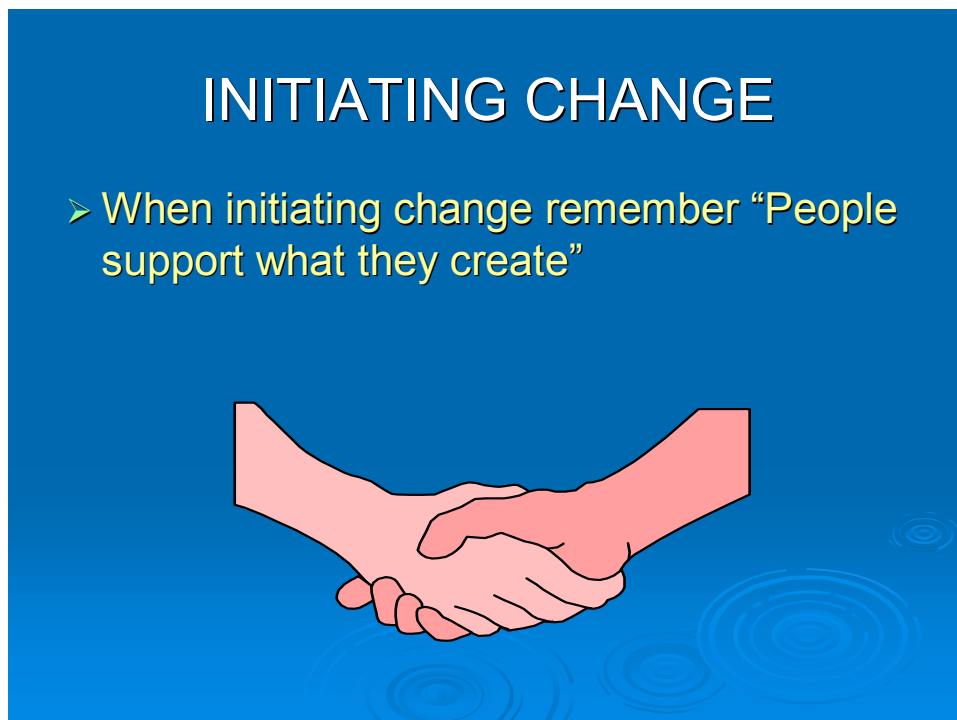


## The 15 Most Important Components of an Effective Safety Management System

### Quotable Quote

"A health & safety problem can be described by statistics but cannot be understood by statistics. It can only be understood by knowing and feeling the pain, anguish, and depression and shattered hopes of the victim and of wives, husbands, parents, children, grandparents and friends, and the hope, struggle and triumph of recovery and rehabilitation in a world often unsympathetic, ignorant, unfriendly and unsupportive, only those with close experience of life altering personal damage have this understanding"



### Other guiding principles

- Use real world approaches not theory
- All paperwork must be succinct
- Whatever is done in OHS must be based on a needs analysis
- Need to get some runs on the board quickly
- Concentrate on the things that give you the best bang for your buck
- Aim for simplicity not complexity
- Minimise the bureaucracy and bull-shit
- Face to face communications should be used wherever possible
- Be guided in what you do by taxonomies of Class 1 damage in your industry

As the facilitator of the process I will use the skills of appropriate self-disclosure and reflective listening

Suggested MUST HAVES for a successful Safety Management System (some of the following interventions will work better in your organisation than others, the skill is in recognising and applying the best interventions for your particular organisation).

### 1. Compliance with the Statute law

In Queensland a number of codes of practice are incorporated under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. These codes provide worthwhile guidance for introduction of a successful Safety Management System.

### 2. The Compliance with Common Law (in states where applicable)

There are four basic duties under common law :

- A) To provide and maintain competent staff.
- B) To provide and maintain a safe place of work.
- C) To provide and maintain safe plant and appliances.
- D) To provide and maintain a safe system of work \* ( a system means generally the way things are done)

The above duties contain few words but the meaning is quite significant. The employer really has to do everything reasonably and practically that he can do. Many would suggest he then has to go a few extra steps. Managers and supervisors really need to be trained in common law duties to fully realise the impact of this important area on how they manage safety.

### 3. Highly visible demonstrated commitment to health and safety on behalf of Senior Management

It is not unusual in companies with high profile safety management systems for senior and middle management personnel to spend over 30% of their time directly on OHS issues. Key personnel conduct safety meetings, they personally participate in safety inspections in their area of responsibility, they have safety as a first high-profile agenda item of every meeting they conduct and they make it clear that they expect those below them to place a high priority on safety. It is not enough for top management to be committed to safety; it must be a clear and high profile demonstration of commitment - you get the performance you demonstrate you expect. A detailed Safety Responsibilities / Accountabilities matrix for management and supervision is appropriate.

### 4. Safety Committee

There should be a senior management safety committee to develop policy and an employee safety committee to recommend safety policy to the management committee and to implement policy agreed to by the management committee. Safety committees are much maligned. Safety committee members must be trained for their role and well supported by management. Committee meetings will not become whinge-fests if the committee is given something substantive to do.

