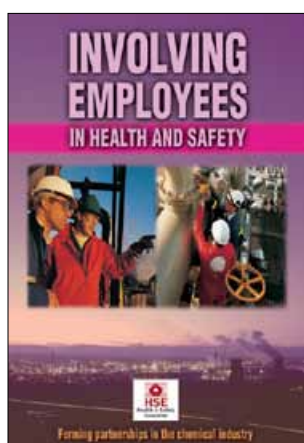


Involving employees in health and safety

Forming partnerships in the chemical industry



This is a free-to-download, web-friendly version of HSG217 (First edition, published 2001). This version has been adapted for online use from HSE's current printed version.

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This guide is designed to help employers in the chemical industry and other industries produce healthier and safer workplaces by increasing the involvement of their workforces in all aspects of health and safety management. It shows how to plan and implement an initiative to introduce or increase workforce involvement, and each stage is supported by case studies.

The guide includes benchmarking questions which you can use in your own company to measure the existing level of involvement and pinpoint areas for improvement. It should also be of value to employee safety representatives as it shows the areas where they could be more effectively involved.

Increasing workforce involvement is vital to improving health and safety management and is part of the Government's long-term Revitalising Health and Safety strategy.

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Foreword

The Government and Health and Safety Commission are '*Revitalising Health and Safety*'.¹ They see partnerships between employers and employees as the key to preventing accidents and ill health at work.

This guide contains case studies from a cross-section of firms in the chemical industry. These firms would not contemplate managing health and safety without the support and involvement of employees. The examples of effective workforce involvement given here build on the valuable work that trade union safety representatives and safety committees already do.

Companies that are seeking to make their safety management systems more effective see involving their employees as the preferred way of improving safety performance. They are not driven by regulatory demands alone.

These companies report benefits in terms of both health and safety performance and general business performance. They report a reduction in 'adversarial' management-employee relations, better morale and an improved image in the eyes of clients and the general public. They maintain that the benefits of employee involvement outweigh the costs incurred. These views are shared by employees, trade unions and management alike.

Partnerships in chemical companies are essential for risk control to be effective. Involving the workforce effectively will mean that health and safety really does become 'everybody's business'.

Dan Mitchell
Head of Land Division
Hazardous Installations Directorate
Health and Safety Executive

Who should read this guide?

Managers: to appreciate the basic principles of workforce involvement and forge new or improved partnerships with the workforce. The form that this involvement takes and the way that it is introduced and maintained should be tailored to fit your company. You may need to make changes to how you do some things in order to enable more effective involvement to go ahead.

Safety representatives: to use the case studies in discussions on developing workforce involvement.

Case studies are provided to:

- identify the benefits of improved partnerships;
- describe how you can achieve effective workforce involvement; and
- illustrate how such involvement is an integral part of good health and safety management.

The advice in this guide is based on the findings of Health and Safety Executive (HSE) research² on workforce involvement in the chemical industry and on examples of good practice identified by HSE inspectors. The advice is applicable to other employment sectors, too. You should review your arrangements for involving the workforce to ensure that you are making the most of opportunities to create partnerships in the workplace.

How to use this guide

Part 1 describes the benefits of workforce involvement and how to plan an initiative to achieve it.

Part 2 gives examples of workforce involvement in the context of the management model described in HSE's *Successful health and safety management*.³ It takes each of the core elements of good management practice and illustrates how you could involve your employees more effectively in each one.

Appendix 1 summaries the legal requirements and **Appendix 2** provides you with a tool for reviewing the extent of workforce involvement in your company.

Use the 'quick check' overleaf as a starting point.

Quick check – how do you shape up?

Use the checklist below to give yourself an idea of the extent of workforce involvement in your company.

Question	Yes/No
Have the workforce as well as managers been involved in determining the company safety policy?	
Do you have employee safety representatives and a health and safety committee?	
Is your health and safety committee dealing with strategic matters or burdened with day-to-day problems that are better resolved elsewhere?	
Are all health and safety committee members equal partners?	
Have safety representatives, supervisors and other staff been trained to enable them to play an equal role in the health and safety committee?	
Can employees set the health and safety agenda during team meetings?	
Is there a system for staff to make a positive input to improve health and safety performance?	
Do ideas for health and safety initiatives come from the workforce?	
Are your employees involved in long-term health and safety initiatives?	
Does your company provide cover for workers to enable attendance at safety meetings and training courses?	
Are the people who carry out particular tasks involved in the risk assessment of those tasks?	
Are workers involved in writing safe working procedures?	
When changes are planned are workers fully involved?	
When accidents are investigated are safety representatives fully involved?	
Do health and safety audits actively include safety representatives as well as managers?	

If you were unsure about any of the questions above or the answer was 'no' then these are areas where you can improve health and safety performance through workforce involvement. At the same time you are likely to improve performance in other business areas. Please read on!

Where you answered 'yes' to any of the questions you should still find this guide useful. Reading it will enable you to test whether your workforce involvement is as effective as you think. It may also give you further ideas. Please read on!

Part 1 How to achieve effective workforce involvement

What is workforce involvement?

“The costs are minimal compared to the benefits of improved awareness and understanding leading to safer actions and conditions.” Manager

‘The workforce’ means all who work at the company, including employees, contractors and agency workers. In the context of this guide ‘involvement’ means active participation where the workforce and their representatives participate in the key elements of health and safety management such as setting targets and reviewing performance. Involvement, therefore, goes beyond the provision of information to the workforce or simply consulting them on management proposals. The process requires management to work with others throughout the company to:

- involve the workforce as equal partners;
- actively seek their views;
- value the positive contribution they can make;
- enable effective involvement to occur in all areas of health and safety management;
- be ready to change how things are done and challenge previous management practices; and
- nurture, support and sustain the partnership.

“The improvements to health and safety are part of good business practice. If a job is not done correctly it will cost [the company] in loss of customer satisfaction, management time and credibility. Insurance premiums will rise and there will be a moral cost.” Manager

Ideally, everyone should be involved - in many cases safety representatives will already be involved. There may be active involvement through health and safety committees and in other business areas too, such as quality systems; this needs to be acknowledged and built upon.

Research has shown that big improvements in health and safety can be made by trade union safety representatives working in partnership with employers.⁴ To enable continuous improvement trade unions should promote workforce involvement and train their safety representatives to identify the most effective means of involvement for their workplace.

Why involve the workforce?

“The health and safety system won’t work without workforce involvement.” Manager

In effectively involving your workforce you are likely to produce benefits by:

- developing a positive health and safety culture;
- reducing accidents and ill health and their costs;
- meeting customer demands and maintaining credibility; and
- complying with legal requirements.

“It is not possible to develop an effective health and safety culture without workforce participation.” Manager

The companies studied² agree that the benefits of workforce involvement in health and safety far outweigh the cost of its introduction and maintenance. Employees interviewed share this view.

Workforce involvement is of particular importance where there is a small management team and more reliance is placed upon the workforce to fulfil some health and safety management functions. But management cannot pass on to others their legal responsibility for managing health and safety.

“The company culture is one of a partnership between the management and the workforce rather than being run by management decisions. This helps to improve motivation of the workforce and encourages ownership of the company’s activities.”

“It is vital to have a workforce which considers health and safety as part of daily work activities.”

