



**PEOPLE COME  
FIRST**

**Building a strong health and safety culture  
in New Zealand mines, quarries and tunnels**



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
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MBIE develops and delivers policy, services, advice and regulation to support economic growth and the prosperity and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

MBIE combines the former Ministries of Economic Development, Science + Innovation, and the Departments of Labour and Building and Housing.

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**“ He aha te mea  
nui o te ao?  
He tāngata.  
He tāngata.  
He tāngata.”**

**“What is the greatest treasure in the world?  
It is people. It is people. It is people.”**

# FOREWORD

**People are the most important asset in any business, and ensuring their health and safety at work is paramount. The time for turning New Zealand's poor health and safety record around is now, and we need your help to make it happen.**

Between 50 and 100 people die in workplace accidents in New Zealand every year. Another 500 to 800 people die as a result of illness caused by their work environment.

This isn't good enough, and signals a pressing need to break with the way things have been done in the past and build a strong workplace culture that puts people first.

The Government recognises the need for urgency and has embarked on a major change programme by:

- accepting all of the Royal Commission's 16 recommendations from the Pike River Coal Mine Tragedy
- appointing an independent taskforce to review New Zealand's health and safety system and committing to a number of reforms based on the taskforce's recommendations
- committing to implement new regulations for the mining industry
- establishing a new Crown entity to manage health and safety at work
- committing to provide proper support and resourcing for all these changes, including new codes of practice and other guidance.

Those in the mining industry know it is not enough just to comply with regulations – there needs to be a wholehearted and sustained commitment towards a safer industry.

Leaders from board level through to managers and supervisors are central to this challenge. As a leader, your influence on those around you is vital and you have an important role to play in keeping everyone safe on the job.

Your mindset and understanding of the work will help create the conditions for that work to be carried out safely. Your constant attention to risk will ensure that you are never complacent and always alert to incidents that could happen and improvements that could be made to make your workplace safer.

*“The lessons from the Pike River Tragedy must not be forgotten. New Zealand needs to make urgent legislative, structural, and attitudinal change if future tragedies are to be avoided. Government, industry and workers need to work together [to make this happen].”*

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE PIKE RIVER COAL MINE TRAGEDY  
OCTOBER 2012**

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# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

**This guide is a reference for managers of mines, quarries and tunnelling operations. It is designed to help you establish, maintain and promote a strong health and safety culture.**

'Manager' refers to anyone with management or leadership responsibilities, including people in roles such as site senior executive, statutory manager, superintendent or supervisor.

The purpose of this guide is to show you what a good health and safety culture looks like, and give you practical tips for getting there and measuring your progress along the way.

This guide is not a comprehensive manual on health and safety management and it doesn't spell out the technicalities of managing a mine, quarry or tunnelling operation. Its requirements are not legally enforceable, but could be used in court as evidence of good practice.

## Our sources

We have drawn on the expertise of people working in the mining industry, including managers and union representatives, and people experienced in leading cultural change. We have also looked at examples of good practice within mining and other industries in New Zealand and overseas.

## Your role

New Zealand leads the world in many things, but health and safety isn't one of them. We want this to change. The mining industry has long been a significant contributor to workplace accidents and work-related illness in New Zealand.

In the past 10 years in New Zealand, 39 people have died at work in mines and quarries, and 486 have suffered serious harm injuries (100 in quarries and 386 in mines). As a manager in the industry, we need your help to turn this around.

Health and safety is an essential part of good management. When your organisation gets health and safety right, it will succeed in other ways because a safer workplace is a more productive workplace. As a manager, you influence the safety culture by what you do, what you say and what you focus on.

## Positive change takes cultural change

Culture is key to improving health and safety in your organisation. A cultural approach doesn't replace other approaches, like engineering and system improvements – but it underpins them and makes them more successful.

When we talk about health and safety culture, we are talking about 'how we do things around here', even when no one is looking. All our behaviours reflect how we think: our assumptions, beliefs and attitudes. In a strong safety culture, everyone has a shared safety mindset and works together to achieve common goals.

Health and safety culture is an essential part of organisational culture. So, if your overall culture promotes fairness, two-way communication, openness, honesty and personal responsibility, it will be easier to foster these values in a health and safety context.

Research from the former Department of Labour shows that the benefits of a positive safety culture can include:

- fewer accidents, injuries and lost time
- safer behaviours among workers
- improved wellbeing and job satisfaction
- better relationships between management and staff.



**Cultural change is powerful but rarely quick. It takes leadership, a plan and perseverance. It requires changes in understanding, mindset and behaviour across the whole organisation. To help you know where you're heading, here's a snapshot of what a good health and safety culture looks like.**





## WHAT A STRONG HEALTH AND SAFETY CULTURE LOOKS LIKE

If you can't confidently tick all these boxes, then your health and safety culture is not what it should be and you need to reflect on how your own behaviour, and that of other leaders, has contributed to making it the way it is. This guide will help you explore ways to improve.

