

The essentials of running a safe business

Small business toolkit



Disclaimer

This publication contains information regarding work health and safety. It includes some of your obligations under the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011* (WHS Act) – that NT WorkSafe administers. The information provided is a guide only and must be read in conjunction with the appropriate legislation to ensure you understand and comply with your legal obligations.

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Acronyms	Full form
ABN	Australian Business Number
ANC	Australian Company Number
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
Cth	Commonwealth
HSR	Health and Safety Representative
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
PAYG	Pay as you go
SDS	Safety Data Sheet
WHS	Work Health and Safety

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Introduction

As a business owner you have a responsibility to ensure that you run your business in a way that protects the health and safety of your workers and other people, such as your customers and nearby members of the public.

This small business toolkit has been designed to assist small business owners understand the essentials of running a safe business.

The toolkit comprises of a self-assessment checklist allowing you to rate your business in the following six essential areas.

- **Management commitment** – clearly defines your own responsibilities and those of your workers; provide the resources to meet those responsibilities; get involved.
- **Consultation** – involve your workers when identifying and resolving safety issues.
- **Safe work procedures** – identify the tasks that can pose a risk to your workers, take action to control the risks, develop simple procedures to manage any tasks where risks cannot be fully controlled.
- **Training and supervision** – train your workers in safe work procedures and ensure that procedures are always followed.
- **Reporting** – have a process for reporting safety issues, such as hazards and incidents, and ensure you act on these reports.
- **Workers' compensation and return to work** – ensure your workers are covered by a workers' compensation insurance policy and have an injury notification system and a return-to-work program to assist your injured workers.

Step 1 – How do you rate?

Use the self-assessment checklist to determine how you rate and understand what you need to do to improve safety in your workplace.

Step 2 – How do you improve?

The information in each section enables you to address issues that you identify in any of the above areas and provide useful assistance whether you are starting from scratch or need only build upon what you already have in place.

When using the toolkit, consider the following:

- The best way to identify and resolve safety issues in your workplace is to involve your workers, and it is essential to have a clear understanding of each other's responsibilities – as a priority, address the issues in the sections; management commitment, and consultation.
- Together with your workers, prioritise those tasks that need to be addressed to improve workplace safety and develop realistic timeframes for their completion based on the complexity of the task and the available resources.
- Implementation of safe work procedures involves training your workers to ensure they understand the procedures and perform them correctly – and supervising your workers to ensure they always follow procedures.

Step 3 – Where can you get more assistance?

NT WorkSafe

NT WorkSafe is available to help you manage health and safety in your workplace, by offering information and guidance via a toll-free call on 1800 019 115.

WorkSafe Inspectors can also help via the Small Business Safety Assistance program where WorkSafe Inspectors can:

- discuss health and safety issues in the workplace
- provide advice on the development and implementation of safety management systems
- help to devise strategies and solutions to manage risks and hazards in the workplace
- provide resources and guidance material on work health and safety issues
- provide information presentations and attend toolbox talks.

Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations

Northern Territory businesses, Aboriginal enterprise and not-for-profits can get help from a territory business advisor from the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations. A territory business advisor can help you identify the types of support your business can access including networking, contacts, information, available grants, tools and resources. Please email businessinfo@nt.gov.au for more information.

Self-assessment checklist – How do you rate?

Tick the boxes that most apply to you.

Management Commitment	Consultation	Safe Work Procedures	Training and Supervision	Reporting Safety	Workers Compensation & Return to Work	Rating
<input type="checkbox"/> Manager(s) and worker safety responsibilities clearly understood and acted upon. <input type="checkbox"/> Time and money allocated to meet safety responsibilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Manager(s) promote safety as a high priority. <input type="checkbox"/> Manager(s) lead by example.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agreed consultation arrangements are used to discuss safety issues and are working effectively. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers involved in safety discussions and developing procedures. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers views are valued and considered.	<input type="checkbox"/> All tasks with safety risks have been identified and risks controlled. <input type="checkbox"/> Safe work procedures developed and implemented for these tasks. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers involved in developing safe work procedures. <input type="checkbox"/> Procedures followed in day-to-day operations. <input type="checkbox"/> Safe work procedures are reviewed.	<input type="checkbox"/> All workers inducted. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers trained in safe work procedures before commencing tasks. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers understand procedures and demonstrate they can perform tasks safely. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers are supervised to ensure safe work procedures are followed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Procedures for reporting safety issues and incidents are developed and implemented. <input type="checkbox"/> Safety issues and incidents are reported and acted on, including notifiable incidents to NT WorkSafe. <input type="checkbox"/> Safe work procedures and training reviewed following incident reports.	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers compensation insurance policy accurately reflects business details. <input type="checkbox"/> Claims forms are submitted to insurance providers. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers informed of the return-to-work policy, including procedures to follow if injured at work. <input type="checkbox"/> Return to work plans implemented for injured workers when required.	Each tick in the Green Zone means you are more likely to be compliant. Monitor and review to continually improve.
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety responsibilities identified but not understood or operating effectively. <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient time and money allocated to meet safety responsibilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Safety not always a priority. <input type="checkbox"/> Limited involvement of manager(s) in safety initiatives. <input type="checkbox"/> Manager(s) do not always lead by example.	<input type="checkbox"/> Consultation arrangement in place but not working effectively. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers not always involved in safety decisions and developing procedures. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers views not always valued or considered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Only some tasks with safety risks have been assessed. <input type="checkbox"/> Limited development and implementation of safe work procedures. <input type="checkbox"/> Limited involvement of workers in developing safe work procedures. <input type="checkbox"/> Procedures developed but not always followed in day-to-day operations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Induction and training in safe work procedures incomplete or inconsistently applied. <input type="checkbox"/> Some workers not able to demonstrate they can do the tasks safely. <input type="checkbox"/> Supervision does not always result in safe work procedures being followed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Reporting procedures developed but not always followed. <input type="checkbox"/> Some incidents reported, but follow-up action limited. <input type="checkbox"/> Safe work procedures and training not always reviewed following an incident report.	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers compensation insurance policy does not accurately reflect business details. <input type="checkbox"/> Not all claims' forms completed and submitted to insurance provider. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers not aware of return-to-work policy or procedures to follow if injured at work. <input type="checkbox"/> Return to work plans are not effective in supporting injured workers.	Each tick in the Orange Zone means you are increasing your level of compliance. But you still have work to do.
<input type="checkbox"/> No clear understanding of safety responsibilities. <input type="checkbox"/> No time or money allocated to meet safety responsibilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Safety not a priority. <input type="checkbox"/> No safety initiatives. <input type="checkbox"/> Manager(s) set a poor safety example.	<input type="checkbox"/> No consultation arrangements in place. <input type="checkbox"/> No involvement of workers in safety issues. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers views not valued.	<input type="checkbox"/> Tasks with safety risks not identified nor the risks controlled. <input type="checkbox"/> No safe work procedures developed. <input type="checkbox"/> Safe work procedures not reviewed. <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility for doing tasks safely is left to workers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers not inducted. <input type="checkbox"/> No safety training provided. <input type="checkbox"/> Worker's ability to perform tasks safely is not verified. <input type="checkbox"/> No supervision to ensure workers are performing tasks safely.	<input type="checkbox"/> No reporting procedures. <input type="checkbox"/> Incidents not reported as required. <input type="checkbox"/> No review of work practices following an incident.	<input type="checkbox"/> No workers compensation insurance policy. <input type="checkbox"/> No return-to-work policy or procedures or plans. <input type="checkbox"/> Workers not assisted to return-to-work after an injury.	Each tick in the Red Zone means you are less likely to be compliant. Address these areas immediately.