“The level of motivation within the workforce was quite poor. It was hoped that if employees could be involved in making decisions and management were seen to be listening and acting upon their ideas with good results, motivation levels would improve.” Manager

“The workforce is more conscious of health and safety. If a spot check reveals an error colleagues can be informed.” Operator

“The workforce raise issues relevant to the safety of the area in the [campaign] feedback sessions. A larger number of issues are raised as ... employees are more aware of the risks as a result of health and safety training.” Manager

Developing a positive health and safety culture

Involving the workforce is good management practice whether the aim is to achieve better quality, design, productivity, etc. Where involvement exists it can be extended to health and safety, and where it doesn't health and safety may be a good starting point. Without workforce involvement in health and safety management, managers and health and safety specialists may:

- become detached from the realities of production and prepare procedures and rules which become difficult to comply with, are discredited and ignored; and
- respond to incidents by adding more rules and artificial procedures which over time become excessive.

Strong and visible leadership by management, together with effective workforce involvement, promotes a positive health and safety culture. This is characterised by individual and collective ownership of high standards of health and safety and is reflected in how the company plans, organises and conducts its activities. Once increased workforce involvement 'takes off', your employees will be able to see how committed you are to improving the work environment. If you listen to, then act upon, employee suggestions on health and safety, they are more likely to take an interest in the plant, equipment and processes around them and report problems. In a positive culture they are also more likely to suggest solutions.

With the chemical industry changing rapidly and reductions in staff occurring in many plants the commitment of the remaining workforce is vital. If employees are to respond positively then flexible working must be done safely and without risk to health. Safety representatives should be involved in assessing the risks from any planned reduction in staffing levels. Contractors should also be partners. Involving them will assist in gaining their commitment and is more likely to produce good health and safety standards.

Reducing accidents, ill health and their costs

Involving your workforce can bring improved health and safety standards and a reduction in accidents and ill health.²

Observe and learn

A chemical manufacturing site already had a good safety record, but the accident rate had reached a plateau and the site was finding it difficult to get a further reduction in injuries such as slips, trips, twisted ankles and eye injuries. The company introduced a behavioural monitoring system in an attempt to change the culture and eliminate bad practice. This involved workforce representatives observing their colleagues and recording safe and unsafe actions. The scheme was first trialled in one area and all the workforce were involved. A number of initiatives were put in place as part of the programme, including:

- appointing 'shop floor' representatives to all project teams;
- training volunteers to operate the behavioural monitoring system; and
- arranging 'safety days'.

The workforce were introduced to the system through departmental and safety meetings and articles in the in-house magazine.

The workforce involvement has helped reduce minor injuries. A 30% reduction in accidents was reported in the first eight months of the programme.

“Often personnel carrying out contract work are seen as less important than company employees and this can create bad feeling and divisions between the two companies. Through integrating the [contractor and client] personnel systems it was hoped that the two workforces would work closely together and become interdependent, and there would be synergistic effects.”
Contractor manager

Research⁴ has shown that where trade union safety representatives work together with employers accident rates can be up to 50% lower than where managers alone make decisions over health and safety. Many trade unions have developed formalised ‘partnership agreements’ which support and motivate direct workforce involvement to assist managers shape their decision-making processes.

Responding to customer demands

Some companies have introduced workforce involvement to satisfy customer demands. This is typically where contractors based on a client’s site and performing service or core functions need to fit in with the site culture and health and safety management system. Customers may require evidence of effective involvement as part of a total quality management system or as a demonstration of good management practice.

Complying with legal requirements

Companies which effectively involve the workforce seldom refer to legal requirements as the driving force;² perhaps this is because they are convinced of the practical benefits of effective employee involvement in risk management. Going beyond mere compliance with regulations involves revitalising the relationship between employers and employees, leading to the development of a true partnership. Safety representatives, who have a legal right to be consulted on health and safety matters, should rather be seen as partners in improving health and safety standards.

A summary of the legislative requirements for employee involvement and consultation is given in Appendix 1 for reference.

How to achieve effective workforce involvement

Overview of the process

To introduce effective and lasting workforce involvement requires several stages as illustrated in Figure 1. The stages may often overlap and are represented as a loop to emphasise that the arrangements should be continuously reviewed and improved. The inner loop in Figure 1 refers to the importance of testing proposed arrangements at one or more departments or sites before rolling them out across the company.

You should bear in mind some important principles when developing workforce involvement arrangements – these are discussed here and then the following section describes how to manage the arrangements using a model for good health and safety management.

Have a vision and goals

To introduce or extend workforce involvement you need to know your present situation and your future goals for health and safety. This information must be clearly communicated to the workforce. Senior management must commit themselves to a policy of increasing involvement. The workforce must have the opportunity to influence the process.

Some companies can draw on their experience of success in involving the workforce in specific projects, eg total quality management or quality circles. Details of success or failure in previous involvement should be reviewed to shape new initiatives.

Set benchmarks

Managers and the workforce together should gain an understanding of current involvement within the company and how you compare with best practice within

“The workforce were concerned that the [involvement] schemes were replacing the suggestion scheme because the company did not want to pay for good ideas. They also thought that the objective might have been to reduce staffing levels (through multi-skilling and flexible working). This has been resolved through talking to people, and explaining how the business needs their full input.” Trainer

your industry sector (benchmarking). Such an appreciation can be gained from an assessment based on the questions in Appendix 2 or through visits to other sites, preferably by managers and safety representatives together. They should then be equipped to develop general policy and set initial goals. Further advice on benchmarking is given in *Health and safety benchmarking: Improving together*.⁵

Team work

You will need to adopt a team approach, involving everyone from the start. The team will need to achieve a common understanding of effective workforce involvement issues such as:

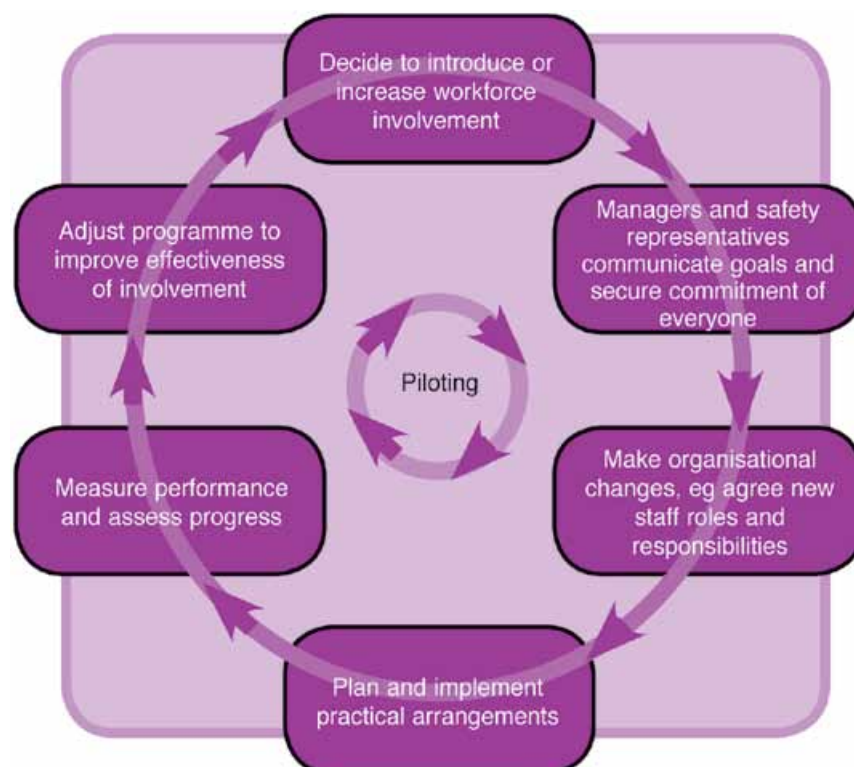
- its goals and benefits;
- its key features;
- the organisational structure and management style which best supports it;
- what your customers and regulators expect of it; and
- the lessons learned from the experience of others.

