



# **Best Practice Guideline: Health and Safety at Work: How to Lead**

**Actions for Directors, Board Members, Owners  
and Operations/Quarries of all Sizes.**

Plan

Do

Check

Act

### Introduction

ASPASA does its Health and Safety Audit once a year and has thought it fit to develop this guidance to set out an agenda for the effective leadership of health and safety. It is designed for use by all including directors, trustee, and officers. It applies to quarries of all sizes.

Protecting the health and safety of employees or members of the public who may be affected by employers activities is an essential part of risk management and must be led by the Board and / or EXCO.

Failure to include health and safety as a key business risk in Board decisions can have catastrophic results. Many high-profile safety cases over years have been rooted in failure of leadership.

The Mine Health and Safety Act places duties on employers, employees and Directors can be personally liable when these duties are breached: members of the Board have both collective and individual responsibility for health and safety.

By following this guidance, employers will help the company find the best ways to lead and promote health and safety, and therefore meets its legal obligations.

The starting points are the following essential principles. These principles are intended to underpin the actions in this guidelines and so lead to good health and safety performance.

### Essential Principles

- Strong and active leadership from the top:
  - visible, active commitment from the Board and EXCO team.
  - establishing effective 'downward' communication systems and management structures;
  - integration of good health and safety management with business decisions.
- Worker involvement:
  - engage the workforce in the promotion and achievement of safe and healthy conditions;
  - effective 'upward' communication
  - providing high-quality training.
- Assessment and review:
  - Identifying and managing health and safety risks (ASPASA Health and Safety Audit);
  - Accessing (and following) competent advice (ASPASA Health and Safety Audit);
  - Monitoring, reporting and reviewing performance (ASPASA Health and Safety Audit)

### In this Guidance

The agenda consists of:

- core actions for Boards and individual Board members that relate directly to the legal duties of an organisation. These actions are intended to set a standard;
- guidelines that set out ways to give the core actions practical effect. These guidelines provide ideas on how you might achieve the core actions;

### Benefits of Good Health and Safety

Addressing health and safety should not be seen as a regulatory burden: it offers significant opportunities. Benefits can include:

- reduced cost and reduced risks – employee absence and turnover rates are lower, accidents are fewer, the threat of legal action is lessened;
- improved standing among suppliers and partners;
- a better reputation for corporate responsibility among investors, customers and communities;
- increased productivity – employees are healthier, happier and better motivated.

### Cost of Poor Health and Safety at Work

Statistics reveal the human and financial cost of failing to address health and safety. Each year:

- Loss of working days due to work-related illness and injury.
- People die from occupational diseases.
- Workers self-report suffering from a work-related illness.
- Workers are injured at work.
- A worker is fatally injured almost every working day.

Organisations can incur further costs – such as uninsured losses and loss of reputation.

### **Legal Responsibilities of Employers**

Health and safety law states that employers must:

- assess risks to employees, customers, partners and any other people who could be affected by their activities;
- arrange for effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of preventive and protective measures;
- have a written health and safety policy if there are more than five employees;
- ensure access to competent health and safety advice;
- consult employees about their risks at work and current preventive and protective measures;

Failure to comply with these requirements can have serious consequences – for both employer and employees. Sanctions include fines, imprisonment and disqualification. (loss of mining right)

### **Plan**

**The Board or EXCO should set the direction for effective health and safety management. Board members need to establish a health and safety policy that is much more than a document – it should be an integral part of the company's culture, of its values and performance standards.**

**All Board members or EXCO members should take the lead in ensuring the communication of health and safety duties and benefits throughout the organisation. Executive Directors must develop policies to avoid health and safety problems and must respond quickly where difficulties arise or new risks are introduced; non-executives must make sure that health and safety is properly addressed.**

### **Core Actions**

To agree a policy, Boards will need to ensure they are aware of the significant risks faced by their organisation.

The policy should set out the Board's own role and that of individual Board members in leading the health and safety of its organisation. It should require the Board to:

- 'own' and understand the key issues involved;
- Decide how best to communicate, promote and champion health and safety.

The health and safety policy is a 'living' document and it should evolve over time, e.g. in the light of major organisational changes such as restructuring or a significant acquisition.

Boards should on a yearly basis request a summary of the Aspsa Health & Safety Audit outcomes, for their own organisations as well as the rest of the Aspsa members. This will give a good indication of what level the company is in the industry.

### **How it can be done**

- Health and safety should appear regularly on the agenda for Board meetings.
- The Chief Executive can give the clearest visibility of leadership, but some Boards find it useful to name one of their numbers as the health and safety 'champion'.