Once this has been completed, check your ratings against the following pages for further guidance

1. Management commitment

Why is Management Commitment important?

... because responsibility for safety starts at the top.

Everyone agrees that a safe workplace is important, but it won't happen if you don't do all you can to make your workplace as safe as it can be. The primary responsibility for a safe workplace rest with you, the employer. Demonstrate your commitment to safety and ensure that everyone in your business is clear about their health and safety responsibilities. Your workers are your greatest asset when establishing an effective safety management plan.

Develop a successful safety culture in your business by leading from the top, where your actions and attitudes send a message to your workers that you are serious about safety. From this commitment, effective partnerships are formed with your workers to achieve safer workplaces.

Ways you can develop a successful safety culture and demonstrate your commitment include:

- implementing safe systems of work
- encouraging the reporting of incidents and opportunities for improvement
- valuing worker contributions and involving them in decisions
- providing safe and effective tools and support (e.g. time and resources to perform the safety role/function) to achieve the desired work outcome.

These elements send the message that you are serious about safety. From this commitment, effective partnerships are formed with your workers to achieve a safer workplace. One of the easiest ways to start to show this management commitment to safety is to develop and implement a health and safety policy.

Everyone involved in work activities at your workplace needs to be considered when developing safety processes, including labour hire workers, apprentices/trainees not directly employed by you, contractors and others. With increased outsourcing and contract work, it is imperative that these people understand their responsibilities as far as safety is concerned at your workplace.

Where you ticked in the red zone...

... shows you it is unlikely that safety responsibilities in your business have been made clear or that safety is seen as a priority.

Ticks in the **Red Zone** indicate that you need to take immediate action to develop a safety culture by clarifying people's roles in managing safety, defining your role, allocating resources to meet your safety responsibilities, and demonstrating your personal commitment to operating a safe business.

Determine safety responsibilities and clearly communicate them

Outline safety responsibilities in your workers' position descriptions and be clear about what each person's safety responsibilities are.

Speak with your workers about what is expected of them regarding safety in the workplace—and about what you need to do to help them achieve these expectations.

If you expect them to report incidents, they need a safety reporting procedure—and they expect you to act upon the safety reports. Similarly, if you expect them to work safely, they need safe work procedures—and they should expect you to involve them in the development of those procedures.

	<p>You should ensure you involve all workers (including contractors, sub-contractors and their employees, labour hire workers, apprentices, volunteers, students on work experience etc.) in the safety responsibilities discussion process, making your expectations of them explicitly clear.</p>
<p>Commit time, money and resources</p>	<p>Time and money spent on safety is an investment in good business practice—it often means reduced costs for workers’ compensation, less time lost due to injuries, and better productivity.</p> <p>When responsibilities have been identified, commit adequate time and money to ensure these responsibilities are met.</p> <p>Spend time to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop safe work procedures • supervise and train your workers • act on safety reports. <p>Spend money to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain and repair equipment • provide personal protective equipment • resolve safety issues.
<p>Make safety a priority</p>	<p>When you have identified safety responsibilities and have committed resources to make your business safe, take the initiative to make safety a top priority.</p> <p>Good communication between your workers, supervisors and you ensure that your workplace systems will be effective. Discuss safety issues at your regular workplace meetings, implement an incident reporting procedure for accidents, incidents and near misses, and follow-up workers’ safety issues as a priority.</p> <p>When approaching safety management at your workplace you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and implement safe work procedures for all tasks that expose your workers to risk • ensure safe work procedures are always followed • involve your workers in decisions about their health and safety • train your workers to do their jobs safely • ensure safety issues are reported quickly—and acted on • review procedures when there are changes in the workplace or after an incident • provide resources to address your safety responsibilities • ensure your workers’ compensation insurance policy is accurate and up to date • ensure that any required workplace rehabilitation policies and procedures are prominently displayed in the workplace (small workplaces do not require these formal structures—see Section 6 Workers compensation and return to work Act for more information).

Where you ticked in the orange zone...

...shows that you're on the right track, but you need to do more to address the risks in your workplace.

Ticks in the **Orange Zone** indicate that you need to be more consistent with your commitment to workplace safety. Are safety responsibilities effectively communicated? Are there adequate resources to meet safety responsibilities?

Are you appropriately involved in safety issues?

