
Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

SAFER AND HEALTHIER WORKPLACES

2007- 2012

A framework to assist Queensland Government agencies
implement Workplace Health and Safety and Injury
Management improvement strategies.

Executive summary

The *Safer and Healthier Workplaces 2007-2012* framework continues the improvements made by government agencies since the introduction of the *Safer Workplaces 2004-2006* strategy. The *Safer and Healthier Workplaces 2007-2012* framework continues the focus on the three major issues that directly relate to improving workers' compensation claims performance, namely:

- improving health and safety management systems;
- establishing systematic injury management processes; and
- workers' compensation claims management issues.

The addition of an initiative under the strategy to advance healthy lifestyle programs in the public service reflects the government's commitment to improve the lives of Queenslanders by supporting people to get healthy and active. Healthy lifestyle programs provide information and skills for self-determination in making decisions relating to individual health and wellbeing.

The success of all strategies relies on the ongoing commitment from senior management and adequate resources within agencies to continue to implement improvement programs. This framework also reflects the Australian Government "Safe and Sound" strategy that details five crucial areas for improvement in public sector workplaces. These five areas are:

- Management Commitment;
- Accountability Measures;
- Systems Review;
- Executive Information; and
- Incentives.

An important element of the *Safer Workplaces 2004-06* strategy was the establishment of targets, with results being monitored and reported to agencies. The Government has approved the continuation of target setting for agencies and these targets compliment national occupational health and safety targets and will be effective from 1 July 2007.

Targets allow agencies to continue the strong focus on injury prevention and workers' compensation claims management activities. Management programs that identify injuries/illness in the early stages and other associated initiatives improve organisational culture and assist in maintaining a healthy work environment.

The quarterly reporting of agency performance co-ordinated by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (JAG) will continue. Timely and high quality workers' compensation data interpretation is essential for agencies to monitor workers' compensation performance. Agencies will provide feedback to JAG at six monthly intervals following the December and July quarterly report. The feedback from departments will be used to highlight whole-of-government concerns and also provides an opportunity for successful agency initiatives to be described.

The framework also requests agencies to consider issues associated with creating and maintaining a healthier workplace, addresses the risks associated with driver safety and continues to highlight the risks associated with psychosocial hazards. Information products addressing these issues will be developed to assist agencies in implementing programs to address these issues.

1. Management Commitment

If government is to lead by example, management commitment is needed to ensure continued improvements of workplace health and safety systems. Senior management commitment is critical if improvements are to be achieved, and must extend beyond satisfying legislative and regulatory requirements. The challenge for senior managers is therefore not only to improve safety and injury management systems but also to develop skills that build positive management and worker capabilities.

A health and safety policy is the primary document in a health and safety management system. It must set out the intentions of the agency with respect to health and safety and should be reviewed at regular intervals and distributed throughout the department.

Active participation by senior management can be demonstrated by:

- chairing departmental peak health and safety committees;
- actively participating in workplaces health and safety strategic planning sessions;
- having health and safety as a standing agenda item at senior management meetings;
- ensuring risk management processes are consistent across the agency and relates to the scale of health and safety risks; and
- appropriate health and safety information is included in staff communications, and distributed to contractors, labour hire employees and visitors.

Employees' perception of leadership and how it is demonstrated in the workplace is crucial for improving and maintaining high level workplace health and safety and injury management standards.

The senior officers' group was created in 2003 and is made up of senior management representatives from the departments of Premiers, Treasury, Industrial Relations, Office of Public Service Commissioner, WorkCover and QSuper. This group will continue to monitor the implementation of programs across the public sector and provide strategic direction for the *Safer and Healthier Workplaces* strategy.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (JAG) will advise the senior officers' group on the ongoing development of this strategy and its implementation across all government agencies. JAG will continue to support agencies in the implementation of strategies under the *Safer and Healthier Workplaces* strategy.

The annual performance report of agencies for presentation to the agency Director-General will continue to be prepared by JAG. A revised assessment and audit tool will be provided to agencies to assist them to measure implementation and report agency performance against set criteria. The information contained in these reports will be useful for agencies to analyse how future resources should be prioritised.

