
ORGANISING

ELEMENT

3



LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this element, you should be able to demonstrate understanding of the content by applying what you have learnt to familiar and unfamiliar situations. In particular, you should be able to:

- 1 Outline the organisational health and safety roles and responsibilities of employers, directors and managers.
.....
- 2 Explain the concept of health and safety culture and its significance in the management of health and safety in an organisation.
.....
- 3 Outline the human factors which influence behaviour at work in a way that can affect health and safety.
.....
- 4 Explain how health and safety behaviour at work can be improved.
.....
- 5 Outline the need for emergency procedures and the arrangements for contacting emergency services.
.....
- 6 Outline the requirements for, and effective provision of, first aid in the workplace.
.....

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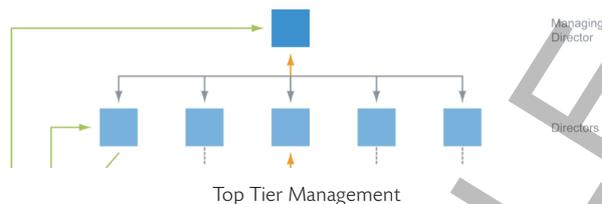
Organisational Health and Safety Roles and Responsibilities

KEY INFORMATION

- **Directors** and senior **managers** have a duty to ensure that their organisation meets its legal obligations. In particular, they are responsible for planning, delivering, monitoring and reviewing policy.
- They must demonstrate clear commitment to health and safety by allocating adequate resources, defining roles and responsibilities, appointing a “champion” at board level, appointing competent advisers and reviewing performance at a board level.

ORGANISATIONAL ROLES OF DIRECTORS AND SENIOR MANAGERS

Directors and senior managers give an organisation its direction and set its priorities. They decide what the organisation does and how it does it. In effect, they control the corporate body. They are, therefore, responsible for ensuring that all of the legal requirements that rest with the employer are met. And as was seen in Element 1, Section 37 of **HSWA** makes it clear that directors and senior managers can be prosecuted for offences committed by the corporate body if they consented or connived in the offence or were negligent in their duties.



The HSE publication “Leading Health and Safety at Work” (INDG417) provides guidance to directors and senior managers in organisations of all sizes. It highlights four key areas for action:

- **Plan** - by establishing a health and safety policy that is an integral part of the organisation’s culture, with board members taking an active lead in promoting health and safety throughout the organisation.
- **Deliver** - the policy through an effective management system that ensures that risks are dealt with sensibly, responsibly and proportionately (this clearly links to HSG65 and other SMSs).
- **Monitor** - to provide the board with reports on the performance of their policy.
- **Review** - performance to allow the board to establish whether the management system is effective in managing risks and protecting people.

DEMONSTRATING TOP MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

Directors and senior managers are not always closely involved in the day-to-day management of the operational side of an organisation. Their role does not always involve “doing” (except in smaller organisations), but it does involve setting strategy.

Directors and senior managers can demonstrate their commitment to health and safety through their strategic thinking by:

- Ensuring availability of resources so the occupational health and safety management system is established, implemented and maintained.
- Defining roles and responsibilities so that the line management responsibility and accountability for health and safety is clear.
- Appointing a member of top management with specific responsibility for health and safety so that it is “championed” at board level.
- Appointing one or more competent persons and adequate resources to provide assistance in meeting the organisation’s health and safety obligations.
- Reviewing performance at board level, perhaps annually.

Directors and senior managers have an enormous influence over their organisation and its priorities. This influence does not simply come from their strategic decision-making, but also from the way they are perceived by those lower in the management hierarchy. They must demonstrate clear commitment and leadership with regard to health and safety.

The influence of visible management commitment and leadership on safety culture is discussed later in this element.

RRC SAMPLE MATERIAL

MORE...

www.hse.gov.uk/leadership/index.htm

REVISION QUESTION

1. Outline the four key action areas highlighted in the HSE publication "Leading Health and Safety at Work" (INDG417).

(Suggested Answer is at the end.)

