management roles and responsibilities.

> Develop a strategy to address the information and training needs of the organisation's senior managers.

> Include information about management's role and responsibilities in OHS induction training and management development programs.

> Use the organisation's intranet or screen savers to reinforce key messages about the role and responsibility of managers in OHS.

> Arrange for updates to be provided to your management group on emerging OHS and injury management issues relevant to your organisation's business.

> Attend executive functions, seminars and conferences on OHS and injury management issues.

INCENTIVES

Incentives that recognise good performance are necessary motivators in OHS and injury management. Awards provide a good source of case study information and signal those governments or government organisations that invest in, and derive a sense of pride from, their excellent OHS and injury management performance.

Practical tips for providing incentives to achieve better practice OHS and injury management

> Include consideration of excellent OHS and injury management performance as part of organisational reward and recognition programs.

> Look to the winners of state or national awards for case studies of leadership, excellence and innovation.

> Invite the winners of these awards to address your executive team or safety and injury management program steering committee.

> Showcase your organisation's excellent leadership and innovation in OHS and injury management by applying for an award.

Further information regarding the safety leadership in government workplaces can be found by visiting the ASCC website at ascc.gov.au or comcare.gov.au