- Leaders are regularly seen in the workplace with the team.

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- Everybody knows that if a job can't be done safely it isn't done at all.

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- Everyone has the knowledge and skills to do their jobs safely.

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- Everyone knows what their health and safety responsibilities and duties are.

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- Staff, contractors and representatives are actively involved in decision-making.

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- There is open and honest communication across the organisation.

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- There is mutual respect between workers and managers.

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- Everyone actively reports incidents, hazards and near misses.

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- Incidents and hazards are investigated without fear of blame or recrimination.

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- People who break the rules or condone rule breaking by others are held accountable.

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- The organisation learns from incidents and near misses and makes sure they don't happen again.

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- There is emphasis on the use and continuous improvement of systems.

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- Risk assessment is routinely and actively used at all levels and in all processes.

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- Health and safety is adequately resourced with sufficient people, equipment and time.

# YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY JOURNEY

Wherever you are in your health and safety planning, follow these five interconnected paths to strengthen the health and safety culture in your organisation.



**BUILD  
TRUST  
AND  
RESPECT**



**LEAD BY  
EXAMPLE**

**COMMUNICATE  
CLEARLY**

**INVOLVE  
EVERYONE**

**KEEP  
LEARNING**



**LEAD BY  
EXAMPLE**

As a leader, your words and actions shape how things are done.

**As a leader, your commitment to health and safety will have a positive effect on your whole organisation. When you make it clear – in your words and actions – that the only acceptable option is to work safely, you are forging the foundations of a strong culture that will protect your people and your business.**

## Setting the standard

Building health and safety into the culture of your business starts with setting the standard for your people and your managers to make your workplace healthy and safe and backing it up with clear expectations that are both practical and realistic.

This health and safety standard is often described in terms of a vision statement that reflects the organisation's values and beliefs. And when you include your whole organisation in creating your vision, you are encouraging 'buy in' from the whole team.

Your vision statement should be clear, concise and easy to remember, like the Australian Minerals Council's: "An Australian minerals industry that is free of fatalities, injuries and diseases."<sup>1</sup>

The Australian Minerals Council also adopted these health and safety beliefs:

- All work-related fatalities, injuries and diseases are preventable.
- No task is so important that it cannot be done safely.
- All hazards can be identified and their risks managed.
- Everyone has a personal responsibility for the safety and health of themselves and others.
- Safety and health performance can always be improved.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.minerals.org.au/focus/safety\\_health](http://www.minerals.org.au/focus/safety_health)

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## Walk the talk

For your vision to have an effect, you need to know what behaviours support it. Work with other managers and supervisors to identify these behaviours and make sure that all leaders model them consistently.

*Front line supervisors are very influential and need to be fully on board.*

# CASE STUDY

## STRONG LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

One Australian mine backed up its vision statement with these clear behaviour expectations for its leaders:

- Be visible in the workplace.
- Set and maintain standards and lead by example.
- Listen to your team and involve them in decisions affecting their work.
- Give regular feedback to your team and team members on their performance.
- Encourage your team to continuously look for improvement opportunities.
- Support your team to develop and improve their technical and teamwork skills.

Real commitment to health and safety isn't something that is switched on and off at the mine gate and contractors need to share that commitment. You need to make sure that all contractors display a high level of commitment to good health and safety practices, at all levels of the organisation. One mining company regularly inspects its contractors' off-site work premises to assess their compliance with site standards.

## Cutting corners is not an option

When there is pressure to complete work to meet targets there can be a temptation, usually well-intended, to cut corners. But your job is to be firm and reinforce that there is always a safe and proper way to work – and that is the only way.

If there is a problem with doing a job safely, support your team to solve the problem quickly. Your support might include providing extra people or resources to get the job done safely and on time.

If you use reward schemes, be wary of basing them on measures that could lead people to think that cutting corners is okay if it helps to get good financial results. Think about incorporating measures that reward commitment to health and safety.

## Plan and resource properly

Promote best practice in your organisation with early planning that identifies what resources and systems are needed, and when, to keep your workplace safe. To do this you will need to:

- provide equipment that is fit for purpose and complies with your standards
- review training needs and provide training as required
- allocate enough people with the right skills to do the work
- give everyone enough time to complete work safely.

### What others are doing

#### Here's how a New Zealand CEO in a high hazard industry leads by example:

"My senior leadership colleagues and I actively participate in various safety meetings. I lead one or two of our annual safety day sessions. I talk at project induction programmes about Goal Zero, our commitment to keeping people safe, and my expectations and aspirations. I participate in one of our annual back-to-work breakfast sessions where we reiterate what is important and why, and reinvigorate people after their holiday break. I also actively participate in safety reviews and our incident review panels where we review accident investigations and proposed actions.