The Concept and Significance of Safety Culture

KEY INFORMATION

- The safety culture of an organisation is the way that all the people within the organisation think and feel about health and safety and how this translates into behaviour. It can be defined as the shared attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours relating to health and safety.
- There is a strong link between safety culture and health and safety performance. Organisations with a strong, positive culture tend to have good performance, whereas those with a weak, negative culture perform poorly.
- The safety culture of an organisation can be assessed by looking at indicators such as accidents, sickness rates, absenteeism, staff turnover, compliance with rules and worker complaints.
- Workers are often influenced by their peers - the people around them at work who do not have any direct authority over them. This "peer group pressure" occurs indirectly by social interaction and can have a significant effect on behaviour. The influence of peer group pressure is a good indicator of safety culture.

DEFINITION

All organisations have a "culture". It is not written down, or even easily stated. It is a subtle mix of formal and informal rules, relationships, values, customs, etc., which, taken together, describe the distinctive "feel" of the organisation. On one level, this is to do with how the organisation gets things done – its particular way of working. On another level, it is to do with how people perceive the organisation, e.g. how friendly it is.

Organisational culture is a characteristic of the organisation that exists at every level, from senior management to "shop-floor" workers. No one person determines the culture of the organisation; all staff working for the organisation determine it collectively.

Organisations can be described as having a "health and safety culture" (or safety culture) in much the same way.

Safety culture can be defined as the shared attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours relating to health and safety.

The safety culture of an organisation is the way that everyone within the organisation thinks and feels about health and safety and how this translates into their behaviour.

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE

An organisation will have either a positive safety culture or a negative one.

Positive Culture

In an organisation with a positive safety culture, the majority of the workers think and feel that health and safety is important. There is a strong policy and clear leadership from the top because senior management have this attitude, which runs through the whole organisation, from top to bottom. Managers think about the health and safety implications of their decisions and workers share the same view and work safely.

Everyone works safely because they want to. That is the way that things are done in their organisation and that is how everybody else is behaving too.

People in the organisation who do not share this view are in the minority and are likely to come round to the group way of thinking and acting. This is because the culture of an organisation tends to be absorbed by its workers over time. Workers who do not adjust to the group way of thinking may either leave, because they don't feel that they fit in, or possibly be dismissed for working unsafely.

In an organisation like this you can see that there is a clear link between safety culture and health and safety performance. People work safely, so there will be fewer accidents and less ill health. It is also easy to see why organisations strive to create a strong, positive safety culture because when there is one, it has a direct influence on worker behaviour.

The Concept and Significance of Safety Culture



A company with a positive safety culture - all members of staff appreciate the importance of safety



A workplace with a negative safety culture, resulting in unsafe behaviour

NEGATIVE CULTURE

In an organisation with a weak, negative safety culture, the majority of workers think and feel that health and safety is not important; they are poorly educated in health and safety and see it as unnecessary or not important. There is a lack of clear direction and leadership from senior management. Managers do not think about health and safety in their decision-making and so let other priorities dictate their actions. Workers behave unsafely, often because they do not know any better.

Safety-conscious workers are in the minority and are likely to come round to the group way of thinking and acting over time; if not, they may well leave because they do not like the organisational culture and feel unsafe in the work situation.

You can see that in an organisation like this there will be a lack of attention to health and safety, standards will be low, behaviour will be poor and accidents may occur as a result.

INDICATORS USED TO ASSESS CULTURE

It makes sense to try to assess an organisation's safety culture to see whether it is strong and positive, or if there is room for improvement. But the safety culture of an organisation is quite difficult to assess directly because there is no one single feature or item that can be measured. Safety culture is partly defined as how people think and feel, their attitudes, their beliefs and their priorities. These are intangible concepts and almost impossible to measure. So, rather than trying to assess the safety culture directly, it is perhaps better to assess it indirectly by looking at the tangible outputs that can be used as indicators. There is no single indicator that can be used to assess safety culture; instead several indicators must be examined together.