<p>Clearly define safety responsibilities</p>	<p>Your workers will contribute to safety if they understand their responsibilities – and have the skills to meet those responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your new workers given induction training that includes safety information and outlines their safety responsibilities? • Do they have clear instructions on how to deal with safety issues? • Do supervisors understand their role in ensuring safety in the workplace? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are processes regularly reviewed to ensure that they are still current?
<p>Provide adequate resources to support safety initiatives</p>	<p>Demonstrate your commitment by providing enough time and money to deal with safety problems—and fix problems when they arise. When problems cannot be fixed immediately, provide an alternative short-term solution.</p> <p>Provide feedback to workers who report issues even if the decision has been made to not take any action. Seeing no action being taken and/or having no information about the issue's progress almost guarantees that workers will be reluctant to report future issues or concerns.</p> <p>If there is a health and safety issue in the workplace, relevant parties must make reasonable efforts to achieve a timely, final and effective resolution to the issue. Agreed workplace procedures for issue resolution should be followed, or where necessary refer to the default issue resolution procedure outlined in the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011. If the work health and safety issue is not solved through the issue resolution process, it can be referred to the regulator for resolution by an inspector.</p>
<p>Demonstrate commitment to safety from the highest level in the organisation</p>	<p>Get actively involved with safety issues when they arise. Attend workplace meetings regularly. Speak with your workers and act upon their feedback regarding safety issues.</p> <p>Ensure solutions to safety problems are implemented promptly by those responsible and monitor the effectiveness of the solution.</p> <p>Seek comments and ideas from workers about any proposed changes (i.e. new technology, work practices or equipment) before the decision has been made. They may have genuine safety concerns about which you are unaware. Ask them how to best use the resources set aside for safety. Ask them what training they require to perform their job safely.</p>

Where you ticked in the green zone...

... shows your workers understand their role—and yours—in getting their work done safely.

Ticks in the **Green Zone** indicate that safety roles, responsibilities and procedures have been defined.

Maintain commitment to safety	<p>Maintain your commitment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring and reviewing your safety performance • building safety into your future business plans • promoting safety to your workers as a core business value • ensuring production demands don't override safety • providing feedback to your workers regarding their successful contribution to safety • providing ongoing training so that everyone can enhance their skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ making up-to-date information available to your workers.
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Typical workplace responsibilities

Owner/manager responsibility	Worker responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement safe work procedures. • Train your workers in safe work procedures. • Consult with workers, Health and Safety Representatives and OHS Committee. • Ensure safety equipment is purchased and maintained. • Develop an incident and injury reporting procedure, and act upon the incident and injury reports. • Supply safety gear (i.e. personal protective equipment). • Have a workers compensation insurance policy and a return-to-work plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow procedures. • Participate in training. • Use equipment properly. • Report incidents and injuries. • Use safety gear. • Participate in your return-to-work plan.

2. Consultation

Why do you need to consult?

...because many decisions you make can have health and safety consequences for your workers

Your workers are directly affected by your decisions and can often foresee things that you may overlook. They can provide suggestions about how to solve health and safety problems and reduce injuries that can lead to increased savings and improved productivity for your business.

Introducing a new chemical or changing work tasks, for example, can create safety risks – and your workers can help you identify these risks and decide what to do to minimise them. You can avoid unnecessary expense and downtime. As well as being a good idea, consultation about safety issues is required under the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 and Regulations.

Consultation enables you to share work health and safety (WHS) information and get your workers' views before you make decisions. You and your workers must be alert to things that can cause harm. Through consultation, you can become more aware of hazards and WHS issues experienced by your workers and can involve them in addressing potential problems before they escalate and affect your business.

Where you ticked in the red zone...

...you are unlikely to be effectively consulting your workers and involving them in safety matters.

Ticks in the **Red Zone** indicate that you need to take immediate action to implement formal consultation arrangements and ensure that your workers have the opportunity to express their views and contribute to health and safety issues.

Establish your consultation arrangements

Consultation is about involving people in the decision-making process rather than just “telling” them what is going to happen. The most basic form of consultation is simply having regular talks with workers. This could involve regular staff meetings where safety is discussed as a standing item, or a more formal safety committee meeting.

Your workers may choose to elect a Health and Safety Representative (HSR) to represent defined work groups in the workplace. One of the tools you can use to encourage consultation with your workers is the establishment of a safety committee. In very small workplaces all staff may be part of this committee. The times the committee meets should be negotiated between the committee members and yourself. By law, if there is a committee, then meetings must be held at least once every three months.

These meetings will assist you to:

- promote cooperation between your workers and yourself to make any necessary changes to ensure work health and safety at the workplace
- provide an opportunity for two-way communication between yourself and the workers to discuss a range of issues associated with the health and safety of your workplace
- provide workers with a formal avenue to raise concerns.

Ensure your consultation captures all work health and safety issues and views— for example consider shift workers and remote workers, trainees, apprentices

	<p>and people with disabilities. Also consider other issues such as language, literacy, gender and age to ensure everyone can be included in the process.</p> <p>The Code of Practice - Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination have more information on HSR's and safety committees.</p>
<p><i>Record your consultation arrangements and issue resolution procedure</i></p>	<p>Ensure that all your workers have knowledge of health and safety issues so they can comment on matters that affect them. Your agreed consultation arrangements and issue resolution procedure should be recorded and displayed in the workplace. It is a legal requirement to display the name/s and contact details of all elected HSRs.</p> <p>The HSRs should also be made aware that they may be contacted to discuss any work health and safety issues. It is also a legal requirement to have an agreed issue resolution procedure, set out in writing and communicated to all workers. Where necessary refer to the default issue resolution procedure in the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011.</p>
<p><i>Consult effectively</i></p>	<p>Consultation means valuing and acting on your workers' ideas, not simply handing out documents or asking for input just for the sake of it. At your regular workplace meetings, discuss with your workers any plans you may have that could affect their health and safety – for example purchasing new equipment, changing work tasks, or redesigning the workplace. Before deciding, seek their views on how safety issues could be addressed.</p> <p>Encourage your workers to raise their safety concerns. Make an extra effort to include young workers, those with a disability and those from a non-English speaking background.</p> <p>If a HSR has been elected, ensure they are notified of any safety issues or proposed decisions that may affect safety and discuss it with them and the committee. Before making any decisions, allow them time to inform all workers and obtain their input and feedback.</p>
<p><i>Record decisions that affect safety</i></p>	<p>Keep records of significant safety decisions to demonstrate that you take safety issues seriously and are prompt in addressing them. It reinforces the actions that need to be taken, outlines who is responsible for undertaking them, and indicates when they need to be completed.</p> <p>Provide an agenda before your regular workplace meetings to inform your workers of the issues to be discussed. It affords them an opportunity to include other topics and enables them time to consider possible suggestions and solutions. Informal discussions are equally as beneficial in the consultation process as formal meetings. Whatever form the consultation process takes, its primary aim is for employers to talk about and resolve issues.</p>