### 5. Safety Meetings

Regular safety meetings coordinated by the supervisor are an ideal medium to transfer safety messages (studies have shown the significant effect supervisor communications can have on the workgroup).

#### 6. Safety as part of performance appraisal

During the performance appraisal of supervisory and management personnel an initial and high emphasis must be placed on safety. The focus should not be on what personal damage occurrences(accidents), have occurred in the supervisor's workgroup, rather it should be on what he/she has done to introduce excellent safety programs.

#### 7. Supervisors and employees must be trained and held accountable for safety

Subjects such as compliance with statute law, compliance with common law principles, hazard identification, risk management, hazard control, personal damage occurrences(accidents) investigation, and job safety analysis should be regarded as the basic skills and the knowledge for supervisors (their "tool-kit" of safety skills).

#### 8. Risk Assessment

Notwithstanding the popularity of risk assessment techniques there are some limitations to the techniques that need to be realised. I have always been of the view that what you do to control risk as a result of a risk assessment exercise is more important than the risk rating. Placing too much emphasis on comparison of risk ratings will lead to inappropriate priorities. The reality is that without an excellent system of Class 1 personal damage occurrence data in Australia estimates of probability and consequence in risk assessment exercises are often subjective. A lot of the risk analysis in industry consists of slightly informed guesswork from stakeholders, the term "consignorance" applies (what happens when you combine ignorance with consensus) (Source-Geoff McDonald)The lack of a National Class 1 data base is an impediment to progress.

#### 9. Incident investigation

Formal incident investigation models e.g. "Analysis Reference Tree Trunk", "Tripod" should be used to guide observations. Once personal damage occurrence investigations are carried out there must be formal methods of auditing the success of implementing recommendations. Despite its popularity root cause analysis has major limitations. Be guided in what you do by taxonomies off Class 1 damage in your industry.

#### 10. Safety Inspections

Safety checklists tailored to the hazards of the area being inspected must be developed. Involvement of the workforce in actually carrying out the inspections is suggested.

#### 11. Auditing

Organisations that are successful at Occupational Health and Safety have regular comprehensive internal and external audits. A quality assurance approach where NCR (Non-compliance reports) are issued is recommended. Auditors must receive training by authoritative training professionals, comprehensive auditing guidelines must be developed and formal processes introduced to follow-up on audit recommendations.

## 12. Emergency Response Plans

Despite our best efforts it is possible that personal damage occurrences (accidents/incidents) will occur. It is essential to have plans to manage specific incidents. Incidents that require emergency response plans include

- Injury
- Fire
- Explosion
- Bomb threat
- Electrical outage
- Oil/fuel/chemical spill
- Gas leak
- Earth wall failure
- Radiation emergency
- Natural disaster
- Missing person

Emergency response plans should include provisions for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. The plans should be regularly practiced and audited.

## 13 Group Approaches

There are ranges of group approaches that can successfully be used in improving safety. Well led, motivated and well researched groups can have tremendous synergy that will enhance your safety management system. The force-field analysis technique is particularly appropriate to use when commencing an OHS change project.

## 14. Safety Procedures

The commonest mistake the author has seen with safety management systems is the development of extensive safety procedures that the workers do not know about, care about or use. The procedures sit on the supervisor's bookcase or a computer program and are rarely referred to. The job safety analysis technique must be used to develop safe working procedures and involvement of the workforce is crucial. If your safe working procedures are over 2 pages in length worry about whether they will ever be used. Use flow-charts, pictures and diagrams in your safe working procedures and base them on a very basic level of English. The K.I.S.S. principles applies.

## 15. Role of the safety professional

Shortsighted companies think they employ safety people and these people will look after safety. The more progressive companies often do not have many dedicated OHS personnel, management and supervisors are so well trained and effective in safety that few dedicated safety personnel are required. Safety personnel should report to the senior officer so the function has some chance of being perceived as being of importance. The danger when you have too many safety people is that line management gets the safety people to manage safety

## **Conclusion**

The above is quite a simple approach to OHS but detailed implementation of the above will achieve significant improvements. Listen to your people, make significant efforts to seek out their ideas on OHS, reduce the bull-dust that surrounds the safety effort, keep the lines of communication open, act upon good ideas, maintain a good sense of humor, show the troops you are fair-dinkum about safety, use the powerful influence front-line supervisors have on

their employees and do not take yourself too seriously! Do not make the mistake of talking to workers about the company safety goals and mission, instead talk about the effects of safety in their immediate work environment. Do not think your safety efforts end when you have written a safe working procedure, procedural controls in isolation are notoriously ineffective.

Focus on “What is in it for me”

As a manager and a supervisor you need a personal action plan on how to manage safety and you need to regularly review progress on the action plan with a process and content expert.

You cannot underestimate the power of excellent leadership in OHS.

\*Further detail on this topic can be found in the paper “What Makes a Safety Management System Fly” to be found on [ohschange.com.au](http://ohschange.com.au)

**WHEN TALKING ABOUT SAFETY PLEASE REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING!**

## EXCELLENCE

- EXCELLENCE IS NO ACCIDENT



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