At least once a month I visit one of our operating sites. I go early to join the community meeting, then a toolbox meeting and then spend time on-site talking with staff and contractors about their work, about the hazards, what they are doing to manage these, how they are staying safe and looking after themselves and each other.

I have smoko and lunch with the guys. Everyone in the organisation knows that I am passionate about safety and that I take the issue incredibly seriously.

I expect them all to follow my example. Without that senior level buy-in, involvement and visibility, the safety agenda just becomes theoretical – and that's when the trouble starts. But to be honest I could and should do more. I need to go more often, I need to stay overnight."

## How to track leadership

Leadership effectiveness can be measured in many ways. How do you and your organisation stack up against the following checklist? Can you think of examples where you do well and other examples where you don't do so well? Where improvement is needed, start compiling your health and safety action plan.

# LEAD BY EXAMPLE ACTIONS



### WHAT YOU DO:

- Do you factor health and safety into all your work-related decisions?
- Do your actions 'walk the talk'?
- Do you make regular visits to all worksites, and all shifts?
- When you see an unsafe practice, do you act quickly to correct it and in a supportive way?
- Do you reinforce that cutting corners is not an option?
- Do you plan early to make sure your team is properly resourced so they can work safely?
- Do you set health and safety goals and track your progress against them?

### AT YOUR MINE, QUARRY OR TUNNEL OPERATION:

- Is there a statement of vision, values and beliefs?
- Was the vision discussed with staff, and is it still relevant?
- Are contractors involved in site health and safety programmes, and do they support them?
- Are contractors assessed for their commitment to health and safety before they're taken on?
- Do all of your leaders support stopping any work if it can't be done safely?
- Are your leaders trained how to build and maintain a strong health and safety culture?





A green rectangular sign with a white border and two silver screws at the top and bottom. The sign is mounted on a metal post and features the text "BUILD TRUST AND RESPECT" in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The background of the sign is a solid green color. The sign is set against a dark, textured background that appears to be a wall or a large rock face.

**BUILD  
TRUST  
AND  
RESPECT**

In strong workplace cultures, people are valued for themselves as well as for their ideas.

**As always, with trust and respect you need to give it to get it. In strong workplace cultures, people are valued for themselves as well as for their ideas. And managers are valued as people, as well as leaders.**

Building mutual trust and respect will help you get the best from your team. They will feel heard and valued, and be more inclined to speak up honestly, share information, follow the rules and challenge unsafe practices.

## **Value your people and what they say**

Building trust and respect takes time but it can be lost in an instant through a careless word or action.

*A good place to start is to get to know everyone by their first name.*

Here are some principles:

- Listen and genuinely try to understand what people are saying and why. You don't have to agree and if you don't, then explain why.
- Keeping confidences is important.
- People want to know they can come to you for support and that you will help them.
- Treat others as you like to be treated.
- Criticise carefully, and constructively.
- Give praise and recognition when it's due.

## **Treat people equally**

Are there things in your organisation that create an 'us versus them' mentality? This kind of thinking won't help you achieve your goals so remove the things that are creating it, like special car parks or 'perks'.

Emphasise that while people have different roles, everyone is part of the team and every contribution they make supports the safety and success of the whole organisation. This goes for your contractors too – they're part of the team and need to be treated that way.

## Make health and wellbeing more than just a work issue

Health hazards in the workplace and those that originate outside the workplace but put your teams' safety at risk are your concern. They need to be managed like any other hazard.

You can also support your people with programmes that will help them to be healthier and feel better about themselves, such as programmes on losing weight, eating healthily, quitting smoking, and managing stress.

Employee assistance programmes (EAPs) recognise that a wide range of issues can affect people's health and wellbeing. Looking after your people is a good thing to do, and it's also looking after your organisation. Programmes often also include families because family issues can be a source of stress for employees.

### EAP helps in many ways

New Zealand EAP providers often help people in a range of ways. These include:

- managing stress and pressure (personal or work), depression and anxiety, workplace issues and changes
- providing bullying and harassment support
- managing anger and conflict, relationship and family matters, grief and loss, addictions, life transition and personal development, health and wellbeing
- providing career planning, budgeting and financial assistance, and personal legal advice.

It's like a life coach, counsellor and financial advisor all rolled into one.

### What others are doing

Some mines, quarries and tunnelling operations have built great relationships around the 'one team' idea by:

- having a common uniform
- sharing change rooms, lunch rooms and meeting rooms
- running joint training programmes
- printing names on shirts and helmets
- having everyone's names and pictures on noticeboards
- not having privileges and perks like special car parks
- sharing social events.

## How to track trust and respect

How do you and your organisation stack up against the following checklist? Can you think of examples where you do well and other examples where you don't do so well? Where improvement is needed, start compiling your health and safety action plan.