Where you ticked in the orange zone...

...you have consultation arrangements in place, but they may not be working effectively or capturing your workers' input.

Ticks in the **Orange Zone** indicate that you have undertaken some consultation, but the arrangements may not be consistent or appropriate to the needs of your workers, or your business.

<p>Implement consultation arrangements that are suitable for your workplace</p>	<p>Your consultation arrangements may need to be changed to better suit the size, structure and nature of your workplace.</p> <p>Perhaps you require flexible arrangements to involve all your workers—for example those on different shifts and sites, transport workers and those working from home who may not be able to attend regular workplace meetings.</p> <p>As a result, both you and your workers may be missing vital health and safety information in relation to the work tasks and work areas of these workers. Introduce regular discussions with these groups of workers about their health and safety concerns.</p>
<p>Encourage your workers to become involved</p>	<p>Most workers are keen to foster a productive and safe workplace, but they may be discouraged by the 'consultation process' rather than consultation itself. Encourage workers to get involved in the safety process in any capacity that they can. Some workplaces even reward positive worker involvement.</p>
<p>Gather input from workers and provide feedback to them</p>	<p>Encourage worker participation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling safety as a priority—try to avoid holding safety meetings at the end of a shift as you will often run out of time and your workers may not contribute due to their desire to go home. Discuss safety issues at the beginning of your regular workplace meetings, when your workers are fresh and alert. • Showing you value your workers' views—develop an action plan and a schedule (including timeframes) to demonstrate to your workers that you are acting on their concerns. Workers can often feel that they are informed about safety issues rather than consulted. If your workers believe their safety concerns are swiftly dismissed and not afforded proper consideration, they will be reluctant to participate in the consultation process. • Make safety decisions by taking into account your workers' views. When your decisions are contrary to workers' views, it is much easier for them to accept the decision if you clearly outline the reasons for your decision. • Giving positive feedback to your workers—let them know why their suggestions are important (relevance), how they are helpful (benefits) and when they will be acted on (schedule). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Including all your workers in the process and ensuring all workers are aware of their role and responsibility with regard to health and safety. Train HSRs and make it easy for all your workers to contribute to work health and safety in your workplace. Workers from non-English speaking backgrounds and those with special

	needs may be consulted individually to ensure their concerns are addressed.
<p>Send a clear message about the importance of safety</p>	<p>To be effective, consultation needs to be consistent and inclusive, and safety issues need to be addressed in a timely way.</p> <p>Conducting ad hoc safety meetings sends a strong message to your workers that consultation and safety issues are relatively unimportant. They are less likely to feel encouraged to participate, and the opportunity to identify safety issues and possible solutions may be lost.</p> <p>Discuss your consultation arrangements with all your workers and ensure that their safety concerns are addressed at your regular workplace meetings.</p> <p>Sometimes, your workers may have varying opinions with regard to the best possible safety solution. Ultimately, it is your obligation to put in place measures that ensure health and safety at your workplace.</p> <p>Ensure that you keep accurate safety records, and wherever possible complete recommended actions with specified time frames. Inform workers of reasons for any delays in resolving safety issues, and update regarding their progress.</p>

Where you ticked in the green zone...

...your regular consultation arrangements are effective, and workers are involved in decisions regarding safety.

Ticks in the **Green Zone** indicate that you have implemented regular consultation arrangements that suit your workplace and that you actively encourage your workers' participation and value their views. If your consultation arrangements are working well, potential hazards and risks will be readily identified, and your workers will suggest and support timely improvements that benefit your business.

<p>Review for effectiveness</p>	<p>Have open and frank discussions with workers periodically to see how well the consultation process is working, and how it could be improved.</p> <p>Ensure that your vulnerable workers, young workers, those with a disability and those with language or literacy issues are adequately represented in the consultation process and understand safe work procedures, reporting measures, training systems and the like.</p> <p>If your consultation process is working well, encourage your workers to contribute to broader issues, such as workplace design, organisation of work, future trends etc..</p>
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Example - Documentation of consultation arrangements

Consultation arrangements

The staff meeting conducted every Friday morning is the agreed arrangement for discussing health and safety issues. At this meeting, any proposals that may affect health and safety will be discussed.

These include:

- purchasing of new equipment or substances
- changing the work premises
- developing or changing job tasks or safety procedures.

Staff are also encouraged to raise any health and safety concerns they may have for discussion at the meeting or through their HSR or OHS committee (name) on (phone number).

Signed:	Owner
<hr/>	Staff
<hr/>	Staff
<hr/>	Staff
<hr/>	Staff
<hr/>	Staff
<hr/>	Staff

Meeting date:

3. Safe Work Procedures

Why do you need safe work procedures?

...because some work tasks carry risks.

Sometimes, risks associated with a work task may be obvious – e.g. dangerous machinery and chemicals used in a manufacturing or construction environment. For other tasks, the risks may not be as obvious – e.g. loading, unloading, packing, unpacking and handling goods in a retail environment may expose workers to back injuries or repetitive strain injuries.

Safe work procedures ensure your workers are aware of the risks in their work tasks, and outline how to avoid injury or illness while doing these tasks.

