

# Workplace Safety and Health *for CEOs*

*The public sector is Western Australia's largest employer with more than 150,000 people and many of its occupations are hazardous. Each year over 5,000 public servants are injured at work.*

*Safety and injury management practices in the Western Australian public sector can only be improved with demonstrated commitment and action by Chief Executive Officers and their leadership teams.*

## **Why is effective occupational safety, health and injury management important?**

### **It's the SMART thing to do –**

a good workplace safety and health and injury management system leads to reduced costs (workers' compensation claim costs; premium costs - the actual total costs of a workplace accident is estimated to be somewhere between 4-10 times the insurance cost) and reduced risks (employee absence and turnover rates are lower and accidents are fewer) and also increased productivity.

### **It's the RIGHT thing to do –**

the benefits of investing in occupational safety and health include improved workplace culture, attraction of talented workers and improved corporate reputation. Staff are happier, more motivated and feel valued.

### **It's the LAW –**

employers are required to take all reasonable measures to protect the safety and health of their employees, and to have an injury management system and return to work program in place. Penalties can apply where an employer does not properly fulfil their legal obligations.

## **Safety leadership**

### **What is it?**

Safety leadership is strong and active leadership that displays a visible and tangible commitment to the improvement of health, safety and injury management systems, practices and culture.

Developing a successful safety culture in your agency involves leading from the top, where your actions send a message to your workers that you are serious about safety. Demonstrating your commitment to safety ensures that everyone in your business is clear about their health and safety responsibilities.

## *How to demonstrate leadership in occupational safety and health and injury management – some recommendations for leaders*

### **PLAN**

- Set the direction for effective health and safety management by setting long-term organisational improvement targets and develop positive performance indicators at both an organisational and business unit level.
- Add targets that drive improvements in areas of identified risk and return to work performance for the agency.
- Make OSH and injury management a standing item on executive meeting agendas.
- Consider OSH and injury management implications when developing organisational change and human resource management strategies.
- Develop a strategy to address the information and training needs of the agency's managers.

### **DELIVER**

- Allocate resources to identify, assess and remedy areas of risk.
- Clearly specify management's OSH and injury management responsibilities in agency-wide OSH and injury management policies and procedures.
- Develop and then undertake an improvement program for the agency.
- Apply adopted work health and safety policies and measures consistently throughout your agency, whether over time or in different operational areas within the agency.
- Identify agency improvement priorities based on achieving targets and controlling injury risks.

### **MONITOR**

- Arrange for updates to be provided to the agency's management group on emerging OSH and injury management issues relevant to the agency's business.
- Ensure line managers report to executive management on workplace injuries, measures taken to prevent further injury and the rehabilitation support provided to injured employees.
- Allocate accountability for workers' compensation costs to a divisional level.

### **REVIEW**

- Set baseline data so that performance improvements can be measured.
- Regularly review OSH and injury management systems and audit tools.
- Engage suitably qualified professionals to conduct impartial in-house audits or reviews, with appropriate employee and employer involvement.
- Incorporate the scheduling of these reviews into agency corporate governance or audit plans.
- Report organisational OSH and injury management performance in the agency's annual report, including the organisation's performance against National Strategy targets.
- Reward excellence in OSH and injury management performance as part of organisational reward and recognition programs.

## What are my occupational safety and health responsibilities?

### LEGISLATION

**The Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (the OSH Act) specifically sets out the following obligations in regard to their employees' safety and health:**

- provide and maintain workplaces, plant and systems of work that do not expose employees to hazards;
- provide information, instruction, training and supervision so employees can perform their work safely;
- consult and cooperate with safety and health representatives, if any, and other employees, regarding occupational safety and health at the workplace;
- provide adequate protective clothing and equipment, where it is not practicable to avoid the presence of hazards at the workplace; and
- ensure safe use, cleaning, maintenance, transportation and disposal of any potentially hazardous substances used in the workplace.

## What are my responsibilities in regard to injury management?

### LEGISLATION

**The Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981 requires employers to establish and maintain an injury management system and return to work program.**

Employers have a legal obligation to provide workers' compensation cover for all workers and to have an injury management system, described in writing, which outlines the steps the employer will take if a worker is injured. This document must also include the contact details of the person who will have day-to-day responsibility for the injury management system.

## What is safety culture?

Safety culture is an organisational atmosphere where safety and health is understood to be and accepted as a high priority. It goes beyond formal arrangements to how people think and act toward safety. An organisation's safety culture is ultimately influenced by its leaders and as such, any change to a workplace's culture needs to be driven from the top.

## Developing a good safety culture

### Six factors evident in organisations with a good safety culture:

1. Commitment at all levels – safety and health is integrated into all aspects of the work process and this attitude is adopted by employees throughout the organisation.
2. Safety and health are treated as an investment not a cost – risk management is seen as a way to improve the performance of the organisation.
3. Training and information is provided for every one – safety and health information is distributed in all aspects of the work process. Posters, warning signs and policies are not enough.
4. A system for workplace analysis and hazard prevention and control – regular surveys indicate the current state of the organisation, which assists in determining an initial baseline and measuring future performance.
5. A blame free work environment – employees at all levels of the organisation feel comfortable correcting unsafe practices and reporting incidents.
6. Celebration of successes – recognition, rewards, incentives, reinforcement and feedback encourage employees to feel it is worthwhile to be mindful of safety and health in the workplace.