# BUILD TRUST AND RESPECT ACTIONS



### WHAT YOU DO:

- Do you model behaviours that promote trust and respect?
- Do you respect people and their ideas – even if you don't always agree with them?
- Do you know everyone working for you by their first name, and have an open door policy?
- Do you make sure that contractors feel part of the team?
- Do you make sure you never expect others to do a job that you wouldn't be prepared to do yourself?
- Do you treat everyone fairly and consistently?

### AT YOUR MINE, QUARRY OR TUNNEL OPERATION:

- Are there symbols or perks that make management appear separate or superior?
- Are there programmes that support people's general wellbeing, like an EAP?
- Are managers and supervisors trained in how to build trust and respect, and do they get feedback on how they are doing?

## WHAT TO DO NEXT

You can start improving trust and respect in your organisation by following these steps:

- ▶ Make time to meet and get to know everyone you work with.
- ▶ Measure and track your teams' health and wellbeing, including their fatigue and stress.
- ▶ Include health and wellbeing initiatives in your audits and reviews.



# COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Keep it simple and tailor what you are saying so that everyone understands.

**Communicating well is one of the most important things you can do as a manager and leader. It's about listening and talking about what's important to you and your team – being able to discuss the good and the bad, openly and honestly. The way you communicate can help to foster a sense of urgency around keeping people safe and well at work.**

As a leader you need to know what really happens in the workplace, not just what people tell you. When your leadership team communicates well, you create an environment where people know that their managers really do want to hear what they have to say and they can express concerns and ideas, and be heard and valued.

## **Talk health and safety from the start**

When you are employing a new person, you need to talk about health and safety very early on – even before you hire them. Building health and safety requirements into your selection criteria will help to ensure you only recruit people with good health and safety attitudes.

*Getting senior managers to talk to new starters about health and safety really helps to drive the message home.*

## **Perfect the art of 'dropping in'**

Regular visits to worksites will give you an 'ear to the ground' and help you pick up on any issues that may not come through formal channels. You can use these visits to:

- tap into valuable informal sources and networks
- project the image of a 'coach' rather than an inspector
- share and invite good and bad news
- invite ideas to improve things
- discuss changes and new developments
- recognise positive behaviours or results.

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## Make the most of meetings

Meetings are a good time to both listen and talk about health and safety. For example, pre-shift and shift handovers, monthly team meetings where longer-term issues and improvements are discussed, management meetings and special meetings after events or accidents.

## Tailor your messages

Keep it simple and tailor what you are saying so that everyone understands. Here are a few tips:

- Complex or important messages are best communicated by getting people together and talking face-to-face. Provide details in printouts and make sure your messages are clear and consistent.
- People like to get the big picture from their managers but they want to hear what it means for them from their team leader. Share information with a series of team meetings, starting at the top.
- Repeat key messages in newsletters, flyers, posters, emails, message boards, reports, meeting minutes and training sessions.

## Make good communication the norm

Make it clear to your people that you really want to hear what they have to say and that you expect them to be open and honest with you and with others. You need to support this on a foundation of trust, then people can:

- give each other feedback without worrying about causing offence or other repercussions
- raise issues, ideas and suggestions for improvement without fear of ridicule
- have the confidence to ask if they're not sure.

If you think people in your organisation really can't talk freely, you may need specialist help. Consider using an independent person to help identify the issues. People will need to be assured that their input will be confidential and that there won't be any negative repercussions for them.



## Provide resources and training

Make sure your meeting rooms have everything that your teams need to support their team processes. Some mines have dedicated areas equipped with noticeboards, site plans and whiteboards for pre-shift meetings.

And while your managers and supervisors may be very good technically, don't assume they know how to communicate well. Supervisors in particular are likely to be chosen for their technical ability rather than their communication skills. You can support them by getting feedback from their teams on how they communicate, and giving them extra training if they need it.

# CASE STUDY

## SAFEGUARD AWARD WINNER

Pacific Steel, Auckland (winner of a Safeguard Award 2013) ran a competition to ask people what they would say to a colleague who was about to do something unsafe. The top six phrases from 300 entries were printed on t-shirts and given to everyone.

### What others are doing

A previous winner of the Australian MINEX award – an award made by the Minerals Council of Australia for health and safety excellence – built a 'utility day' into their roster.

In every shift cycle, teams had a part-day when they weren't needed for operational work. They used the time for team processes like problem-solving, training, developing procedures and planning. The mine manager would also give a briefing on business performance, which made everyone feel involved in the big picture.

## How to track communication

Good communication is all about clear and mutual understanding. Use these questions to start a conversation about communication in your organisation. How do you and your organisation stack up? Can you think of examples where you do well and other examples where you don't do so well? Where improvement is needed, start compiling your health and safety action plan.

