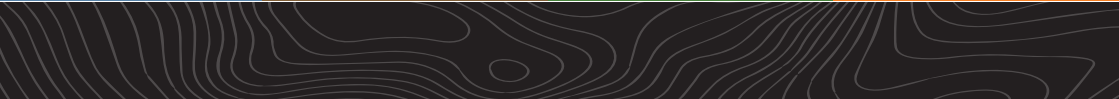


Worker Engagement and Participation



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1 Introduction

The best outcomes are achieved when a business and its workers work together on health and safety.

Worker Engagement and Participation is about having planned ways for:

- workers to give input on issues which will (or are likely to) affect their health or safety. This includes asking for and taking into account their views
- workers to improve work health and safety on an ongoing basis, e.g., by raising concerns or suggesting improvements

This will help you and your business to make better decisions and keep your people and productivity thriving. Workers who help develop safe systems of work can suggest practical, cost-effective solutions.

They are more likely to make them happen in practice.

Duty holders, including owners or persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs), have an obligation under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSAW Act) to engage with and enable the participation and representation of workers. A PCBU should regularly discuss health and safety issues at their work with their workers.

The intent of this booklet is to provide you with help in ways to engage and communicate with your workers to improve safety and health outcomes at your workplace, while improving business performance and productivity.



2 Engaging with Workers



Worker engagement is about involving workers in health and safety matters and decisions in the workplace. The best ways you can engage are to:

- share information and decisions in a timely manner
- give workers reasonable opportunities to share their views, raise work health or safety issues, and contribute to decision-making processes
- consider the views of workers

Strong worker engagement drives employee performance, accomplishment, and continuous improvement through the entire business. Worker engagement is the emotional connection which a worker feels towards his or her organisation that tends to influence their behaviours and level of effort in work-related activities. By involving workers in decisions affecting their work, you create a workplace environment where workers care for what they do.

Examples of worker engagement are:

- **Conducting risk assessments** - Involve workers in risk assessments of their activities. Listen to their ideas and act on them where practicable to do so.
- **Changes to practices and processes** - Ask workers about more effective and safer ways to carry out tasks.
- **Sharing information** - On matters relating to health and safety (this includes specific issues that you need to engage with workers on such as worker health, amenities etc.
- **Safety Committees/Toolbox talks** - Give your workers a reasonable opportunity to express their views and raise work health or safety concerns and contribute to the decision-making process. Consider the views of your workers and advise them of the outcomes in a timely manner.

3 Worker participation

Participation is one way for workers to raise health and safety concerns, suggest ways to improve health and safety, and make decisions that affect worker health and safety. A PCBU that has good worker participation will:

- give workers opportunities to raise issues or suggestions in a timely way
- have workers who know how to participate, and use opportunities to do so
- have decision makers who consider and respond to workers' issues or suggestions

PCBUs should have deliberate, planned ways to engage with workers and support their participation. Having formal and informal ways for workers to contribute, will be most effective.

The HSAW Act does not require you to adopt a particular system. In fact, there is a clear expectation that you and your workforce (and unions representing any employees), will, in good faith, work out the systems and processes that best suit the workplace's particular circumstances.

For mining operations, if one or more mine workers request a health and safety representative, at least one must be included as part of the worker participation system.

For quarries and alluvial mines, a worker participation system must be developed if there are 30 or more employees, or an employee (or a union) requests that one be developed.

PCBUs should encourage their workers to ask questions about the effectiveness of their worker engagement and participation practices.