2. Accountability Measures - Targets

The targets that have been set for government agencies under *Safer and Healthier Workplaces 2007-2012* establishes a range of targets for government agencies as a step towards achieving the national vision of Australian workplaces free from death, injury and disease.

The *National OHS Strategy 2002-2012* provides a basis for developing sustainable, safe and healthy work environments and for reducing the number of people hurt or killed at work. This National Strategy was agreed to by all Australian governments, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). The targets endorsed by the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council state:

- a reduction in the incidence of work-related fatalities, with a reduction of at least 20 per cent by 30 June 2012 (with a reduction of 10 per cent being achieved by 30 June 2007); and
- a reduction in the incidence of workplace injury by at least 40 per cent by 30 June 2012 (with a reduction of 20 per cent being achieved by 30 June 2007).

In support of achieving these targets the Queensland Government has established the following targets for all Government departments:

- i. *Injury Prevention:* A reduction of 10 per cent in the number of lost time injuries claims greater than five working days, excluding journey injuries, each year for the next five years commencing in the 2007-08 financial year. This will be calculated using workers' compensation data as the source.
- ii. *Ten percent reduction in lost time* (work days lost) over each year for the next five years. To be reported in days and monetary values. The baseline for this calculation will be determined from an average over the past three years performance.

Each agency is encouraged to set or refine their own targets to complement these required levels of achievement. The targets are designed to be challenging but achievable. Data availability limits the targets to compensated work-related injury and disease.

Outcome indicators are important measures but generally reflect past actions. Positive performance indicators allow an agency to measure activities undertaken that are designed to positively impact on outcome performance. Positive performance indicators can be used by agencies to assess the following issues:

- risk management;
- management of work processes;
- participation, communication and skills;
- planing, design and procurement; and
- monitoring and review.

3. WH&S Systems Review and Improvements

Having effective policies and procedures not only establishes how WH&S and injury management issues are to be managed but also leads to improved safety outcomes. Audits conducted under the *Safer Workplaces Strategy 2004-06* identified the current standards existing within departments and made recommendations for systems improvements.

For the *Safer and Healthier Workplaces 2007-2012* strategy, agencies will undertake an audit during the 2007-08 financial year. The cost of this audit will be met by the individual agencies and can be undertaken by external or internal personnel. Only agencies detailed in APPENDIX 1 are required to undertake the audit program.

It is proposed that a further external audit will be conducted during the 2009-10 financial year. Once again, only agencies listed in APPENDIX 1 will be required to undertake this audit. Partial funding for these audits will be co-ordinated through the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (JAG). JAG will also provide a list of external auditors that will be appointed following a whole-of-government tender process.

Table 1 below represents the key elements and performance criteria developed for agencies to assess and report their progress towards implementation of *Safer and Healthier Workplaces 2007- 2012*.

Key elements and performance criteria

Table 1

Key element	Performance criteria
WHS policy and commitment	1. WHS policy 2. Management responsibility
Planning	3. Planning processes
Implementation	4. Consultation 5. Risk management-including Safe Driving Program 6. Healthy Lifestyle Programs 7. Information, instruction and training 8. Injury treatment and management 9. Claims management 10. Incident recording, investigation, analysis and review
Measurement and evaluation	11. Measuring and evaluating WHS performance
Review and improvement	12. Reviewing WHS performance 13. CEO reporting

The self-assessment audit tool will give key indicators under each of the 13 elements that will allow agencies to facilitate improvement strategies. Five levels of achievement will continue to be available under each element as set out below:

- A. Meets all essential and best practice criteria in guidance
- B. Meets all essential and some key best practice criteria which identify effective planning, implementation and/or communication
- C. Meets all essential criteria, however, planning, implementation and/or communication needs improvement
- D. Evidence of development of a process to meet the performance criterion, but it is not yet implemented
- E. No evidence of a process in place to meet the performance criterion.