Safe work procedures are a means of briefly documenting the risks associated with a work task and incorporating the appropriate risk control measures into a sequence of steps for doing the task safely. Safe work procedures provide a useful tool for training and supervising your workers, responding to incident reports and changes in the workplace and are most effective when developed in consultation with your workers.

Where you ticked in the red zone...

... shows that your workers are unlikely to have documented instructions to help them do their jobs safely.

Ticks in the **Red Zone** indicate that you need to take action immediately to identify the tasks your workers do that may expose them to safety risks. Work with them to develop simple procedures to do their work safely. A person conducting a business or undertaking has a duty to consult workers on health and safety issues directly affecting them.

<p>Identify and prioritise tasks that require safe work procedures</p>	<p>Consider all the tasks that are done at your workplace. Safe work procedures should be developed for the tasks that could potentially harm your workers if the risks are not addressed.</p> <p>Many tasks are unlikely to expose your workers to risks, so documented safe work procedures for those tasks may not be necessary. Consult with workers about which tasks present a risk to them and determine how best to do the task safely. Develop safe work procedures for the tasks that pose the most serious consequences and gradually work through those that present less serious consequences.</p>
<p>Develop safe work procedures</p>	<p>Involve your workers, especially those that are experienced in performing the task—they are more likely to follow a safe work procedure if they have been involved in its development, and they will often know the best and safest way to perform a task.</p> <p>Identify the elements of each task in order from start to completion of the job—e.g. a production line may involve lifting objects onto a bench, shaping them with an electrical grinder, cleaning them with solvents and stacking them on a pallet.</p> <p>Identify the risk that each of these elements pose to those performing the task.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any risks of sprain/strain injuries from lifting and stacking? • Does the grinder allow access to the moving parts that could cause injury?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there dangerous fumes from the solvents? <p>Seek as much information about the risks as you can. For example, ask your workers about the risks, check machinery and equipment manuals, source best practice guidelines and read safety data sheets (for chemicals).</p> <p>Control the risks—once you have identified the risks and how much of a hazard they are, you then need to decide how to control the risks; and then take some action to implement the control solution. The ways of controlling risks are ranked from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest. This ranking is known as the 'hierarchy of risk control'.</p> <p>For further information refer to the Code of Practice – How to manage work health and safety risks available at worksafe.nt.gov.au/codes-of-practice.</p> <p>Document your safe work procedures—the easier your safe work procedures are to understand, the more likely your workers will follow them. List all the control measures you have identified as a series of steps set out in the order they need to be used.</p> <p>Distribute the safe work procedures for review—have your experienced workers review the safe work procedures and make amendments as appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the procedure is finalised, you must communicate it to all staff— you need to tell them about what's in it, don't just get them to read it.
<p>Implement safe work procedures through training</p>	<p>Correct implementation of safe work procedures involves training and supervision. Your workers must be trained to do their work tasks safely and must demonstrate an ability to follow the safe work procedures. Simply reading the documented procedure is not enough; you must ensure that the safe work procedures are always followed. Consider disciplinary action if your workers do not follow implemented safe work procedures.</p>
<p>Review your procedures</p>	<p>Review your safe work procedures when there is a change to your workplace or work process or after an injury or near miss associated with the task. As a rule, do a periodic review of all your safe work procedures to ensure they remain current and effective and involve your workers in this review.</p>

Where you ticked in the orange zone...

...shows that you're on the right track, but you need to do more to address the risks in your workplace.

Ticks in the **Orange Zone** indicate that you have started to address the risks associated with work tasks, but you may need to look more closely at the work tasks, identify any issues you may have overlooked, and ensure that your safe work procedures are appropriate and help your workers do their jobs safely. You may need to take the following action.

<p>Review work tasks</p>	<p>Have you done a thorough inspection of the workplace and a complete review of all work tasks?</p> <p>Perhaps you may have overlooked risks associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transporting chemicals • lifting and moving products
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tasks performed at heights • areas where slips, trips and falls may occur • housekeeping • electrical equipment etc. <p>Consult with your workers and get them involved in identifying the hazards associated with their work. Develop and implement safe work procedures for those tasks that pose the greatest risk.</p>
<p><i>Plan your approach to developing safe work procedures</i></p>	<p>Sometimes, business pressures or uncertainty about what to do next may stall the development and implementation of safe work procedures. Ask yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have work tasks been prioritised for developing safe work procedures? • Are workers involved in developing safe work procedures? • Have workers been trained in the safe work procedures for the tasks they perform? <p>Plan the process carefully so that you are able to develop safe work procedures gradually, within the constraints of your other business demands. A good plan will potentially help you overcome limitations such as shortage of time and resources. You can delegate the preliminary development of procedures to others while still overseeing the process.</p>
<p><i>Involve your workers</i></p>	<p>The work health and safety legislation requires you to consult with your workers about matters relating to their work health and safety. Consult your workers in all stages of developing safe work procedures for the tasks they perform—it will ensure that the procedures are comprehensive, accurate and useful. Involve your workers in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying the issues and assessing the risks associated with their work • developing suitable options to control the risks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ documenting and reviewing the procedures.
<p><i>Keep procedures up to date</i></p>	<p>If you find that your workers are not always following safe work procedures, review the procedures to ensure they provide appropriate safeguards and reflect current work processes, equipment, and substances used in the task. Ensure that the procedures consider the different circumstances under which the task may be performed. If the procedure is not being followed, either workers (including supervisors) need to change what they are doing, or the procedure needs to be changed to reflect what is actually occurring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the procedures appear up-to-date and appropriate, is the problem related to training or supervision? • Have your workers been trained and assessed against the procedures before commencing the task? • Are they adequately supervised in accordance with the procedures and their competence level? • Do you and your supervisors always follow the procedures? <p>For further information on training and supervision, see Section 4 Training and supervision.</p>

Where you ticked in the green zone...

... shows that your workers are using safe work procedures to help them do their jobs safely.