Where the company recognises trade unions it would be helpful to plan a joint initiative. This makes it clear to all employees the commitment being given by the company and their trade union to continuously improve health and safety standards.

Tread carefully

The process, like other major changes, needs to be managed carefully, starting with good preparation and planning. Managers and workers may have concerns and suspicions about increased workforce involvement. The integration of effective involvement into the mainstream of health and safety management is a gradual process and you need to be ready to deal with problems as they arise. Concerns can be overcome by providing briefings, training and by demonstrating early successes.

Figure 1 Overview of process for developing and implementing workforce involvement arrangements



“It is good to be involved and safety is here to stay.”

“Don’t underestimate the amount of effort involved to develop successful workforce participation. The work is never finished. Workforce involvement is critical, but won’t happen without management commitment and support.”

“Implementation of workforce involvement needs total commitment from the start. Extensive planning and consultation are required to enable staff training programmes, shift realignment, etc to gain the support of the shop floor.” Manager

Follow good management practice

A recommended way to introduce or improve workforce involvement is to use a recognised health and safety management model.^{3,6} Using this approach you should ensure that any initiative:

- has the commitment of senior management;
- is well organised;
- has a robust programme for its planning and implementation;
- is monitored for its effectiveness;
- undergoes periodic audit and review; and
- is subject to continuous improvement.

The following sections describe how to implement an effective workforce involvement initiative by using this management framework.

Setting the policy for workforce involvement

To encourage effective workforce involvement you first need to ensure that your health and safety policy statement specifies that everyone has a positive role to play. It should give a clear commitment by top management to actively involve the workforce, including contractors, as part of a developing health and safety culture. The workforce should be involved in formulating that policy.

Existing policies may not always make positive statements about workforce involvement, rather they may emphasise employees’ duties in a negative manner. You may wish to examine and strengthen your policy statements in the light of the above guidelines.

Mission possible

One company has a mission statement containing the following core value declaring a commitment to active workforce involvement:

“Working together – We will use teams as the basis for conducting our business in order to achieve our shared vision. As a team we achieve more than we do as individuals. We nevertheless recognise the valuable contribution and leadership which individuals can and do make to the site’s performance. We will accept greater responsibility and be accountable for it.”

Organising

Basic requirements

Your organisation will need to change and respond to support effective workforce involvement. There are some key requirements which must be addressed. Existing management arrangements should be modified, where necessary, to enable the initiative to go ahead and not conflict with other business needs, eg changes in roles should be defined and training given to equip people to fulfil their new functions.

Effective communication, ie ‘bottom up’ and ‘top down’, should be established or strengthened through a variety of means.

The workforce should be aware of their responsibilities and be given the authority and the resources, including time and finance, to empower them to fulfil new roles. Individuals should be empowered to fulfil not just their day-to-day health and safety duties but to carry out new health and safety functions (provided they are competent to do so).

“As we increased the participation we needed to look again at peoples’ job descriptions and amend these.”

“Full consultation with all the workforce is necessary before starting workforce implementation. Prepare the framework consistent with your organisation, and ensure that everyone including contractors are participating in the scheme.” Manager

“There was a big two-way communications exercise with workshops to listen to employees’ concerns regarding the [initiative]. Many of the ideas to come out of these workshops have been made target areas for the continuous improvement teams.” Manager

“The management here are good at listening and they provide information, help and money to solve issues.”

Control

Establishing and maintaining management control is essential when the initiative will challenge and change how you do things. Control is achieved by getting the commitment of everyone to clearly stated health and safety objectives. Getting this aspect right will increase the feeling of ownership by all. You may need to address the following aspects:

- Is a top manager ‘championing’ the initiative? This demonstrates commitment and leadership.
- Are nominated staff responsible and accountable for the operation of the initiative?
- Are the trade unions on site committed to supporting it? They can motivate employees towards effective participation.
- Is there need for general redefinition of roles and responsibilities of all staff? This is important where safety representatives adopt roles which challenge the usual structure of command.
- Have staff been empowered to enable them to fulfil their revised roles, for example employees acting as ‘champions’?
- Does the function of the health and safety committee need to be changed to support rather than hinder workforce involvement?

We are the champions

A large company operates a health and safety management system which has 15 key elements. At plant level there are ‘champions’ providing leadership for each of these elements, such as management of change, to drive forward continuous improvement. The ‘champions’ are from a range of staff eg operators, first-line supervisors and engineers. They have authority and are ambassadors for best practice in each topic area and are a focal point for cascading information. The area ‘champions’ have access to top management by feeding information into a group of ‘site champions’ which is led by a manager. Employees acting as champions can therefore have exceptional influence throughout the organisation.

Co-operation

Managers and workers should demonstrate their commitment by co-operating to make available the resources required for effective involvement to occur. This may be routine involvement or participation in a new project. In some cases the co-operation may extend to suppliers.

Give and take

Active workforce involvement was introduced at a manufacturing site through the adoption of continuous improvement teams. A large number of process, maintenance and support staff were to be involved in those teams. This had significant staffing implications which could have wrecked the initiative. To diffuse potential production conflicts team members were offered overtime pay to attend the meetings. The workforce displayed a positive commitment by giving up their leisure time to attend. Without substantial goodwill from all involved the initiative would have failed.

“The involvement in health and safety has improved, with safety committees now being chaired by the workforce rather than managers. Barriers between the workforce and management are being broken down and any elements of a ‘blame culture’ are being removed.”
Operator

To achieve full co-operation you will need to address the following questions:

- What do you need to do to enable people to co-operate with each other?
- Is health and safety being used as a channel for wider (non-safety) industrial relations issues which need to be resolved by other means?
- Are managers allowing safety representatives and others sufficient time to fulfil their new roles?
- Have you included contractors in your workforce involvement initiative?

Health and safety committees are often the focus of initiatives to increase involvement and may themselves need to undergo radical transformation. This usually means the committees become more proactive, eg they set targets and standards and review performance. This contrasts with the traditional role of workplace inspection and reviewing reports of incidents and non-compliance. Some committees rotate the role of chair to demonstrate equality between members. At some sites contractor representatives are included on the health and safety committee or they have their own committee.

The valuable work that safety representatives and safety committees have already done should be acknowledged and built upon. The introduction of radical changes can result initially in the potential for disagreement about what constitutes safe and healthy working. This needs to be planned for, eg by ensuring that managers, supervisors and others leading safety improvement teams are aware of how specialist help such as safety and technical expertise can be obtained. The potential for conflict is likely to reduce as working relationships are built up.

Keep it local

At a medium-sized manufacturing site the health and safety committee was seen at times as a political forum where people aired their grievances. The management wanted to move forward to develop a more proactive committee and a positive health and safety culture. They established new local-work-group safety committees to tackle day-to-day problems. These are chaired by the work group managers and provide a more focused forum for two-way communication. The workforce has been involved in making improvements throughout the site via the work groups. All members of the workforce attend the local meetings and they attend the central committee on rotation. The role of the central committee has been changed to become more strategic.

“Team leaders had to be encouraged to give the operators/observers time away from normal work activities to implement the programme, attend feedback sessions and write up reports.”

