

Work health and safety

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Senior executives are classified as officers under the **Work Health and Safety Act 2011** (WHS Act) and the **Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017** (WHS Regulation). As such you must:

- comply with laws to ensure the health and safety of workers - the WHS Act holds you **personally liable** for ensuring your agency complies with its duties.
- exercise due diligence - **you cannot delegate this duty**.

To exercise your due diligence you must:

- acquire and keep up to date with safety knowledge
- understand business health and safety risks
- provide appropriate resources to identify and control risks
- consider and monitor hazards and risks as they arise
- review incidents to identify insufficient controls
- respond in a timely manner to hazards, risks and incidents, and communicate work health and safety messages
- ensure relevant policies, processes and resources are regularly reviewed, independently audited and are consistent with the minimum compliance standards
- demonstrate leadership and personal responsibility.

Safety should be a part of your everyday activities.

Creating safe workplaces

We all have a part in making and keeping our workplaces safe. As a senior executive, **you have obligations under the law to ensure your workplaces are safe**.

You can start improving the health and safety of your workplace today by:

- talking to your workers about what a safer workplace might look like
- making your safety promise
- turning your words into actions.

As a leader you should also ensure other decision makers and people managers in your team are supported and equipped to manage hazards, including psychosocial hazards, in your workplace.

You should familiarise yourself with your internal work health and safety policies and procedures. **SafeWork NSW** regulate health and safety across workplaces. They provide support to agencies through advisory resources and workshops to help maintain a safe workplace and meet health and safety responsibilities.

SafeWork NSW have developed the **Code of Practice for managing psychosocial hazards at work** to help you understand your safety obligations.

Consulting with staff

Consultation and communication are critical elements for creating a healthy, safe and productive workplace.

As a senior executive, you need to actively consult, engage and communicate with your people using a wide range of methods, channels and styles. It is important to consult with your team about what workplace factors are affecting them and how you can provide a working environment that supports their mental health and wellbeing at work.

You should consult your people, or people likely to be affected by a matter, at each step of the risk management process. Consultation should occur as early as possible on:

- new policies, procedures and systems of work
- organisational restructures, new reporting arrangements and work locations
- changes to tasks, duties, and working arrangements, including rosters
- new technology, plant, equipment and production processes, or
- the redesign of existing workplaces.

One of the formal channels available to you is your Health and Safety Committee. This committee includes senior executives, subject matter experts and Health and Safety Representatives, all elected by your agency's staff members. This committee is a critical channel for discussing WHS concerns, and enabling the development and implementation of effective management strategies.

Committee meetings also are a powerful opportunity to share good news and success stories, discuss case studies and lessons learnt, and help other parts of your workplace benefit from this knowledge and experience. By having regular risk and WHS culture conversations as part of your everyday work, you will be leading by example and helping to embed your WHS landscape.