Ticks in the **Green Zone** indicate that you are effectively managing safety risks in your workplace through your safe work procedures. Be aware, however, that changes in your workplace and work processes can make your existing controls and procedures ineffective. Review them regularly to ensure they continue to reflect existing conditions. Revise them as appropriate.

<p><i>Regularly review safe work procedures</i></p>	<p>Determine if any technological changes have evolved since your last review that could make the task safer. Review the effectiveness of your training and supervision.</p> <p>Periodically verify that your vulnerable workers, including young people, people with disabilities and those with language difficulties, are able to understand the safe work procedures and use them effectively. Ensure these workers are properly represented during consultations about safe work procedures and related matters.</p>
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Example safe work procedure – workshop grinder

Safety risks from electricity, moving parts, metal fragments, noise, heat

Before operating

- Check that the lead is tagged and in good condition.
- Check wheel for cracks or damage. Replace cracked or damaged wheel immediately.
- Use only wheels having maximum operating speed at least as high as 'No Load RPM', as marked on the machine's nameplate.
- Use only flanges specified for the machine.
- Position the machine so that the power cord always stays behind the machine during operation.
- Ensure personal protective equipment is available – i.e. safety goggles and ear protectors.

When operating

- Always wear safety goggles and ear protectors during operation.
- Ensure the wheel is not contacting the work piece before the switch is turned on.
- Before using the machine on an actual work piece, let it run for a while. Watch for vibration or wobbling that could indicate poor installation or a poorly balanced wheel.
- Use the specified surface of the wheel to perform the grinding.
- Do not touch the work piece immediately after operation – it may be hot and could burn your skin.

After use

- Check leads.
- Check wheel and replace if necessary.
- Place machine in tool cupboard.

Developed by:

Manager's name

Worker's name

Manager's signature

Worker's signature

Review date:

4. Training and supervision

Why is training and supervision important?

...because workers need to know how to do their jobs safely and they need to be aware of issues that affect their health and safety.

Having skilled workers makes better business sense, as they are generally capable of producing more output and often require less stringent supervision. Train your workers in your work procedures to ensure they can perform the tasks safely.

Training should require workers to demonstrate they are competent in performing the tasks according to the procedures. It is insufficient to simply give a worker the procedure and ask them to acknowledge that they understand and can perform it. The level of supervision required will depend on the level of risk and the experience of the workers involved. High levels of supervision are necessary where inexperienced workers are expected to follow new procedures or carry out difficult and critical tasks.

The law requires employers to provide their workers with any information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to ensure their health and safety at work.

Training will ensure that your workers know about issues that will affect their health and safety. It will provide your workers with information about potential risks associated with their work, the safety policies and procedures you have in place, how to work safely, and how to deal with emergencies.

Supervision will provide a direct link from the employer to worker, will help ensure your policies and procedures are being followed, and will allow non-compliance to be addressed and rectified. Good supervisors are essential for improving productivity and maintaining safe practices.

Where you ticked in the red zone...

... shows that your workers are unlikely to have received the necessary training and supervision to ensure that they are safe at work.

Ticks in the **Red Zone** indicate that you need to take immediate action. Work health and safety legislation requires the business to provide any information, training, instruction and supervision that is necessary to protect everyone from risks to their health and safety.

<p>Establish a safety induction process</p>	<p>When you employ a new worker, train them in the policies and procedures that you have established to manage safety in your business. Your induction training should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health and safety responsibilities—theirs, yours and supervisors’ • reporting safety issues, such as dangers and incidents • consulting with workers about safety issues • reporting injuries and incidents/near misses • your return to work or rehabilitation program • general safety rules, such as using and properly maintaining equipment, not removing or altering any safety devices, maintaining and using personal protective equipment • training requirements for specific tasks
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency procedures • the location of safety data sheets (SDS) (for chemicals) and operators manuals (for equipment), which should be further discussed during task-specific job training. <p>Induction training establishes the desired 'culture' or requirements at the workplace from the start of employment. Simply giving information to workers to read is not sufficient. You need to ensure that they understand it.</p>
Review training periodically	<p>Review your training information periodically to ensure that it is up-to-date and effective. An induction checklist or training manual are ways of documenting your induction process to ensure consistency.</p>
Provide task-specific training	<p>Where work tasks pose a significant risk to the health and safety of your workers, you should ensure that safe work procedures are developed (in consultation with your workers). These procedures need to be thoroughly understood by anyone undertaking the tasks. Documented safe work procedures are also an excellent training tool. Refer to Section 3 Safe Work Procedures.</p> <p>Inform your workers about the potential safety issues when performing the task, then explain how to control them. Demonstrate the safe work procedure, step-by-step. Observe each worker carrying out the procedure and assess their performance until they are competent to undertake the task without direct supervision.</p>
Provide adequate supervision	<p>Adequate supervision of workers is required to ensure health and safety. When determining adequacy, you should consider the level of risk in the job, the age/experience and/or competence of the worker, and the existing controls in place to reduce the risk. Newer workers will need closer and more regular supervision than experienced workers. Also, consider the requirements of those with disabilities, cultural differences or language barriers.</p> <p>Maintaining records of supervision such as diary notes or team meeting minutes can help to promote consistent work practices.</p>
Assess worker competence	<p>A worker's signature on a safe work procedure is not a confirmation of their competence. Their competence can only be measured by direct observation and assessment by an experienced supervisor.</p>
Enforce procedures	<p>If a worker doesn't follow safety rules, like turning off a safety device, treat it like any other policy breach. At first, they may need counselling and more training. If it happens again, disciplinary action might be necessary.</p>
Keep training records	<p>Training records enable you to keep track of who has been trained, how they performed and what further training is required. The law requires that you keep training records for certain tasks, such as working in confined spaces and working with certain types of hazardous chemicals (the SDS will tell you if it is considered hazardous). However, it is good practice to maintain records of all training including induction, task specific training etc.</p>

Where you ticked in the orange zone...

...shows that your workers are being trained and supervised, but you need to ensure this is done more consistently and effectively.

Ticks in the **Orange Zone** generally indicate that there are areas in your training and supervision that you may not be addressing.