Communication

Effective workforce involvement depends upon and brings about good communication. In companies where there has been only limited involvement in the past managers should ensure they provide sufficient information to staff and allay any fears concerning changing roles. Initially, involvement is likely to be via safety representatives and they will need to communicate proposals and plans to the wider workforce. Your communication strategy should include:

- Communicating clear principles and goals to the workforce.
- Involving safety representatives in this process.
- Giving all the workforce the opportunity to influence the initiative.
- Launching the initiative and communicating progress once it is underway.

“The local committee allows us to discuss relevant issues in more detail. It is good to be consulted on health and safety issues.” Operator

Communication should be by both managers and safety representatives and may take many forms including:

“[The company] wants to obtain clear and open feedback from the workforce including their recommendations on improvements that could be made, and their views on the company’s proposals. Safety is an area of common ground for all employees and can be used as a vehicle to improve communications.”
Manager

“To encourage workforce participation it is vital to be a good listener, and act on what people tell you.”

“Initially the unionised part of the workforce thought that there was an ulterior motive behind the workforce involvement, and first-line managers have been sceptical, but all members of the workforce have welcomed it. Any concerns have been removed through the evidence of management commitment to the empowerment process and the tangible benefits to all.” Manager

- launching the initiative, eg at a conference or general meeting;
- departmental meetings, team briefings, ‘tool box’ talks, or one-to-one briefings;
- analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) or questionnaires to gauge opinion and encourage improvement ideas;
- newsletters specific to the initiative or features in the regular company newsletters; and
- poster campaigns and competitions.

The communication process should draw out and resolve the concerns of all staff and gain support from managers, which is crucial in realising the staff resource needed. This should be a two-way process where concerns, suggestions and queries can be raised and addressed in an open and constructive manner. Where employee proposals are not accepted it is essential to clearly communicate the reasons why.

Great minds

A suggestion scheme was introduced in one company to improve workforce involvement. The suggestion forms prompted employees to describe the existing practice or situation and record their suggestion, listing: what should happen; the benefits; how it could be implemented; and recommended action. Suggestions could be taken forward by a continuous improvement team. Feedback is always given to the employee(s) making the suggestion.

Competency

Any initiative will flounder if staff have not been empowered with appropriate competencies. You should seek to make maximum use of peoples’ skills and knowledge. For example, process, maintenance and engineering workers can bring valuable practical experience to the work of safety committees. Especially on higher hazard sites, where there is the potential for a major accident, staff should be trained to understand the wider safety implications of their work. You need to consider:

- Is specialist support needed to help run the initiative? ‘Coaching’ may be in high demand at the start of the process.
- Do staff require new skills to enable them to take on new roles and to relinquish old ones? Training-needs analysis may be required to inform this decision.
- Staff may need to acquire team-working and problem-solving skills and specific skills such as risk assessment.
- The timing of training is critical to the success of the initiative.
- Staff should have access to appropriate safety/technical/training personnel whose role is to act as facilitators.
- As awareness improves, further training needs may become apparent.

Planning and implementing

Timing

The extension of workforce involvement into the mainstream of health and safety management will take time to achieve and is not without risks. Do not embark upon the initiative until it is well planned and you have taken account of the organisational changes needed. If it is badly planned and stalls this may be worse for the organisation than not having started at all. It is sensible to set milestones for the initial changes.

“People have to be ready to be involved and you need to know how to handle it.

Management must find out from the workforce how it will be received and the result of the discussions will drive how you introduce the involvement. You can start out small and pilot certain areas to confirm you have got it right. If you don’t get the views of staff then you could be wasting your time.”
Manager

“Sit down with a small group. Set out your proposals and get their views before you launch a plan. Map out carefully what you intend to achieve and how, then you can see the progress.” Manager

“Piloting in one area is necessary to iron out any bugs and learn from mistakes. Launch the programme gradually by department, so that commitment builds and mistakes are less drastic than if the programme is done all at once across the site.”
Manager

First steps

The initiative may progress on a number of fronts at the same time or be introduced gradually. It may be a long journey so successful first steps are important.

A good way of starting any improvement process is to involve employees in SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. For example, you could apply it to your existing health and safety management system. Involving the workforce in this process by collecting the views of all staff can be very effective. Such an exercise must be carefully planned as it can provide an opportunity for rejection. It needs to be conducted and supported in a way that gives staff ownership of the process.

Swot up!

A fine chemicals manufacturer wanted to achieve a big improvement in health and safety. They decided to start the process by involving the entire workforce in a SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This served to:

- obtain employees’ views on how recent changes in the company had affected performance in safety, health and the environment; and
- generate ideas for improvements.

Communication was encouraged by:

- setting objectives and basic ground rules at the outset;
- having the safety managers facilitate (rather than lead) the sessions and keep the focus on health and safety issues;
- holding meetings during normal shift hours rather than disrupting work patterns (this also demonstrated the management commitment);
- using the workplace tea point as the venue;
- having an informal format (the only equipment used was a flip chart); and
- having a participant rather than a manager record items (on the flip chart).

An employee safety representative was involved in analysis of the data. A total of 260 issues were raised which were passed to the relevant safety action teams within a month of completion of the SWOT meetings. They reviewed the issues and set them out in the plant action plans, each containing five priorities for the year.

Piloting

It is good practice to carry out pilot activities before implementing changes across the board. Choose a topic which is likely to be a success and so will produce positive feedback. The topic needs to contain sufficient substance to be viewed as a worthy target but should not be your most challenging area where solutions may be difficult to find.

Organisational change

In any workforce involvement initiative managers will have to relinquish areas where they held control and employees accept new roles. Such changes can create concern and uncertainty and their effect on the workforce must be considered carefully. However, safety representatives can help plan and promote changes if they are consulted early. The team implementing the initiative needs to consider the arrangements that best meet the needs and capabilities of the organisation, ie that are possible to manage and will be effective. Advice from human resource

“To successfully introduce workforce participation sites should start with small issues and small numbers of people... The issues and site should be carefully selected and the ideas should be piloted. The project should be given the maximum support. If it is a success you have a flag to wave and can build other projects onto this. If it is a failure then it will give an indication of the resources required to make a success for when you try again.”
Manager

“One of the biggest problems with introducing workforce involvement is the level of cynicism which it is necessary to overcome. This can only be achieved through being open with people. The company must not have a hidden agenda and should not hide problems from the workforce as they will see through this and it will discredit what you are trying to achieve.”
Manager

“The quality circles which existed in the early 90s had closed down when the business went through tough times. Many people thought that this was a similar initiative and would have the same conclusion. The initial teams to be piloted had good demonstrable results to prove that the concept works.” Works engineer

specialists and experts in other fields, such as quality, may be appropriate at the planning stage.

Keeping up the momentum

Workforce involvement initiatives can be planned and implemented, with some support from health and safety specialists, with timescales ranging from six months to three years.² Once the initiative has started, keep up the momentum from implementation of the changes to review of their effect. You should plan resources with care; accurate forecasting of human resource and finance needs and their availability will enable realistic milestones to be set.

You need to maintain everyone's belief in the initiative. This can be nurtured by managers, trade unions and employees working together to:

- demonstrate continued commitment;
- maintain openness, good communication and active consultation;
- highlight material benefits of the changes whenever possible;
- integrate workforce involvement into the normal way of doing business; and
- learn lessons from any unsuccessful initiatives.

Measuring performance

The workforce should be involved in collecting the evidence about what you are achieving, ie monitoring performance against planned milestones using the indicators of success agreed at the planning stage. Collection of the right data is vital. You should:

- Check that management are being supportive, eg are staff being released to attend problem-solving meetings or inspections?
- Check whether the organisational arrangements are changing as required. Changes should take account of staff appraisal and training-needs analysis data.
- Monitor problems, collect data and ideas for improvement which can be fed back into the system, eg to a continuous improvement team.
- Record any benefits which were not planned but have become apparent as workforce involvement has developed.
- Measure other areas as well as health and safety, eg check business indicators, as productivity may increase.

