

Alert WorkSafe VICTORIA

Safety By-Word: Consultation

WorkSafe has begun a statewide campaign to increase awareness of the value of consultation, which became a requirement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act on January 1.

"Consultation is an essential tool in understanding workplace hazards and is already widely practiced in many places through regular team meetings, health and safety representatives and OHS committees," WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said.

"The next step is to make consultation part of every workplace's culture - from the boardroom to management, the general workforce and within each work group.

"Known hazards in an industry or individual workplaces, changes to work practices, systems of work, or new equipment can all put people at risk.

"A regular two-way consultative process should identify existing or emerging issues whether it's an office environment, retail, a factory, building site, farm or freight depot.

"By adopting a sensible, pro-active approach, which considers all views before decisions are made, a greater commitment to health and safety is built. Respect for various views is also built, adding value far beyond health and safety management."

Mr Merritt said consultation would further improve already encouraging signs that workplace safety was being treated more seriously across Victoria.

WorkSafe has produced a guide on consultation which is available online at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or by calling 1800 136 089.



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What is consultation, who needs to be involved and how is it done?

- Consultation is a two-way conversation between employers and employees. It involves sharing information in a timely way and in a form that can be understood by employees
- Employees likely to be directly affected by any matter that might affect their health, safety or welfare should be involved in the consultation process. This includes independent contractors engaged by an employer, any employees of these contractors including labour hire staff
- All employees should have a reasonable opportunity to express their views and play a part in the problem-solving process rather than hearing about changes after they've been made
- If employees are represented by a Health and Safety Representative the HSR must be involved in consultation with or without the direct involvement of the employees
- Consultation takes many forms including regular team meetings, the operation of health and safety committees and the election of health and safety representatives. Consultative procedures should be agreed, and followed, once in place, however either party can seek a review at any time



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