

Steps to good, better, best safety

Construction companies have a legal duty of care towards their workers. The three-step good, better, best model provides a useful template to start and improve site health and safety.

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY in Employment (HSE) Act 1992 states that employers must take all practicable steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of employees. The Site Safe good, better, best model explains how employers can achieve this when starting or improving their health and safety management system.

Good site health and safety

The first or 'good' step is a basic health and safety system that records all known hazards, accidents and employee competency training and contains an emergency plan to meet the minimum legal requirements:

- Hazard management - a hazard register is a template used to record a company's known hazards. Preventing injuries on-site requires a proactive approach in reporting hazards, staff involvement and regular reviews of the hazard controls. A hazard register can be used:
 - at the tender stage to work out the hazards for each job
 - to help compare subcontractors' hazard registers.
- Incident, near-miss and accident investigation - thorough incident and accident

investigations are needed to help identify trends and hazards.

- Emergency preparedness - plan for all potential emergencies at the start of a project and review when situations change. Also, think about multiple hazards or emergency situations when developing a plan, for example, working at height in a confined space.
- Training and competency - inductions, relevant training and knowing when a staff member is safe to work unsupervised are key aspects to running a safe business. It's important to record all training in a register as this clearly communicates when an employee is competent.
- Contractor management - an employer's legal responsibility doesn't stop at their employees but also includes all their subcontractors. Include all subcontractors at site inductions and emergency procedures and request their health and safety plan at the tender stage.

Add more to get better

To support the foundation of good health and safety tools and improve systems and behaviours on-site, take 'better' steps:

- Task analysis - a task analysis gets workers beyond just listing hazards and controls on-site in a hazard register or board. Instead, they think through the task step by step and list the hazards and controls for each step.
- Toolbox talk meeting - an opportunity to talk about site activities, new or reviewed safe work practices and observations, accidents and incidents and near misses, task analysis and all employee concerns.
- Incentives and praise - reward employees who update registers, speak at toolbox meetings and actively think about their actions.

Be the best

Health and safety processes and systems that complement each other will together help develop an on-site safety culture. Once this has been established, it is important to keep it thriving.

Internal and external safety audits, higher-level training and specific goals and responsibilities are positive indicators that will set a pathway for the best health and safety system. ◀

For more ▶ The Site-Specific Safety Plan (SSSP) has free templates and registers. Download from the Site Safe website, www.sitesafe.org.nz.