<p>Identify gaps in your training and supervision</p>	<p>Inconsistent performance by your workers may indicate that training and supervision require improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was training completed successfully before the work task was undertaken? • Do your supervisors understand their responsibilities regarding training and supervision? • Are they appropriately skilled to undertake training and supervision? • Are your workers following safe work procedures? <p>A highly competent worker does not necessarily make an effective trainer—to train effectively they need to have good communication skills combined with sound technical knowledge.</p> <p>Regular checks of your workers' performance (either formally or by casual observation) will identify where further training may be required.</p> <p>Ensure that training records are signed off by both the worker and management to indicate that training was completed.</p> <p>Whenever there is a change to the workplace or to the way work tasks are undertaken, any existing safe work procedures need to be reviewed—and further training may be required if the procedure changes.</p> <p>To ensure that your workers follow the policies and procedures, and perform consistently, be clear about your expectations and your commitment to a safe workplace.</p>
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Where you ticked in the green zone...

...shows that you are ensuring that your workers are trained, assessed and supervised to be safe at work.

Ticks in the green zone indicate that you have the correct processes in place. To ensure they remain effective, review them, and don't stop there.

<p>Continually improve training</p>	<p>Consider how you can improve your training methods, and how you can enhance the consultative arrangements between your workers and supervisors. Consider broader training in workplace health and safety issues, and other relevant training such as first aid training.</p> <p>The value of periodic refresher training is that it brings the appropriate issues back to the forefront of workers' minds.</p>
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5.Reporting safety

Why do you need safety reporting procedures?

...because they help you identify health and safety issues and assist with implementing solutions.

A simple reporting procedure will help you obtain important information about health and safety issues in the workplace; identify problems when they arise and address them.

Safety reporting procedures make it simpler for you and your workers to manage safety issues and prevent recurrences of incidents and injuries. These procedures may also identify safety issues that were previously unnoticed and will guide you in developing new safe work procedures and improving existing ones. When linked with an incident investigation process, they help you understand why incidents occurred, assist you to make decisions and set priorities, and allow you to analyse trends in safety issues.

Incident

You are required to contact NT WorkSafe immediately after becoming aware of a notifiable incident at your workplace and preserve (do not disturb) the incident scene until NT WorkSafe Inspectors arrive or directs otherwise (some exceptions apply).

To make a notification

- call 1800 019 115 if notifying of a serious injury or a death (this number is manned 24/7); or
- use the [online incident notification form](#); or
- [download the incident notification form](#) and send completed to ntworksafe@nt.gov.au

Where you ticked in the red zone...

...shows that you are unlikely to have a system that documents safety problems and allows you to develop prevention strategies.

Ticks in the **Red Zone** indicate that you need to take immediate action to ensure that safety issues—incidents, injuries and illnesses—are reported internally, and where the law requires, externally.

Involve your workers in developing a safety reporting process

You must have a process to record all injuries and incidents that occur at the workplace.

Consider:

- What issues to report – e.g. faulty equipment, hazardous spills, housekeeping issues, injuries, near misses, general safety hazards, suggestions for improving processes etc.
- How to report them – establish the process, at the very least, of verbally reporting issues to either supervisors or management. Written reports of issues allow you to track and analyse trends. If possible, have workers make suggestions about suitable control strategies.
- Who to report issues to – issues should be reported to supervisors or management. You should nominate someone to have authority to act upon the safety reports, such as yourself or a supervisor.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How are issues resolved – if there is a health and safety issue at the workplace, reasonable efforts must be made to achieve a timely, final and effective resolution. Involve your workers in developing an agreed written procedure for issue resolution or follow the default procedure set out in the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011.
<p>Record safety reports</p>	<p>Many of your workplace safety issues will be minor and can be resolved without the need for documentation, particularly if the issue can be addressed immediately.</p> <p>In some situations, however, where there is a significant safety issue that cannot be resolved immediately, and following the agreed or default issue resolution procedure, you should make a record of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who made the report • when the report was made • to whom the report was made • nature of the problem • action taken to resolve the problem • management sign-off • any feedback given to the person who reported the issue • any further action required—what, when and by whom?
<p>Encourage worker participation</p>	<p>The success of your safety reporting procedure largely rests with your workers—they need to see the benefit of it and be keen to use it.</p> <p>Let them know about the procedures that have been developed and implemented, ensure that everyone is aware of their health and safety responsibilities. Assure workers of your commitment to taking all reports seriously and using them to improve workplace safety.</p> <p>Always keep workers informed about the outcomes of any issues they report. New workers should be advised of these procedures during their induction training.</p>
<p>Use your safety reports</p>	<p>Your safety reports are an ideal resource from which you can develop and implement safety improvements. When incidents or injuries occur, use the safety reports to review and improve your safe work procedures. Review the reports to identify trends that may help you identify underlying safety problems. Discuss the reports with your workers.</p>
<p>Report certain accidents, injuries and illnesses</p>	<p>The law requires that workplace fatalities and certain serious incidents (including dangerous events) be reported to NT WorkSafe within specified timeframes.</p> <p>To find out further information on what needs to be reported, how to report the information, and who to report to, contact 1800 019 115 or go to worksafe.nt.gov.au/notify-nt-worksafe</p> <p>If an employee is seriously injured there are also separate reporting requirements to your workers' compensation insurer. See Section 6 Workers compensation and return to work for more information about workers' compensation issues.</p>

Where you ticked in the orange zone...

...you have consultation arrangements in place, but they may not be working effectively or capturing your workers' input.

Ticks in the **Orange Zone** indicate that you see benefit in reporting safety issues, but you still need to examine the suitability of procedures and the consistency with which they are followed.