# COMMUNICATE CLEARLY ACTIONS



### WHAT YOU DO:

- Do you regularly 'drop in' to make sure you really know what's going on at the worksite?
- Do you go looking for information and not wait for it to come to you?
- Do you value other people's views and give feedback?
- Do you value all news, good and bad, and thank the messenger?
- Do you talk to new starters about the importance of health and safety?
- Is your communication style simple, to the point and easy to understand?
- Do you make sure you communicate complex information face-to-face?

### AT YOUR MINE, QUARRY OR TUNNEL OPERATION:

- Are there formal opportunities to discuss health and safety, such as pre-shift meetings, management meetings, team meetings, and health and safety committee meetings?
- Are minutes from health and safety meetings published and available to everyone?
- Are actions agreed at meetings tracked to make sure they are implemented on time?
- Are team meeting rooms provided with noticeboards and whiteboards?
- Are managers and supervisors trained to communicate effectively about health and safety?
- Are communication processes regularly reviewed and audited?





**INVOLVE  
EVERYONE**

Get everyone working together to solve issues and develop, review and improve work processes and standards.

## **Strong cultures are inclusive cultures. When you're building a strong health and safety culture, you need to actively involve everyone in your health and safety processes and decisions.**

Involving staff is a requirement under the *Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992*.

As well as being a legal requirement, it makes good business sense because:

- the person doing the job can help ensure a full understanding of the hazards and how best to control them
- involvement builds awareness, understanding, compliance and accountability
- people can be excellent role models for each other.

### **Get your teams problem-solving**

At a team level, get everyone working together to solve issues and develop, review and improve work processes and standards. Training at a team level should focus on skills like communication, team building, delegating, coaching, problem-solving, managing emotions, and giving and receiving feedback.

At an organisational level, get your elected representatives to take part in health and safety planning and decisions under a formal participation agreement.

*Make sure managers at all levels have the skills they need to involve their teams in creating a healthy and safe workplace. They should understand that involving the team does not mean a loss of control.*

### **Tips for getting people involved**

- Make sure people know that their contribution to health and safety decisions is welcomed and important – including the right to stop a job if it can't be done safely.
- Make sure management supports but doesn't dominate your health and safety committee. Try getting a health and safety representative to chair meetings.
- Being a health and safety representative can mean time away from core work, which may cause issues for supervisors. Discuss this openly and find a solution that works for everyone.

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## Look after each other

Behaviour that supports health and safety needs to be a normal, everyday part of your workplace. To support this, people need to know exactly what's expected of them, what the rules and procedures are, and that there is no room for taking risks.

You can help your teams to work together safely by creating an environment where they feel comfortable discussing each other's unsafe work practices. It can be hard to do this, so make sure everyone knows that it's not about finding fault; it's about creating a safe place to work, for everyone.

Some organisations involve families in health and safety programmes so that safe behaviour is supported and reinforced at home.

# CASE STUDY

## SAFEGUARD AWARD WINNER

When Refining NZ (winner of a Safeguard Award 2012) wanted to shift safety culture, it used a 'Safety Warrior Week'. This involved staff and their families and it used rugby and rugby league legends to promote the programme.

The phrase 'crouch, touch, pause and engage' was used to encourage staff and contractors to think more about hazardous work before they got started, and to understand that you can play it safe without losing mana.

## Include contractors and unions

All of the above is just as relevant to contractors. When you select contractors you should check their ability to meet your site's participation standards. You should include representatives from major contractors on your health and safety committee.

Registered trade unions also have a role to play on behalf of their members.

Organisations and unions need to deal with each other in good faith. Unions also have a role to play in training health and safety representatives and supporting effective participation. Union industry health and safety officials are another set of eyes that can provide a valuable perspective on what's happening 'on the ground'.

## What others are doing

A New Zealand quarry operator asked its people to identify the safe behaviours required by operators, supervisors and managers. These became standards that were used in a questionnaire-based tool to monitor individual behaviour and identify strengths and weaknesses.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to develop stronger safety mindsets and practices. Different versions have been developed for operators, supervisors and site managers.

# CASE STUDY

## CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CONIAC)

CONIAC'S declaration on engaging its people states:

"Every construction worker has a right to work in places where risks to their health and safety are properly controlled. Every worker should have a voice and will be given opportunities to influence health and safety in the places they work.

We commit to actively promoting positive relationships between workers and their representatives, employers, designers, clients and those in control of construction work. We recognise the role that unions and safety representatives play in improving worker health and safety consultation.

We will:

- expect all workers to get involved
- encourage clients, employers, designers, project managers and others in control of construction work to ensure workers are listened to and given real opportunities to help improve their working conditions
- ensure that sufficient resources, including training, are made available to all sectors of the construction industry to improve worker consultation
- develop and share best practice in the industry.

Our aim is to achieve a long term culture change in the construction industry, to improve working conditions for everyone."