4. Executive Information

To enable departmental leaders to make informed decisions concerning WH&S and injury management, relevant performance information will be distributed to all agencies. To facilitate this, JAG will continue to provide injury information to the head of agencies on a quarterly basis and will also compile a yearly report on agency performance that will include common injury types for each department.

Feedback supplied by agencies following the quarterly reports prepared in December and July each year will advise on:

- progress towards implementation of the *Safer and Healthier Workplaces 2007-2012* strategy;
- performance against targets; and
- names, positions, locations and contact details of personnel working within the agencies health/safety and injury management program.

This information will be collated and reported to the Senior Officers Group by JAG. Senior management representatives from government agencies will also be invited to specific seminars for leaders conducted by JAG during Work Safe Week. Government agencies are encouraged to promote WH&S issues during safety week. JAG will advise all departments of the location of relevant seminars, functions or workshops held during safety week.

Meetings of officers with responsibilities for WH&S within agencies listed in APPENDIX 1 will be held each quarter to monitor the implementation of strategies and to advise agencies of proposed legislative changes and any emerging health, safety and injury management risks. WorkCover Queensland and Q-COMP, the workers' compensation regulator, will also be invited to participate in these meetings.

JAG along with a representative of WorkCover will continue to visit government departments listed in APPENDIX 1 on a yearly basis to review yearly performance and to update on whole-of-government initiatives.

To facilitate further information sharing, a network of meetings will be held throughout Queensland, which will involve agency Workplace Health and Safety Officers (WHSO) and Workplace Health and Safety Representatives (WHSR) and persons with workplace rehabilitation responsibilities. It is proposed to hold meetings in major regional centres on a quarterly basis with representatives from government agencies along with representatives from WorkCover Queensland.

Agencies also need to consider strategies relating to the development of supervisor skills aimed at managing the risks associated with psychosocial injuries. The "Practical People Management Course" distributed by the Office of Public Service Commissioner in 2006, is one course that can be considered by agencies to address this issue.

5. Incentives

Incentives that recognise good performance are necessary motivators in WH&S and injury management. Individual departments are encouraged to consider implementing WH&S/injury management related awards within staff awards or related recognition programs. Individuals or groups that receive awards derive a sense of pride from their performance and will encourage further support for departmental WH&S programs.

Departments are also encouraged to support nominations of their WH&S programs in the annual Work Safe Awards program held each year. The Work Safe Awards recognise and reward Queensland businesses that have reached high standards of health and safety. The benefit of participating in these awards programs is that it highlights the investment and support that an agency has contributed to improving WH&S.

Since 2006, the Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management have contained a specific category that encourages high standards of workplace health and safety and injury management relating to both physical and psycho-social hazards. Departments should consider applying for these award programs that celebrate the successes of project teams and work units who have made a significant contribution to the Queensland Government's Smart State vision.

Award winning programs are used as best practice examples and are exemplars for other government agencies to improve their WH&S and injury management programs. Individuals who have participated in the nomination process also believe that reflecting upon past achievements motivates them for further success.

Awarding teams within agencies who achieve set targets in respect of positive performance indicators such as risk assessments undertaken, or the number of job safety analyses performed, is also recommended. An example of recognition used by one agency saw a team awarded an increased budget allocation for specific safety related programs because of their strong performance in undertaking preventative programs. This incentive program was well received by team members and has been used as an example across the organisation to promote the benefits of a team approach to WH&S.

It is important that this approach uses positive performance indicators to focus employees and management on preventative programs and commence a shift away from a reliance on lag indicators such as lost time injury frequency rates (LTIFR). Incentive programs therefore need to compliment agency WH&S improvement programs by highlighting and rewarding individuals or groups whose activities and actions have demonstrated a significant contribution.

APPENDIX 1

- **Department of Communities**
- **Department of Community Safety**
- **Department of Education, Training and the Arts**
- **Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation**
- **Department of Justice and Attorney-General**
- **Department of Transport and Main Roads**
- **Department of Environment and Resource Management**
- **Department of Public Works**
- **Queensland Health**
- **Queensland Police Service**