4 Communication

Strong worker engagement and participation relies on good communication skills. The following are the top 5 communication skills that will help you with worker engagement:

1. **Listening** – Being a good listener is the key to good communication. Active listening involves paying close attention to what the other person is saying, asking clarifying questions, and ensuring you understand them.
2. **Non-verbal communication** – Your body language, eye contact, hand gestures, and tone of voice all influence the message you are trying to convey. A relaxed, open stance (arms open, legs relaxed), and a friendly tone will make you appear approachable, and will encourage others to speak openly with you.
3. **Clear and concise** – Try to convey your message in as few words as possible. Think about what you want to say before you say it; this will help you to avoid talking excessively and/or confusing your audience.
4. **Empathy** – Even when you disagree with an employer, co-worker, or employee, it is important for you to understand and respect their point of view.
5. **Open-mindedness** – You should enter any conversation with a flexible, open mind. Be open to listening to and understanding the other person's point of view, rather than simply getting the message across.



Within every business, all transactions result from communication. Good communication skills are essential to allow others and yourself to understand information more accurately and quickly.

5 Worker Safety Representatives (HSR)



Reasonable opportunities must be provided for employees to participate effectively in improving health and safety at work. Where agreement cannot be made on an employee participation system, the default system set out in Part 3 of the HSAW Act applies. The default system requires that an election for a health and safety representative is held.

It is good practice to implement a documented system for worker participation based on the following: good faith and a clear commitment to health and safety outcomes, have at least one health and safety committee for every location or site, and that each committee focus on safety critical aspects of the mining or quarrying operation.

For larger sites it is also good practice to have effective, empowered and informed site health and safety representatives (HSRs) that are trained under the HSAW Act. Several training providers deliver NZQA unit standard 29315 which meets the requirements for initial training. The PCBU is required to pay for the HSR training.

HSRs are able to make significant contributions to work health and safety because they are in the workplace from day-to-day and understand the nature of the work that is performed by the people whom they represent. If a site health and safety representative or committee makes a health and safety recommendation to the employer, it must be adopted, or a written statement provided setting out the reasons for not adopting it.



6 Good Practice Examples

The following are industry examples of worker engagement and participation practices:

1. Upper Hutt-based Real Steel Ltd introduced a whiteboard where people can proactively write up any health and safety issues, and a deadline is set for resolving them. All issues get added to the board, and workers are updated on progress at meetings.
2. “Everyone knows that anything on the whiteboard stays there until it’s sorted. It’s just a good, straightforward tool to make sure everyone can contribute” – Real Steel employee.
3. Real Steel also has a quarterly H&S innovation award. This encourages workers to raise issues as well as promote recognition that everyone has responsibility for H&S, not just supervisors and managers.
4. OceanaGold have introduced PEACH interactions. The Senior Leadership Team are required to undertake specific interactions with workers. Topics to discuss include; their personal motivations for being here, what they like/don't like about their job, any specific hazards they see on the site, questions about their job, hazards, issues, any previous incidents with the work they are undertaking etc.
5. OceanaGold have also introduced Safety, Health and Environment Representatives quarterly field trips. Once a quarter, management undertake a field trip with their HSE reps, this exposes them to hazards outside of their normal work areas. Once in the field, they will undertake a task observation or workplace inspection for that area.
6. A dedicated safety day – At this quarry, the site shuts production for one day per month. A skeleton crew continue with sales and the rest of the site complete safety training, conduct safety inspections, review safe work procedures and a site safety meeting is conducted. This focusses everyone on safety improvement for one day per month without other work distractions.
7. A number of sites have workers conducting toolbox meetings and/or safety meetings with managers and supervisors being participants in the meeting rather than running them. Agendas and content are agreed between management and workers prior to the meeting.

Useful resources

MinEx – Extractives Health & Safety Council

www.minex.org.nz

Unions in New Zealand represent workers from a broad range of sectors, industries and occupations

<https://www.union.org.nz/rights/>

WorkSafe Guidelines 2016

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/businesses/worker-engagement-and-participation/good-practice-for-worker-engagement-participation-and-representation/>

Example of Real Steel worker participation initiatives

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/the-toolshed/case-studies/wepr-case-studies/worker-participation-in-risk-management-improves-efficiency/>



Health and Safety in NZ extractives

www.minex.org.nz