## How to track involvement

Routinely involving everyone will benefit your business as well as improving your health and safety environment. How do you and your organisation stack up against the following checklist? Can you think of examples where you do well and other examples where you don't do so well? Where improvement is needed, start compiling your health and safety action plan.

# INVOLVE EVERYONE ACTIONS



## WHAT YOU DO:

- Do you arrange effective health and safety participation training for you and your management team?
- Do you actively encourage your people and work teams to make decisions about their own work and to contribute to organisational decisions?
- Do you insist that contractors meet your participation standards?
- Have you talked with your teams and unions about what they want to include in the participation agreement, and is this agreement in place?
- Have you made arrangements for health and safety representatives to have enough time to carry out their representative duties?
- Do you make sure that management supports but doesn't dominate health and safety committee meetings?

## AT YOUR MINE, QUARRY OR TUNNEL OPERATION:

- Can people take any necessary action to ensure workplace safety – including stopping a job?
- Is training provided for health and safety representatives?
- Is there a clear and established feedback loop for responding to suggestions or issues that are raised?
- Is training provided in teamwork skills such as problem-solving, and giving and receiving feedback about safety behaviour?
- Do people encourage each other and give feedback about safe behaviour?
- Are there formal processes for planning and notifying your health and safety committee meetings, and recording and circulating minutes?
- Are workers or representatives involved in identifying hazards, assessing risks, investigating incidents, audits and reviews?







Organisations with  
a robust health  
and safety culture  
learn from past lessons.

**As philosopher George Santayana famously noted, “those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Organisations with a robust health and safety culture learn from past lessons, good and bad, and from the experiences of other organisations.**

## **Capture and write down what your organisation has learned**

Successful organisations use systems, procedures and rules to capture what they have learned and to be clear about their expectations for the future.

You can make your procedures usable by:

- keeping them uncomplicated – get people who use them to help write them
- not having too many – balance the use of procedures with the level of risk
- training people how to use them
- making sure those who need them can access them when they need them.

*One New Zealand mining company created a guide to implementing the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 that consisted entirely of pictures to show the standards required.*

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*As one experienced investigator says, “during serious investigations there is one comment I often hear, and I hate to hear: ‘this has happened before’. This tells me that the accident was avoidable and unnecessary, and represents a failure by the organisation to learn.”*

## **Promote training and improvement**

Workforce competence is a key part of a strong safety culture. Competence comes from regular training, practising and refresher courses. It needs to be constantly monitored.

Make sure you provide training in both technical skills and people skills, and create a supportive environment for people to take on new challenges. It's important to keep up with new or changing legislation, standards and technologies. So don't forget about your own training and professional development needs while you're sorting out everyone else's.

## **Take the ‘just culture’ approach**

The just culture concept is based on the idea that it's normal for people to make mistakes. Organisations should allow for this by building protections into their systems and processes to minimise the effects of mistakes.

A just culture approach includes:

- encouraging a strong culture for reporting incidents
- encouraging open and honest incident investigations
- getting to the bottom of problems to identify any systemic causes
- reporting and sharing the outcomes of investigations
- taking actions to make sure that the incident won't happen again.

## Just culture and just consequences

Investigating an incident with a focus on finding someone to blame isn't productive. It encourages people to be cautious and evasive, and makes it difficult to find out what really happened.

The just culture approach encourages people to report mistakes, including their own. People understand that their report will be used as an opportunity for learning and not for blaming, and have confidence that their report will be taken seriously and that it will be acted on.

Accountability still applies under just culture and poor attitudes, negligent or deliberate rule breaking, or non-conformance is not tolerated. The organisation draws a clear line between what behaviours are acceptable and what aren't. The consequences for poor behaviour are based on an understanding of why it occurred, and are fair and consistent.

### What others are doing

A New Zealand quarry established teams of operators led by a supervisor to identify the top five hazards and performance-shaping factors in each of its quarries, and to systematically review and identify ways to manage them. The supervisors received training in the human factors that affect hazard and performance management (people skills) and were aware of the need to focus on both human and organisational factors.

The New Zealand Minerals Health and Safety Council (MinEx) regularly distributes safety alerts, which describe industry incidents in New Zealand and overseas. This is to make sure our mines, quarries and tunnelling operations have the opportunity to learn from these incidents and avoid similar things happening here.

## How to track learning

Ongoing learning is vital for building a strong health and safety culture. Use these questions to focus your attention on learning opportunities in your organisation. How do you and your organisation stack up? Can you think of examples where you do well and other examples where you don't do so well? Where improvement is needed, start compiling your health and safety action plan.

# KEEP LEARNING ACTIONS



### WHAT YOU DO:

Do you keep up to date with training and development, and insist your management team do the same?

Do you encourage people to report their own mistakes and give them positive recognition when they do? And do you report your own?

Do you provide opportunities for people to take on new challenges in a supportive environment?

