



Health and Safety Strategy 2016–2019



Foreword

As the Chair of Ambulance Victoria (AV) I am proud of our organisation's continuing delivery of world class pre-hospital care to the Victorian community. The time has come, however, to look after our own people as well as we care for our patients.

Along with every member of the AV Board, I will no longer accept the current level of injury of AV employees. Injuries that impact not only our paramedics but also their families.

The only way we will reduce harm to our paramedics is to create a culture where paramedic safety is front and centre to all our thinking and actions. We simply can't continue to trade health and safety performance for good performance in other areas. We must become an organisation in which outstanding clinical performance and safety go hand in hand. The AV Health and Safety Strategy is the road map to achieving this.

In partnership with the final report of the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee, 'Victoria's Ambulance Action Plan: Improving Services, Saving Lives', the AV Health and Safety Strategy strives to make safety an everyday way of life at AV, included in all our decision making and in everything we do.

Sustained safety improvement can only be realised through strong leadership combined with clear safety accountabilities for executives, managers and all employees within the organisation.

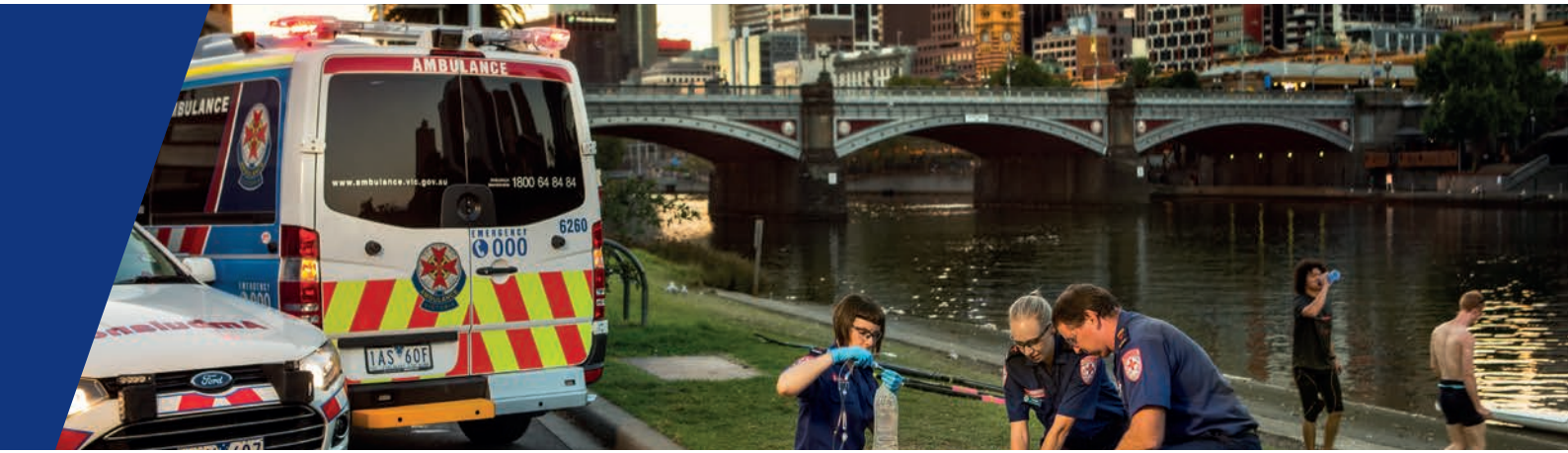
Reform is underway at AV. We are serious about safety and about building safety accountability and ownership at all levels of the organisation.

AV's Board is not only providing its support for this strategy – we are driving it.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ken Lay', written in a cursive style.

Ken Lay
Chair of Ambulance Victoria Board



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Message from the CEO

Great patient care can only be provided by a safe, engaged and operationally ready workforce.

Providing the best care for our patients and the safest possible workplace for our staff must be the foremost priorities for all of us at AV.

We are facing a period of unprecedented change with a number of challenges to manage through an ageing population, increased demand for services and the changing nature of our workforce. In the midst of these challenges we must remember to focus on our greatest responsibility, the safety of our people.