- The presence on the Board of a health and safety director can be a strong signal that the issue is being taken seriously and that its strategic importance is understood.
- Setting targets helps define what the Board is seeking to achieve.
- A non-executive director can act as a scrutineer – ensuring the processes to support Boards facing significant health and safety risks are robust

### **Corporate Governance**

For many organisations, health and safety is a corporate governance issue. The Board should integrate health and safety into the main governance structures, including Board sub-committees, such as risk, remuneration and audit.

### **Do**

**Delivery depends on an effective management system to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of employees, customers and members of the public.**

**Companies should aim to protect people by introducing management systems and practices that ensure risks are dealt with sensibly, responsibly and proportionately.**

### **Core Actions**

To take responsibility and 'ownership' of health and safety, members of the Board must ensure that:

- health and safety arrangements are adequately resourced;
- they obtain competent health and safety advice;
- risk assessments are carried out;
- employees or their representatives are involved in decisions that affect their health and safety.

The Board should consider the health and safety implications of introducing new processes, new working practices or new personnel, dedicating adequate resources to the task and seeking advice where necessary.

Boardroom decisions must be made in the context of the organisation's health and safety policy; it is important to 'design-in' health and safety when implementing change.

### **How it can be done**

- Leadership is more effective if visible Board members can reinforce health and safety policy by being seen on the 'shop floor', following all safety measures themselves and addressing any breaches immediately.
- Consider health and safety when deciding senior management appointments.
- Having procurement standards for goods, equipment and services can help prevent the introduction of expensive health and safety hazards.
- The health and safety arrangements of partners, key suppliers and contractors should be assessed; their performance could adversely affect the organisations.
- Setting up a separate risk management or health and safety committee as a subset of the Board, chaired by a senior executive, can make sure the key issues are addressed and guard against time and effort being wasted on trivial risks and unnecessary bureaucracy.
- Providing health and safety training to some or all of the Board can promote understanding and knowledge of the key issues in your organisation.
- Support worker involvement in health and safety can improve participation and help prove commitment.

### CHECK

**Monitoring and reporting are vital parts of a health and safety culture. Management systems must allow the Board to receive both specific (e.g. incident-led) and routine reports on the performance of health and safety policy.**

**Much of the day-to-day health and safety information need be reported only at the time of a formal review. But only a strong system of monitoring can ensure that the formal review can proceed as planned – and that relevant events in the interim are brought to the Board's attention.**

### Core actions

The Board should ensure that:

- appropriate weight is given to reporting both preventive information (such as progress of training and maintenance programmes) and incident data (such as accident and sickness absence rates);
- periodic audits of the effectiveness of management structures and risk controls for health and safety are carried out; (use the Aspasa H & S audit – it is an industry standard)
- the impact of changes such as the introduction of new procedures, work processes or products, or any major health and safety failure, is reported as soon as possible to the Board;
- there are procedures to implement new and changed legal requirements and to consider other external developments and events.

### How it can be done

- Effective monitoring of sickness absence and workplace health can alert the Board to underlying problems that could seriously damage performance or result in accidents and long-term illness.
- The collection of workplace health and safety data can allow the Board to benchmark the organisation's performance against others in its sector. (Aspasa audit results are useful in this case)
- Appraisal of senior managers can include an assessment of their contribution to health and safety performance.
- Boards can receive regular reports on the health and safety performance and actions of contractors.
- Some organisations have found they win greater support for health and safety by involving workers in monitoring.

### ACT

**A formal Boardroom review of health and safety performance is essential. It allows the Board to establish whether the essential health and safety principles – strong and active leadership, worker involvement, and assessment and review – have been embedded in the organisation. It tells you whether your system is effective in managing risk and protecting people.**

### Core Action

The Board should review health and safety performance at least once a year. (the Aspasa H & S audit helps with this). The review process should:

- Examine whether the health and safety policy reflects the organisation's current priorities and targets;
- Examine whether risk management and other health and safety systems have been effectively reporting to the Board;
- Report health and safety shortcomings, and the effect of all the relevant Board and management decisions;
- Decide actions to address any weaknesses and a system to monitor their implementation;
- Consider immediate reviews in the light of major shortcomings or events.

### How it can be done

- Performance on health and safety and wellbeing is increasingly being recorded in organisations' annual reports to investors and stakeholders.
- Board members can make extra 'shop floor' visits to gather information for the formal review.
- Good health and safety performance can be celebrated at local levels.

#### ***Auditing and reporting***

All companies (employers) need to have formal procedures for auditing and reporting health and safety performance. This is where ASPASA comes in.

The Board should ensure that any audit is perceived as a positive management and Boardroom tool. It should have unrestricted access to both external and internal auditors, keeping their cost-effectiveness, independence and objectivity under review.

Ask ASPASA to come and give a short presentation at one of the Board or management meetings on where your company stands on Health and Safety

# Plan, Do, Check, Act