Do you insist that all incidents and near misses are treated as opportunities for learning regardless of whether or not someone was hurt?

Do you share data on incidents, trends and benchmarks with your people?

Do you find out what's happening in health and safety elsewhere and share what you have learned with your people?

### AT YOUR MINE, QUARRY OR TUNNEL OPERATION:

Do the people who use the procedures help write them?

Do you balance the number of procedures with the amount of risk?

Do your teams capture a lot of their learning through discussion and problem-solving?

Is training and development provided in both technical and people skills?

Is there a strong incident reporting and investigation culture, including near misses, based on 'just culture' principles?

Are people accountable for their attitudes and any negligent or risky behaviour?

Is incident data used to identify and analyse trends, and is data on near misses considered particularly valuable for identifying potentially serious incidents that haven't happened yet?



# MORE WAYS TO TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

## Use indicators carefully

You'll find a good discussion on the use of indicators to measure health and safety in the MBIE publication *How Health and Safety Makes Good Business Sense* (see the resources list on pages 42 and 43).

Indicators are generally described as either 'lead' or 'lag'. Lead indicators measure activities designed to prevent harm and manage risk, and should generally be preferred to lag indicators which measure safety performance results. You need to be careful with lag indicators, eg injury frequency rates, because:

- they have the potential to encourage negative behaviours such as not reporting incidents, near misses and injuries
- as a performance measure they reflect the past and tell us little about the potential for future incidents, particularly incidents with low probability but serious consequences if they do happen.

Just because your business has a low personal injury rate or incident rate doesn't mean that it's safe. This mistaken assumption was a precursor to the Texas City refinery explosion in 2005 and to a number of other major disasters.

## QUICK GUIDE TO INDICATORS

These are examples of indicators that you can use to measure your health and safety culture:

- ratio of near miss reports to actual incidents
- numbers of system non-conformance reported by workers
- number of safety observations undertaken by managers
- number of safety observations undertaken by workers
- numbers of improvements implemented as a result of worker suggestions
- instances of worker participation in safety audits and in incident investigations.



## Use surveys

Surveys give you valuable feedback about your people's perceptions on matters such as:

- management style, communication, values and behaviours
- what's working well and not so well
- teamwork.

Perceptions aren't always accurate but they do reflect what people are thinking and should always be taken seriously. If people's perceptions are negative, then managers need to understand why and think about what they can do to change them.

Surveys can take a number of forms. Enlist specialist advice – preferably from an independent, external person – to make sure your survey is well-designed and will give you useful and valid feedback. Repeating surveys over time can help you track improvements in your health and safety culture.

## SURVEY TECHNIQUES

These can include:

- **Observations:** Observing management and workers doing their normal work to get information on working practices, processes, communication channels and decision-making.
- **Documentation analysis:** Analysing documents tells a lot about management processes, decision-making and communication.
- **Personal interviews:** Interviewing company management and/or workers can provide qualitative insights.
- **Group discussions:** Can help to get a qualitative insight. They need to be conducted by a specialist, as the answers will be highly influenced by group dynamics.
- **360-degree feedback:** This is when feedback on individual performance is obtained from a number of sources (including team members and peers), against predefined criteria such as mindset and behavioural expectations.

## Use formal reviews

Use reviews to look for evidence of whether cultural initiatives are being actioned as intended and how effective they are. Reviews may be internal or may use an external provider. Make sure that your review team is the right one for the task. Reviews can provide feedback on matters like:

- management visits to worksites – which sites and how often
- team involvement in decision-making
- health and wellbeing programmes
- quality of incident investigations and use of 'just culture'
- supervisor-led health and safety initiatives
- effectiveness of health and safety committees.

# TAKE ACTION

- 1** Review your organisation's health and safety culture using the snapshot on page 7. Ask others, including workers and/or their representatives, to do the same. Compare your results and compile a schedule of strengths and areas for improvement.
- 2** Use the checklists for each of the five paths to a strong health and safety culture. Identify key actions you can take to improve your culture and write these down as an action plan.
- 3** Read the major incident investigations referenced in the resources list and identify where health and safety culture was a significant contributor to the incident. Ask yourself: "Could this happen here?" If yes, review your action plan to incorporate this learning.



# IT'S UP TO YOU

**As a manager, you have a vital role in leading change to improve health and safety in your mine, quarry or tunnelling operation.**

The key for improving health and safety outcomes is to create a strong health and safety culture with everyone being committed and empowered to work together to achieve common health and safety goals and outcomes.

Creating a strong culture takes time and effort but you can start now by taking positive actions to:

- lead by example
- build trust and respect
- communicate clearly
- involve everyone
- keep learning.

Success will help to ensure that your workplace is a safer, more secure and more enjoyable place to work. In addition, the benefits will extend beyond this to other aspects of your business.

