

Who is an officer?

‘Officers’ in small businesses have an obligation under WHS laws to demonstrate a proactive approach to WHS matters.

Who is an officer?

The role and influence a person has in a business determines if they are an ‘officer’ under work health and safety (WHS) laws. This is different for each person and each business.

An officer must be proactive and lead WHS matters to ensure the business meets its WHS duties. To learn more about what is expected, read our information sheet *What does an officer need to do?*

An officer is generally someone who:

- makes, or participates in making, significant decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of the business, or
- has the capacity to significantly affect the business’ financial standing.

So, if you make or influence the significant financial or operational decisions of the business, you are likely to be an officer.

For small businesses, officers are typically the owners or operators of the business.

An officer’s influential role means they can do things to ensure the business has the resources and systems it needs to comply with WHS laws and make the workplace safe.

This means an officer can determine the success or failure of WHS measures.

While an officer may not always be directly involved in implementing WHS measures, they are involved in making important decisions on money, equipment and other resources that allow the business to implement WHS measures.

Frequently asked questions

Can I transfer my officer duty?

No, you cannot transfer your officer duty to someone else. You can get others to help you with WHS, but you remain responsible. You cannot delegate or use contracts to make someone else an officer for you.

How many officers can a business have?

More than one person can be an officer within the same business – it will depend on how many people meet the definition.

Where there is more than one officer, each officer shares responsibility but each must meet their WHS duty.

Does an officer need to be a paid employee?

No, it doesn’t matter whether you are a paid employee or not. If you meet the definition, you need to fulfil your duty as an officer.

More information for volunteer officers can be found in our [Essential Guide to Work Health and Safety for Volunteers](#).

Does my role as a safety officer mean I am an officer?

No, you are not an officer simply because you are the ‘safety officer’ for the business. You would still need to meet the definition of an officer under WHS laws.

For more information

See our Officer duty web page to watch videos about who is an officer and what it means to be an officer, read our information sheet *What does an officer need to do?*, or read our guide on the health and safety duties of an officer.

You can also talk to your [WHS regulator](#) for tips, advice and support.