If you carried out a benchmarking exercise at the start of the initiative (see page 10), you could repeat this to give a measure of progress. Safety representatives and safety committees should be involved in planning, conducting and reviewing the exercise and acting upon the results.

Auditing and reviewing performance

Even the best-planned initiative is unlikely to succeed first time on all fronts. You will need to gain maximum benefit from the successful outcomes and learn from what went wrong. Auditing, perhaps as part of a general health and safety management audit, can be used to assess progress, particularly where an audit at the start of the process can act as a benchmark.

The aims of any review of workforce involvement include:

- analysing why some aspects were a success and others were not;
- checking whether the goals still satisfy business needs and the methods of implementation are working as intended;
- identifying ways of improving the quality, depth and span of involvement;
- continuing benchmarking against other organisations (you may wish to share the results of your monitoring with other organisations or sites);
- continuing consultation with the workforce, customers, regulators etc,

“Staff are motivated by seeing their ideas turned into actions to improve the workplace.”

“Throughout the process let the people see the results and the management commitment. The workforce must see changes being made in response to suggestions.” Manager

“Benchmarking [is carried out] against other [group] companies by visiting them and evaluating the results obtained through their health and safety improvement projects, by noting where improvements have been effective and whether they can be applied [here].”

- concerning their expectations and needs; and
- adjusting the programme taking into account the conclusions of the review process.

Role call

The corporate audit system at a large manufacturing site examines a wide range of health and safety management issues including workforce involvement. External auditors examine evidence to conclude whether:

- employees from all levels of the organisation participate in process safety risk management (PSRM) activities;
- all employees have the opportunity to provide their input to the PSRM programme; and
- all employees have received PSRM training or, where appropriate, refresher training.

Company staff self-audit against the same criteria.

Summary

- Involving the workforce is vital to achieving a positive health and safety culture.
- Workforce involvement can take many forms and each organisation will have to develop their own arrangements.
- Partnership agreements with trade unions and safety representatives can help with all stages of workforce involvement.
- The more the workforce is actively involved in health and safety management the greater their sense of ownership and job satisfaction and the more likely that health and safety performance will improve, along with other aspects of the business.
- The workforce should be involved in all of the basic management elements: policy; organising; planning and implementing; measuring; audit and review.

Part 2 Effective workforce involvement in practice

Involving the workforce in managing health and safety

Management have a duty to manage but the workforce should also be actively engaged in all elements of the health and safety management system. It is usual to find workforce involvement in some but not all of them. You should examine areas where the workforce are already involved, eg quality assurance, and use them as a basis for expanding involvement and demonstrating the benefits.

The key elements of effective health and safety management³ are:

- setting policy;
- organising;
- planning and implementing controls and systems;
- measuring performance;
- auditing and reviewing of performance; and
- a strong commitment to continuous improvement involving the constant development of policies, systems and techniques of risk control.

The following sections give further examples of how companies in the chemical industry are successfully involving the workforce in the management of health and safety.

Policy

A precise statement of policy is important to act as a reference point for the rest of the management system. Policies for the main risk control systems, eg permit-to-work, or contractor management should also include workforce involvement.

Perfect partners

Workforce involvement does not just involve company staff but can often include contractors. In order to reduce contractor turnover and improve their competence and safety awareness, a large company entered a partnership agreement with a reduced list of contractor companies. By focusing in this way they are able to nurture the selected firms and improve their performance. They did this by:

- providing a contractor guide book detailing a risk assessment method to assist workforce assessment;
- introducing safety inspection visits by contractor operators alongside external inspectors and agencies;
- setting up contractor safety workshops (eg contractor staff helped develop a hand injury workshop);
- delivering 'toolbox talks'; and
- establishing a contractor safety forum.

"The level of involvement of contractors is high and they benefit by adopting the client's safety systems. There is a safety forum which allows contractors to benefit from each others' experience and share best practice."

Establishments subject to the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH) are required to prepare a major accident prevention policy (MAPP). The

policy, together with the safety management system, should involve the workforce in the control of major accident hazards. Higher hazard sites have to prepare a safety report which is assessed by the regulator. The safety report should show that the company has systems for ensuring that employees are actively involved in the control of major accident hazards.⁷

Map out your policy

The safety management system described in a safety report to implement a major accident prevention policy (MAPP) at a higher hazard site includes the following:

'[It is company practice to give the workforce]... a sense of partnership in its business undertakings and achievements. [The company] continues to promote and develop employee participation in all activities such as consultation committees and business improvement teams.

Examples of this involvement include the area health, safety and environment committee, plant audit and inspection teams, accident and incident reporting and investigation and process hazard reviews.

All of these arrangements provide opportunities for [the workforce]... to participate in the setting of standards relevant to the control of major accident hazards, in the provision and design of new equipment, including personal protective equipment, and in the development of operating procedures and emergency procedures for control and mitigation of major accident hazards.'

Organising

Companies need to define the responsibilities and relationships which promote a positive health and safety culture and implement the safety policy. These involve four crucial elements:

- establishing and maintaining management **control** of health and safety;
- promoting **co-operation** between individuals, safety representatives and groups so that health and safety becomes a collaborative effort;
- ensuring the **communication** of necessary information throughout the organisation; and
- securing the **competence** of all employees.

Examples of effective workforce involvement in these four elements are given in the following sections.

Control

Managers should take full responsibility for controlling factors that could lead to injury or ill health. Control is achieved by getting the commitment of everyone to clearly stated health and safety objectives. Everyone needs to know what they are expected to achieve and be empowered to do it. Empowerment might be individuals and in some cases groups such as process teams agreeing annual objectives to improve health and safety systems or performance, eg proactive work to review certain procedures or control systems.

“Only the originator of a procedure can make amendments to it under the requirements of the quality system. However, anyone can make recommendations about procedures and they will be considered and may be incorporated. Ownership of jobs is clearly defined and so people know to whom they should make any comments.” Manager

Power to the workers

At a major hazard site a wide range of problems are tackled by continuous improvement teams (CITs). These give control and ownership to workers whose expertise was previously not fully tapped. The empowerment has become a reality through the significant provision of resources and training. The teams review current activities and make recommendations to managers for improvement. The results include introduction of new equipment, amending and introducing procedures, redesign of equipment and raising awareness. The teams continue to monitor the results of any changes.

The teams are multifunctional, comprising technicians, supervisors, resident contractors and sometimes managers. A manager acts as a project ‘champion’ for each CIT to monitor progress, resourcing, etc. To avoid potential production conflicts team members are paid overtime to attend the meetings. All team members attend a two-day training course on the role of CITs and problem solving techniques. Three years after setting up CITs 232 of the 300 employees and also 16 contractors had participated in them.

Co-operation

Employee participation encourages their ‘ownership’ of health and safety issues and helps control risks. It establishes an understanding that the company as a whole, and people working in it, benefit from good health and safety performance. Pooling knowledge and experience through participation, commitment and involvement means that health and safety really becomes ‘everybody’s business’.

