

Safety management - developing a safety policy >

This information bulletin provides the outline of an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Policy and can be used to develop your organisation's own policy. OHS policies are not mandatory under Northern Territory legislation however they set the basis for an Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS) and publicly display your organisation's commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace and systems of work.

What is a health and safety policy?

An Occupational Health and Safety Policy is a statement by the organisation of its intentions and principles in relation to its overall occupational health and safety performance. The policy provides a framework for action and sets the occupational health and safety objectives and targets. It should be signed, dated and authorized by the organisation's top management.

Where to start

The first step in developing a safety policy is obtaining management commitment and involving employees in the process. The two are complimentary in that management commitment provides the motivating force and resources while employee involvement provides the means through which workers develop and or express their own commitment to health and safety.

What to include

- a general statement of intent including management's commitment;
- a list of goals and objectives;
- responsibilities and accountabilities for achieving those goals and objectives including those of management, supervisors and workers;
- an outline of the safety program and procedures;
- the method of review.

General Statement of Commitment

Management's commitment to provide a safe and healthy workplace and to comply with the minimum legislative requirements should be stated clearly.

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The policy should also include a reference to the consultation processes for discussions on health and safety matters with employees as well as a commitment to provide relevant information and training on health and safety issues.

Goals and objectives

These should be clearly stated and should include such things as a commitment to:

- provide safe plant and systems of work;
- provide written procedures and instructions to ensure safe systems of work;
- ensure compliance with legislative requirements and current industry standards;
- provide information, instruction, training and supervision to employees, contractors and customers to ensure their safety; and
- provide support and assistance to employees and opportunities to be involved in consultation on safety issues.

Responsibilities and accountabilities

The policy should include a reference to employee responsibilities and accountabilities to ensure employees are aware of their responsibility to protect themselves and their fellow workers. Every one in the organisation should be aware of the influence that their actions and inaction can have on the effectiveness of the system and understand they may be personally responsible or accountable.

Outline of the safety program

There should be a brief overview of the OHSMS and how it is to be implemented, maintained and reviewed.

Review

The policy should be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary to maintain continuous improvement. The policy should always be signed by the current senior person in the organisation and dated.

Distribution

Copies of the policy should be displayed in prominent positions and placed on notice boards, induction booklets and distributed to all staff.

Other policies

It may be advantageous to have a number of policies in addition to the general OHS Policy depending on your workplace needs. Other policies might include:

- Rehabilitation / Return to Work.
- Smoke Free Workplace.
- Drug and Alcohol.

Each of these may be developed in a similar manner to the general OHS Policy and should always involve workers in their preparation. In some organisations these are incorporated into their general OHS Policy.

Sample Policy >

Occupational Health and Safety Policy

Organisation Name

Commitment

XXXX recognises its moral and legal responsibility, in particular to the *Work Health Act 1986* and the *Dangerous Goods Act 1998*, to provide a safe and healthy work environment for employees, contractors, customers and visitors. This commitment extends to ensuring the organisation's operations does not place the local community at risk of injury or illness.

Goals and objectives.

XXXX will:

- provide safe plant and systems of work,
- provide written procedures and instructions to ensure safe systems of work,
- ensure compliance with legislative requirements and current industry standards,
- provide information, instruction, training and supervision to employees, contractors and customers to ensure their safety, and
- provide support and assistance to employees and opportunities to be involved in consultation on safety issues.

Responsibilities

XXXX recognises that management has the overall responsibility to provide a safe workplace. Each management representative will be held accountable for implementing this policy in their area of responsibility via their annual performance reviews. These responsibilities are contained in full in our Management OHS Procedure 00? but broadly encompass:

- Providing and maintaining the workplace in a safe condition
- Ensuring all OHS policies and procedures are implemented
- Actively promoting and being involved in those policies and procedures
- Providing the resources to meet their OHS commitment

Employees will ensure that they:

- Follow all OHS policies and procedures
- Report all hazards to their supervisor

Consultation

The organisation has total commitment to encouraging consultation and co-operation between management and employees. It will formally involve elected employee health and safety representatives in any workplace change that will affect the health and safety of employees in any workplace.

Authorisation

The CEO will personally sign and date the policy

Review

The policy will be reviewed annually.

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