<p><i>Check workers' understanding of the processes</i></p>	<p>For your safety reporting procedures to be effective, your workers must understand them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the procedures documented? • Do your workers have access to a copy? • Have you reviewed the procedures with your workers? • Is everyone clear about their health and safety responsibilities?
<p><i>Review and update responsibilities periodically</i></p>	<p>Sometimes, when changes occur in your workforce, responsibilities for health and safety issues may need to be re-allocated. Ensure that everyone is aware of new roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Don't allow follow-up action on safety issues to stall due to personnel changes. Having a written register of reported issues will greatly assist in this process.</p>
<p><i>Review safe work procedures</i></p>	<p>When an incident or injury occurs in your workplace, it may indicate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is no safe work procedure for the task, and it poses a significant risk • the current procedure isn't effective • your workers are not following the safe work procedure. <p>After an incident or injury, review your safe work procedures and make changes or develop new procedures when inadequacies become apparent.</p> <p>Your safety reports should trigger a review of your procedures, training and supervision.</p>

Where you ticked in the green zone...

... shows that your workers are following procedures for reporting safety issues, and problems are acted upon.

Ticks in the green zone indicate that you have implemented a system for reporting safety issues and incidents and, ensure that safety reports are acted upon and corrective measures taken.

**Look for
continuous
improvement
opportunities**

Use your safety reports as a management tool to continually improve safety in your workplace.

Information from the safety reports may indicate:

- problems with your equipment
- difficulties with the workplace layout
- flaws in your procedures.

Consult openly and regularly with your workers about continual workplace safety improvement opportunities.

6. Workers' compensation and return to work

Do I need a workers' compensation insurance policy and a workplace rehabilitation policy and procedures?

If you employ workers, you must have a current workers' compensation insurance policy. It is also advisable to have an effective return to work program to ensure that your workers receive the appropriate assistance in returning to their normal duties in the event of a workplace injury or illness.

You are an employer for workers compensation purposes if you employ a person who is defined as a worker under the *Return to Work Act 1986*.

A worker is a natural person who, performs work or a service of any kind for another person under a contract and is in relation to the contract and employee for the purpose of assessment for PAYG withholding under the *Taxation Administration Act 1953* (Cth), Schedule 1, Parts 2-5, **even if the employer is not withholding tax when they should be.**

If it is determined a person is an employee using ATO guidance (even if the employer thinks they are a contractor), then the individual should be covered for workers' compensation. If an employer is unsure if they require a workers' compensation policy, they should seek independent professional advice on tax and other employer obligations.

If you are a director of a company, you are only covered if your company has taken out a workers' compensation policy with an approved insurer and your personal details and your remuneration have been disclosed to the insurer.

Workers Compensation and return to work obligations

As part of your workers compensation and return to work obligations, you must:

- have a current workers compensation insurance policy that covers all your workers
- submit claim forms to your insurance provider within three working days of receiving them from an injured worker
- make workers compensation payments to your injured workers as instructed by your insurer
- take all reasonable steps to make suitable duties available to your injured workers
- keep a record of your wages for the past seven years.

Where you ticked in the red zone...

...your workers are not covered for workers compensation insurance.

Ticks in the red zone indicate that you need to take immediate action to obtain a workers compensation insurance policy.

To access more information on workers compensation please call 1800 250 713 or visit worksafe.nt.gov.au/workers-compensation

<p>Where do I obtain a workers' compensation insurance policy?</p>	<p>In the Northern Territory, your workers compensation insurance policy can only be offered by an approved insurer.</p> <p>They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allianz Australia Insurance - (08) 8982 8333 • CGU Workers' Compensation – 1300 558 921 or (08) 8924 0300 • GIO General Ltd - (08) 6188 0990 • QBE Insurance (Australia) Ltd - (08) 8982 3877 • Territory Insurance Office (TIO) - 131 846 or (08) 8946 2222
<p>How do I obtain a workers' compensation insurance policy?</p>	<p>To obtain a policy, you must provide the following information to your insurer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registered business name • registered business address • workplace address (if different) • ACN and/or ABN • description of your business including industry and types of occupation of your workforce • estimate of your total wages for the policy period • total number of workers, including permanents and casuals • estimate of payments to contractors.
<p>What is a return to work plan?</p>	<p>The return-to-work plan assists injured workers in returning to work after injury. Although workers may have medical restrictions and may be unable to perform their pre-injury jobs, they can often do modified or alternate work while recovering.</p> <p>The plan formalises suitable employment offered by the employer in line with the injured workers medical certificate of capacity.</p> <p>It is designed to make clear what the worker can and cannot do when they return to work, and when this will be reviewed.</p> <p>The employer should not speculate, make assumptions and / or presume a doctor's role. Regard should be had to the injured worker's medical certificate of capacity. Any medical restrictions should be taken into account.</p> <p>It is extremely important that the employer works in collaboration with the injured worker when developing the plan. For a successful return to work the injured worker should be consulted and their input included in the plan.</p> <p>Physical restrictions, suitable duties, hours worked, supervision arrangements must be clearly outlined in the plan and must be regularly monitored and reviewed. Treatment times and dates may need to be considered in the plan.</p> <p>The plan must be developed and agreed to by the worker and the employer and both must sign the plan.</p>

Where you ticked in the orange zone...

... you have a workers compensation insurance policy, and a return work plan in place but your policy does not reflect the true nature of your business and your return to work plan is ineffective.

Ticks in the **Orange Zone** indicate that you are partially compliant, but you may need to update your workers compensation coverage with your insurance provider and review your return to work program.

For assistance, contact your insurance provider and provide them with details about your current business activities, the number of workers and your estimated wages for the current workers compensation policy period.

Also, discuss and review with your insurance provider your return-to-work plans to ensure that:

- your return-to-work plan is up-to-date and working effectively
- appropriate duties are made available to injured workers.

Where you ticked in the green zone...

... you have an appropriate workers compensation insurance policy and an effective injury reporting system and return to work plan.

Ticks in the **Green Zone** indicate that you are compliant with your obligations regarding workers compensation insurance and have an effective return to work plan.

However, you would be well-advised to:

- monitor your workers compensation insurance policy details and ensure that your insurance provider is advised of any significant changes to details regarding your business activities, number of workers, or estimated wages.
- monitor and review your return-to-work plans on a regular basis with your insurance provider to ensure they are still working to provide effective assistance to your injured workers in returning them to their normal workplace duties.