Swopping roles

A process operator joined the health and safety team at a fine chemicals manufacturer. The purpose of the secondment was to demonstrate the company’s commitment to partnership with the workforce by empowering the employee to have increased influence and control, to break down barriers within the company and to improve standards. The operator worked with the team for eight months and was joined by a safety representative who continued the work. The secondees were allowed to pursue their own issues as well as working on topics identified by management. Tasks carried out were very varied including:

- Review of a manufacturing process where compliance with standards was poor to identify the issues and determine and implement solutions.
- Production of posters, newsletters and information leaflets to communicate specific issues, eg safe use of pallets.
- Co-ordinating the results of site-wide ‘SWOT’ analysis, (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

The secondment exercise resulted in:

- Breaking down barriers between the workforce and managers. By working together workers and management gained better understanding of and respect for each other.
- Better two-way communication between the workforce and safety team.

- Managers recognising the worth and potential of effective workforce involvement when the quality of the solutions to problems became apparent.
- The secondees acting as champions for health and safety. Management believe they made a significant positive change to the company culture.

Communication

Through face-to-face discussions with management and colleagues employees can make a more personal contribution to achieving the company's goals. Regular 'tool box' talks provide the opportunity for supervisors to discuss health and safety issues with their teams. At such meetings employees can make their own suggestions (perhaps by 'brainstorming' ideas) for improving health and safety.

It's good to talk

'Tool box' talks provide an informal setting to communicate issues such as the lessons learned from incidents or changes in systems of work. They are often led by workers rather than managers. They facilitate two-way communication by giving participants the opportunity to discuss issues concerning their job or workplace.

One company uses 'tool box' talks as a regular means of communication with contractors. In one session a contractor who had been injured carrying out a task which had not been assessed for risks described the circumstances to other workers. This led to a discussion within the team about the incident and their need for risk assessment before carrying out work.

Laughter is the best medicine

An injury from a hand-held grinding machine prompted a continuous improvement team (CIT) to examine the use of grinders. They called themselves 'The Grindstone Cowboys'. The team included a representative from each resident contractor who used this equipment. They reviewed current working practices and legal compliance on site and visited other plants to evaluate best practice.

There was a lot of information to pass to the workforce during the initiative. They did this through regular briefings and use of a newsletter 'The Daily Grind' which used a combination of humour and shock tactics to communicate with workers. It was a comic book format enabling easy reading and including features such as 'grinding grimaces' highlighting injuries and safe use information (such as one page items on the guarding of machines).

“The training material is developed for us by us”

“The people who work on the plant are the ones who have the expertise in how it functions in normal and abnormal conditions. We wish to capitalise on this.” Manager

Competence

If all employees are to make a maximum contribution to health and safety, there must be proper arrangements in place to ensure they are competent. Your workforce will have an abundance of skills and knowledge which can be ‘tapped’. Involving employees and contractors in planning and delivering training is a good way of harnessing this experience.

DIY training

Employees in one company are involved in developing new training packages and updating existing ones, eg following plant modification. Plant operators carry out training-needs analysis, write manuals, conduct technical reviews and provide the training for their colleagues. They are supported by consultants who give advice about the best format for the training to make it interesting and understandable. They also have access to other resources such as designers.

When a new plant distributed control system was being installed 25 operators were involved in developing training for operators of the new system. They produced a training package and two operational guides. Operators’ views were taken into account during screen design and a simulator was developed for training before the system ‘went live’.

An experienced plant operator also produced an interactive computer-based training package explaining the company health and safety management system. All plant operators and many contractors have completed the training package.

“The contractor operators were very enthusiastic about the increased participation. They see the site as their workplace and feel part of it. This can be more difficult for a contractor than for the host/client organisation. It is often more difficult to make contractors feel ownership as the perception still exists that they are less important than the client’s personnel”
Manager

Feel good factor

A company manages maintenance activities on a large manufacturing site for a client who requires (as part of their agreement) active workforce involvement. The contractor’s workforce were trained to carry out risk assessments and prepare method statements specifying the system of work and controls to be applied prior to commencing work. Their management review and approve these before the work starts, giving their employees the opportunity to discuss any concerns. As well as providing new competence this has led to better understanding and respect between the contractor and client workforces.

Helping hands

A continuous improvement team was set up to examine isolation standards for chemical process plant undergoing maintenance, cleaning, etc. The team of maintenance and process operators reviewed and revised the standards and procedures then, with assistance from the training manager, provided training in the new system for their colleagues.

“The level of knowledge and enthusiasm of the workforce has increased following the risk assessment training.”

“If operators are involved with the initiation or development of a project they will feel more ownership for it. Their involvement helps to get things right first time, and hence reduces costs.”
Manager

“Health and safety standards have improved ... Part of this is due to operator involvement during the development stage of projects when input can be made about how the equipment will be operated. The opportunity is then available to identify where problems can arise and design them out of the process or put suitable controls in place.” Manager

Planning and implementing

Your health and safety management system, health and safety plan, risk control systems, procedures, etc need to be planned and actioned by managers with others as a collaborative exercise involving competent people throughout the organisation.

Involvement in design

Engineers and others designing and installing plant should consult the operators concerning all aspects of the equipment such as maintenance, cleaning and other needs and involve them to optimise access to controls, space for cleaning, etc.

Avoiding pitfalls

At a bulk chemical storage site a hose pit was being refurbished. The workforce were consulted to comment upon the management proposals to improve operability and safety. Recommendations were made by the operators which were accepted and actioned by management. These included moving the ‘header’ back so it was easier to reach and changing the height of valves so that they were easier to operate.

Foundations for success

A new plant was to be built on a green field site. Professionals established the basic design and the operators were involved in review of the design during building. A team of operators, plant managers and safety staff were involved. The team went through the process stage by stage to identify any aspects which could improve operability. They changed things like the height of valves and operational controls. The operators also wrote manufacturing procedures for the plant. They split into two groups; one group wrote a procedure which the other tested.

Setting objectives

Your health and safety plan should include objectives for developing, maintaining and improving the health and safety management system. This process may include team objectives and within teams, individuals could agree personal objectives.

Pick and mix

At a manufacturing site the workforce determine the team safety objectives. Each team decide priority health and safety topics to be tackled during the year as collective objectives. Individuals then have personal objectives which contribute to the team process. Managers are part of the teams but support rather than manage the tasks. The initiatives include:

- A review of the selection and use of gloves by the day maintenance team. The gloves are needed to protect against a range of dangerous materials. The team obtained suppliers’ literature, were involved in visits to other plants, glove suppliers and to an off-site testing facility. They are revising risk assessments and preparing information about glove types for use by ‘permit-to-work’ issuers.

- Increasing benzene awareness in the workforce, including contractors. A shift team carried out a fundamental review of potential exposure points, involving examination of line diagrams, review of equipment type and condition, personnel decontamination protocols, monitoring arrangements and personal protective equipment.
- Creating a pocket-sized booklet of standard engineering data as a guide for staff and contractors.
- Involvement of the improvement team in writing and checking parts of the site COMAH safety report concerning the measures to limit the consequences of a major accident and the emergency response.

Risk assessment

Risk assessment is fundamental to the planning process. In practice a representative of the staff who carry out the tasks being assessed should be involved in the assessment. They know how the job is actually done and the scope for dangerous shortcuts. They can provide useful information about aspects of the work that they find difficult and any ideas they have for making the work more efficient or safer. This may bring production as well as health and safety benefits. A teamwork approach enables a true picture of the activity to be built up and increases the potential pool of ideas for improvement.