Accidents

Accident records can be used to work out how many accidents are happening as a rate (e.g. number of accidents per 100,000 hours worked - more on this in Element 5). The accident rate for a particular organisation can be compared with the:

- Organisation's performance in previous years. This will indicate whether the accident rate is increasing or decreasing. A decreasing rate might be seen as an indicator of a positive safety culture.
- Rate for other organisations that do the same work, or the industry average (often published by the authorities). This is the process of **benchmarking**. An accident rate that is higher than national average might be seen as an indicator of a negative safety culture.

Looking at the standard of investigation that follows an accident and the effort that is put into preventing a recurrence is another way of using accidents as an indicator of safety culture. In an organisation:

- With a **positive** safety culture, much time and effort will go into investigating accidents, writing investigation reports and introducing follow-up action to prevent a recurrence.
- With a **negative** safety culture, superficial accident investigations are carried out, reports are of poor quality and follow-up action is either not taken, or is ineffective.

Sickness Rates

A lot of ill health is caused, or made worse, by work. For example, in many countries, a huge number of working days are lost due to back pain and a significant proportion of that back pain will have been caused or made worse by the work that individuals are doing. So sickness rates can be used in the same way that accident rates are, as an indicator of safety culture.

Absenteeism

A high level of worker absenteeism indicates that workers are either not able, or not willing, to come to work. If they are not able, this might indicate that they are suffering ill health caused or worsened by work, as we noted above. If they are not willing, it indicates that they are withholding their labour for some reason. This is usually caused by poor workforce morale, which in turn can sometimes be linked to poor safety culture.

Staff Turnover

An organisation with a positive safety culture is often a good place to work. Workers feel safe, morale is good, training is available, and workers are consulted about their working conditions. As a result, workers stay with their employer for a long period of time, so low staff turnover may indicate a good safety culture, while high staff turnover may indicate the opposite.

Compliance with Safety Rules

In an organisation with a positive safety culture, the majority of workers want to work safely, so they comply with the safety rules and procedures laid down by the organisation. When a formal, or informal, safety inspection or audit is carried out, a high level of compliance is seen. The safety culture has influenced workers' behaviour in a positive way.

Where there is a negative safety culture, quite the reverse is apparent. Workers do not follow the rules, either because they do not know what they are doing (perhaps due to poor training) or because they know the rules but do not want to follow them (perhaps due to poor attitude). Workers are free to break the rules because of poor supervision; they know that they will not be punished.

Complaints About Working Conditions

There is an obvious link between safety culture and the number and type of complaints made by workers (and workers' safety representatives) to management. An organisation with a positive culture may actively encourage complaints, but few serious ones will be made. An organisation with a negative safety culture may actively discourage workers from complaining and many of the complaints made will be legitimate and serious ones.

INFLUENCE OF PEERS

When people are put together into groups they interact. Some individuals will come to have a lot of influence over the group; others will have little influence. In this way a "hierarchy" is established within the group. Certain ways of behaving will become the "norm", which will often be established by the more influential members of the group. A person wishing to become a member of the group will have to comply with the group norms. This pressure to comply with group norms is "peer group pressure".

Peer group pressure is an important factor to take into account when thinking about safety-related behaviour. If a group is already working safely then peer group pressure will keep most people in that group in line. But if the group is working unsafely then peer group pressure will tend to force more and more workers to behave unsafely in an attempt to fit in with group norms. Even though workers may know that what they are doing is wrong and may want to do it the right way, the pressure to comply with their social group overcomes their personal apprehensions.

The behaviour of peer groups and the influence that peer group pressure has been allowed to exert on worker behaviour is often a good indicator of safety culture. In an organisation with a positive culture, peer group pressure is in line with safe behaviour. In an organisation with a negative culture, peer group pressure is driving unsafe behaviours and this has not been challenged by management.

RRC SAMPLE MATERIAL

MORE...

www.hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/topics/culture.htm

REVISION QUESTIONS

2. Define "health and safety culture".
3. How do an individual's peers exert influence over his/her behaviour?

(Suggested Answers are at the end.)