However, as a health and safety leader you should never feel that the job is done. You need to continue monitoring and seeking ways to improve. You need to be ever vigilant and alert to the possibility of something going wrong. You need to be constantly reviewing your tolerance to risk and understanding that small failures are signs that something needs fixing.

Your mindfulness and focus on the issues raised in this guide will help build and sustain safer mines, quarries and tunnelling operations now and in the future. It will help ensure that lessons from past tragedies, such as at the Pike River Coal Mine, are not forgotten.

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# RESOURCES

## Key legislation

All available at <[www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz)>

- *Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992*
- *Health and Safety in Employment (Mining – Underground) Regulations 1999*
- *Health and Safety in Employment (Mining Administration) Regulations 1996*

## Standards

All available from Standards New Zealand online at <[www.standards.co.nz](http://www.standards.co.nz)>

- *AS/NZS 4801:2001 – Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems – Specification with guidance for use*
- *AS/NZS 4804:2001 – Occupational health and safety management system – General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques*
- *AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 – Risk management – Principles and guidelines*

## Publications

Simpson, G, Horberry, T, and Joy, J. (2009). *Understanding Human Error in Mine Safety*. Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd

Department of Labour. (2007). *How Health and Safety Make Good Business Sense (A Summary of Research Findings)*. Retrieved from: <[www.dol.govt.nz/publications/research/good-sense/lit-review.pdf](http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/research/good-sense/lit-review.pdf)>

## Websites

**Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment** <[www.mbie.govt.nz](http://www.mbie.govt.nz)>

The Ministry's website provides a portal to a range of health and safety information, mostly on its 'Health and Safety' and 'Labour' sites. This includes material published by the former Department of Labour, which the Ministry now incorporates.

- *A Guide to the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992*
- A range of health and safety factsheets on topics such as measuring health and safety culture, taking all practicable steps, and employee participation systems – these can be downloaded from <[www.business.govt.nz/healthandsafetygroup?#hse](http://www.business.govt.nz/healthandsafetygroup?#hse)>

**Accident Compensation Corporation** <[www.acc.co.nz](http://www.acc.co.nz)>

- *Measuring your capabilities in Workplace Safety Management – ACC Workplace Safety Management Practices Audit Standards (ACC442)*. (March 2012)

**Business Leaders' Health & Safety Forum** <[www.zeroharm.org.nz](http://www.zeroharm.org.nz)>

- Leadership assessment and resources
- Case studies on health and safety leadership

**Health and Safety Executive (UK)** <[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)>

A range of publications are available on health and safety management and on building a strong health and safety culture. The 'human factors' briefings are particularly valuable.

**Minerals Industry Risk Management Gateway** <[www.mirmgate.com](http://www.mirmgate.com)>

MIRMgate is an initiative of the University of Queensland to provide the minerals industry with comprehensive safety information. It provides a portal to a library of information related to hazard and risk management in the mining, minerals processing and quarrying industries.

**International Council on Mining & Metals** <[www.icmm.com](http://www.icmm.com)>

- *Overview of leading indicators for occupational health and safety in mining.* (November 2012)

**Learning Legacy** <<http://learninglegacy.independent.gov.uk>>

The London Olympic Park construction project is internationally recognised for its successful health and safety practices based on a strong culture. A number of reports are available.

## Major incident investigations

**Moura Mine disaster**

- Hopkins, A. (1999). *Managing Major Hazards: The Lessons of the Moura Mine Disaster*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin
- Chapman, J A. (2007). *The Moura Mine Disaster: A Case of Failure in Organisational Learning and Knowledge Management*. Penrith South DC, NSW, Australia: University of Western Sydney. Retrieved from: <[www.wacra.org/PublicDomain/IJCRA%20xixi\\_i\\_pg79-86Chapman.pdf](http://www.wacra.org/PublicDomain/IJCRA%20xixi_i_pg79-86Chapman.pdf)>

**Texas City Refinery explosion**

- US Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. (2007). *Investigation Report – Refinery Explosion and Fire, BP Texas City, Texas*. Retrieved from: <[www.csb.gov/assets/1/19/csbfinalreportbp.pdf](http://www.csb.gov/assets/1/19/csbfinalreportbp.pdf)>

**Pike River Mine disaster**

- Royal Commission on the Pike River Mine Tragedy, Final Report. (October 2012). Retrieved from: <<http://pikeriver.royalcommission.govt.nz/Final-Report>>

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# GLOSSARY

Where the following terms are used in the document, they are intended to have the meaning described below. This meaning may be different from its common use in your organisation.

- Manager** Refers to anyone with management and leadership responsibilities, including people in roles such as site senior executive, statutory manager, superintendent or supervisor.
- Staff** Includes all employees of the organisation, eg operators, tradesmen, technical and support staff, office workers, managers.
- Workers** Includes all staff, contractors and subcontractors.





**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
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