Bags of ideas

Employees were suffering back injuries associated with manually feeding 25-kg sacks of material such as pigment into a mixing machine. An assessment team comprising operators, engineers and local managers was formed to consider the feasibility of introducing 'big bags'. They identified problems and difficulties preventing the use of this system and then solved them, eg using a lift truck to move the bags required the relocation of lights and modifications to the feed chutes at the mixers and to the dust extraction systems. There have been significant benefits from the change in addition to reducing injuries. The loading time for the mixer has been reduced from 60 - 90 minutes to 15 minutes so improving production time. Dust exposure has also been reduced. Costs of raw materials have been lowered through buying in bulk. The trials were so successful that the use of 'big bags' has been extended to all areas on site.

Driving force

In the haulage business drivers can be exposed to significant risk at customer sites, eg when making a delivery. They work unsupervised and need to be equipped to make decisions about their own safety. Workforce involvement was introduced at one company in response to customer demands and to improve safety performance. A 'hazard spotting' system has been adopted. On arrival at site the driver makes an assessment of the conditions.

If a serious risk cannot be eliminated the delivery may not go ahead. The haulage company gives the driver the final say in this matter. Defects are recorded on an 'unsatisfactory delivery condition report' - as 'needing

“Some drivers thought that being responsible for assessing the site to evaluate delivery risks involved extra work, but they now see this as carrying out the same job in a more responsible manner.”

“The procedures are easy to understand and accurately reflect working practices as the people who use them developed them. This means that everyone agrees that this is the best work method and the resulting product is more consistent. There is less room for misinterpretation to lead to a wrong action and a possible accident.” Manager

“Awareness of the correct manufacturing process is now much higher. This means that everyone is now working in the same way. Operators are also more aware of how procedures can be changed if they have ideas for improvements.” Manager

attention or preventing delivery’. The report form lists items to be considered and acts as a checklist. The haulage company’s transport manager examines completed forms and refers defects to the customer and client for resolution. Improvements resulting from reports include:

- sending more appropriate equipment to delivery sites;
- customers marking tanks or fitting gauges;
- training needs identified and met at the customer site; and
- improvements to tank valves and bunds.

These matters are discussed at the monthly safety committee which all drivers attend.

Writing procedures

Employees and safety representatives should be involved in writing procedures - they know how the job is done and can therefore provide a ‘reality check’ to ensure that procedures are sensible and workable.

It takes two

At a medium-sized manufacturing site the process operating procedures had become out of date and did not reflect how the work was really done. The health and safety instructions for the task were contained in those procedures. Management identified a need for increased workforce involvement and concluded that it would be best if operators carried out a review and update of the procedures. These were then agreed with their shift managers before issue. Operators worked in pairs during the manufacturing process to review each procedure and record how the job was actually done.

Measuring

Measurement is essential to maintain and improve health and safety performance. There are two ways to generate information on performance:

- Active systems monitor the achievement of plans and the extent of compliance with standards.
- Reactive systems monitor accidents, ill health and incidents.

Effective procedures are needed to capture both sorts of information. Employees and safety representatives have a valuable part to play in measuring performance.

Active monitoring of health and safety

Active monitoring takes place before an accident, incident or ill health occurs, measures success and reinforces positive achievement. Workplace inspection by managers and workers such as safety representatives and action team members should focus on health and safety critical areas, key risk control systems and related workplace precautions. The tracking of ‘near misses’ and monitoring of maintenance systems designed to prevent chemical leaks are particularly important in the chemical industry.

“If I see an unsafe act or condition I do something about it, for example, if someone is using safety glasses instead of a visor while premixing I will ask them to change.”
Operator

A commonly used method of involving the workforce in measuring compliance with workplace precautions involves workers observing their colleagues and recording safe and unsafe actions (known as behavioural monitoring).

Team support

At a manufacturing site team performance data is collected, reviewed and reported to the safety committee by safety/employee representatives. They co-operate and liaise with managers while doing this. They have been empowered to gather data on progress with targets such as: numbers of safe- and unsafe-act observations carried out and their results; incidents; and other issues such as learning events. Some managers are also present at the committee.

Measuring up

A chemical manufacturing company reviewed risk assessments throughout all plant areas. Each area was assigned a ‘champion’ - some were managers and some were from the workforce. The champion’s role was to ensure that risk assessments for their particular area were completed and that any remedial action was taken to improve conditions. This work focused on examining both hardware and management systems. Following completion of the risk assessments the champions retained their roles and are now responsible for monitoring the condition of the work areas against agreed standards. Champions are members of the safety committee and report back to the committee on a quarterly basis.

Regular monitoring may also be usefully supplemented by periodic surveys of employees’ opinions on key aspects of health and safety. HSE has published a tool to help organisations assess such aspects of their health and safety ‘climate’.⁸

Reactive monitoring of health and safety

Reactive monitoring is triggered by events, eg accidents and ill health and should involve the workforce as they can provide vital insight into what might have happened. You may need to consider the training needs of your staff to enable them to become competent in, for example, the investigation of accidents, dangerous occurrences and ill health. The workforce should also be involved in examining accident and ill-health data to identify common features or trends. Safety committees have traditionally been involved in these types of monitoring. The work of safety committees should be extended to include active monitoring.

Blood brothers

At a manufacturing site, management concerns about the causes of high blood-lead levels resulted in co-operation with the trade union safety representatives over investigations. This changed the position from an adversarial one where only management investigated to a co-operative one where the individuals concerned consented to a joint investigation involving the safety representative. They can exclude the safety representatives should they wish but so far they have been content to involve them and are

satisfied that confidentiality is maintained, ie concerning the levels of lead recorded.

This initiative has led to the identification of root causes of exposure to lead and a marked reduction in the incidence of high blood-lead levels. In the past, accidents and near misses were also investigated solely by management, with completed reports fed back to the health and safety committee, preventing active involvement of the workforce. This has now changed with the safety representatives playing an equal part in the investigation.

Audit and review

Organisations promoting a positive health and safety culture carry out periodic planned reviews and they involve the workforce in an active manner as part of a continuous improvement programme. You can include your workforce in both fundamental review processes, which often occur after an audit, and in more routine lower level reviews.

Mopping up

One company involved the workforce in the auditing and comprehensive review of the arrangements for implementing their health and safety defect reporting system. A safety representative and a process operator discussed the problems associated with operation of the system with a range of staff and contractors. Their findings identified the need for area focus and commitment and for better recording and tracking of reports. This resulted in the appointment of area co-ordinators and establishment of a database to improve data management.

Summary

Part 2 gave examples of the real benefits that companies have experienced from involving their workforce. Now go back to Part 1 and consider how you can implement a workforce involvement initiative in your workplace or improve your existing schemes.

Appendix 1 Legal requirements for workforce involvement

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of employees and others who may be affected by the work activities. That means they have to manage the risks. Specific duties include provision of information, instruction and training for employees.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess the risks and have arrangements in place to manage health and safety effectively. Specific duties include the provision of information and training to employees.

The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 allow recognised trade unions to appoint safety representatives, who then have rights to:

- be consulted about health and safety issues;
- inspect the premises;
- investigate reportable accidents, occupational diseases and dangerous occurrences;
- attend safety committee meetings;
- request a safety committee be formed; and
- contact enforcing authority inspectors.

Employers have duties to consult employees who are not represented by trade union safety representatives under the **Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996**. This may be done directly or through elected representatives. All representatives must be provided with paid time off to carry out their duties and to undertake appropriate training; they must also be given adequate facilities on site.

The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH Regulations) require employers to take all necessary measures to prevent major accidents and limit their consequences to people and the environment. The Regulations demand the application of explicit management systems to prevent and mitigate the effects of an accident. The COMAH Regulations now act as a driver for some companies to review current management arrangements and make workforce involvement more effective.

Companies required to prepare COMAH safety reports should agree and prioritise with the workforce the major accident scenarios they are trying to prevent. Engaging the workforce in this way should ensure that a 'reality check' is applied to the measures given in the safety report for preventing major accidents.

Note: the law on employee consultation on health and safety is under review following a public consultation exercise in 1999/2000.

Appendix 2 Simple assessment tool for reviewing workforce involvement

Table 1 contains questions to help you carry out an assessment of the extent of workforce involvement at your site. The table includes illustrative examples of good practice for use in judging the responses. You may choose to use these examples and/or add further questions based upon material in this guide or issues that are specific to your company. Where the term ‘employees’ is used in the table it includes your own employees and other workers such as contractors.

To involve the workforce in this exercise, you may wish to run it using the team implementing the workforce involvement initiative or the health and safety committee. Where trade unions are recognised, you may find it more productive to carry out a joint exercise with the safety representatives. The professional health and safety advisors retained by some trade unions may be able to provide valuable assistance in helping develop such joint initiatives.

Table 1 Assessment of extent of workforce involvement

Question	Examples of good practice
<p>Policy</p> <p>To what extent is the workforce involved in the development and review of your health and safety policy statement or policy for specific risk control systems?</p> <p>Where the COMAH Regulations apply, to what extent is the workforce involved in the development and review of your major accident prevention policy (MAPP)?</p>	<p>Workforce representatives are actively involved in preparation and revision of general health and safety policy statement and key risk control system statements, eg statement for maintenance of plant. Commitment to involvement is specified in the general policy statement.</p> <p>Workforce representatives are actively involved in preparation and revision of the MAPP. Commitment to involvement specified in the MAPP.</p>
<p>Organising: control</p> <p>Are employees being empowered and given specific health and safety roles as individuals or as part of teams? (This is not replacing management duties for health and safety).</p>	<p>Employees take on new roles, eg secondment to safety department, or act as champions for specific topics, eg permit to work. Employees and contractors are involved in continuous improvement teams tackling health and safety topics.</p>
<p>Organising: co-operation</p> <p>Are all of the workforce co-operating to enable staff to carry out their health and safety functions?</p>	<p>Managers and colleagues provide resource, eg fund and attend meetings in overtime periods, change individual shift patterns, provide additional cover to release staff for meetings or training.</p>

Question	Examples of good practice
<p>Organising: co-operation (continued) Have changes been made to the health and safety committee and management arrangements to enable effective, active workforce involvement?</p>	<p>The committee focuses on strategic health and safety matters; management roles reflect this. Day-to-day problems are resolved as they occur and solutions drawn to the attention of the committee.</p>
<p>Organising: communication Is there good communication involving workers throughout the organisation?</p>	<p>Employees are involved in delivering the message. For example, at a launch of a programme, workforce representatives/improvement teams are involved in 'tool box' talks, newsletters, posters or suggestion schemes which enable active involvement. Employees are kept informed and are able to contribute.</p>
<p>Organisation: competence Are employees actively involved in the design and delivery of health and safety training?</p>	<p>An improvement team prepares training material and trains the workforce. Training is provided for staff who require new skills as the result of changing roles from increased involvement.</p>
<p>Planning and implementing Is the workforce involved in setting your overall objectives and plans for health and safety (the detail of which implements the strategic policies)?</p>	<p>Employees are involved in setting workforce involvement objectives. Teams/departments set their own annual health and safety targets/plans based on strategic policies and these are reflected in individual job objectives.</p>
<p>Do safety specialists or other managers carry out the risk assessments without involving relevant workers?</p>	<p>The 'doers' are actively involved, consulted or are trained to enable them to play a full part in the assessment process.</p>
<p>When new equipment, materials, services or contractors are being procured is the workforce actively involved?</p>	<p>Employees form part of a design/engineering team, assisting in identifying hazards and providing process/operational information and suggestions.</p>
<p>Is the workforce actively involved in the design of, or changes to your equipment, work layout, systems of work, rules and procedures?</p>	<p>Operators, engineers and fitters assist in talking to staff, redesigning equipment and preparing briefings.</p>
<p>How is the workforce included in problem-solving activities?</p>	<p>Workers participate as equals in teams solving problems.</p>
<p>Where the COMAH Regulations require the preparation of a safety report is the workforce involved in its preparation?</p>	<p>The safety report preparation includes participation of workforce representatives.</p>

Question	Examples of good practice
Measurement	
Is there active monitoring involving the workforce?	Active involvement in workplace inspections, behavioural observations, checking progress with plans, team health and safety performance, assessing risk control systems, suggestion schemes.
How is your workforce involved in the investigation of accidents and ill health?	Safety representatives investigate (and analyse root causes) of accidents and cases of ill health.
Audit and review	
Does your health and safety committee review strategic health and safety matters, eg operation of your risk control systems?	Health and safety committee carries out fundamental performance review, ie audits performance of the health and safety management system and key risk control systems and takes action as necessary.
Are your workers involved in the review of risk controls?	Teams include active workforce participation during activities such as process hazard review and review of operating procedures.
Do your managers include the workforce in the review of departmental health and safety matters?	Team review their own performance and suggest action.
To what extent is your workforce actively involved in the audit process?	Employees and safety representatives form part of the audit team.

Table 2 shows a suggested format for the assessment (compiled using the questions in Table 1) which enables it to be used as a tool for reviews and follow-up action.

Table 2 Suggested format for collecting information and recording actions

Assessment of workforce involvement				
Question	Examples of good practice	Evidence at your company	Suggested action or solution	Improvement actions with date and responsibility
<i>Is there workforce involvement in active monitoring of health and safety?</i>	<i>Workforce takes part in inspections, behavioural observations and checking application of risk control systems.</i>	<i>Some inspections of workplace precautions by supervisors.</i>	<i>Introduce systematic inspections involving supervisors, maintenance staff, management safety representatives or other employees.</i>	<i>Plant manager to raise at next meeting of health and safety committee. Committee to consult workforce on proposals.</i>

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HSE Books 1997 ISBN 0 7176 1276 7
- 4 Reilly, Paci and Holl 'Unions, safety committees and workplace injuries'
British Journal of Industrial Relations 1995 **6** (33.2) 0007-1080
- 5 *Health and safety benchmarking* INDG301 HSE Books 1999
(single copy free available in priced packs of 5 ISBN 0 7176 2494 3)
- 6 BS 8800: 1996 *Guide to occupational health and safety management systems*
British Standards Institution
- 7 *COMAH safety report assessment manual* available on the Internet at
www.hse.gov.uk
- 8 *Health and safety climate survey tool* Licensed computer software
HSE Books 1997 ISBN 0 7176 1462 X

Further reading

Partners in prevention: revitalising health and safety in the workplace HS079 Trade
Union Congress 2000 ISBN 1 8500 6534 9

Creating partnerships for prevention: joining up health and safety Trade Union
Congress 2001 ISBN 1 8500 6576 4

Working together: Guidance on health and safety for contractors and suppliers
INDG268 HSE Books 1998 (single copy free available in priced packs of 10 ISBN 0
7176 1548 0)

Consulting employees on health and safety: A guide to the law INDG232
HSE Books 2000 (single copy free available in priced packs of 10
ISBN 0 7176 1615 0)

A guide to the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996
Guidance on Regulations L95 HSE Books 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1234 1

*Safety representatives and safety committees Approved Code of Practice and
guidance* L87 HSE Books 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1220 1

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