Everyone at AV must take ownership of our safety performance and be responsible for our own safety and the safety of our workmates. This will allow us to achieve a zero harm culture and work towards our goal of no workplace injuries.

To improve workplace safety and the health of all our staff, we have developed the AV Health and Safety Strategy. This strategy describes how we will build the safety awareness, capability and accountability that is necessary to achieve our strategic goals over the next three years, 2016 to 2019, while providing the safest workplace possible.

We will build a safety first culture where everyone is committed to AV's safety expectations and has the knowledge and skills to do their jobs safely. We will appropriately fund and implement targeted preventative programs to improve the health and safety of our workforce.

So that our employees can be proud of our efforts to keep ourselves and each other safe – like we're justifiably proud of the care we offer the community – I encourage all of our people to support the AV Health and Safety Strategy.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

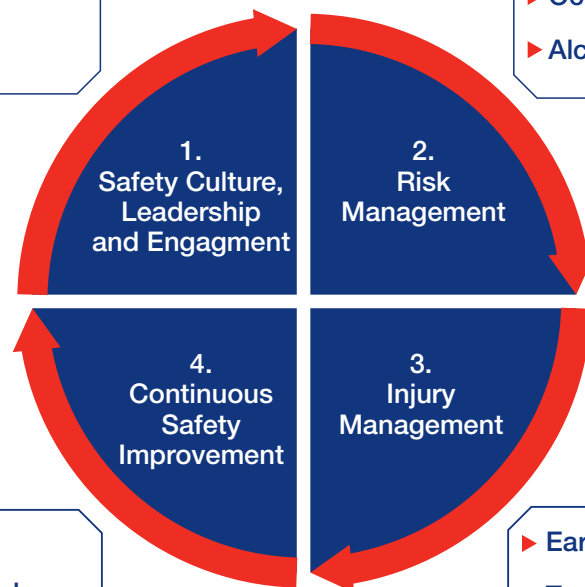
Tony Walker
Acting CEO
Ambulance Victoria



AV Health and Safety Strategy at a glance

- ▶ Safety accountability framework
- ▶ Safety key performance indicators
- ▶ Safety leadership program
- ▶ Annual safety forum

- ▶ Manual handling
- ▶ Mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Occupational violence
- ▶ Alcohol and other drugs



- ▶ Safety system review
- ▶ Safety consultation framework
- ▶ Safety incident and claims management platform
- ▶ Incident investigation framework

- ▶ Early intervention
- ▶ Transitional duties project
- ▶ Preferred treaters network
- ▶ WorkCover agent partnerships arrangement



About this strategy

The AV Health and Safety Strategy details AV's plans to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of our people and describes the actions the organisation will take over three years from 2016 to 2019.

Delivery of the strategy will ensure AV can meet the expectations of the Victorian Government, the people of Victoria and our own employees in taking better care of our people in their workplace.

The AV Health and Safety Strategy was developed with wide consultation across the operational business and with key external stakeholders and experts. It builds on AV's focus on safety to enable a more strategic use of our resources to improve health and safety outcomes. Achieving a healthier workforce is not only the right thing to do, it will also contribute to a more reliable service.

The AV Health and Safety Strategy has been developed to achieve one of the major themes in our AV Corporate Plan January 2016 – June 2017: 'Improving paramedic health, safety, wellbeing and capability.' It takes a strong initial focus on safety as a critical foundation for building more proactive health and wellbeing systems and culture.

AV has also accepted the final report of the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee (APPCC) that was handed down in December 2015 – 'Victoria's Ambulance Action Plan: Improving Services, Saving Lives'. The AV Safety Strategy is in line with the Action Plan's second action area 'Improving paramedic health and wellbeing and training'.

Implementation of the AV Health and Safety Strategy is subject to oversight by the AV Executive team and the AV Board of Directors including a program of quarterly and annual reporting. The strategy is supported by a full implementation plan and progress will be measured against identified key performance indicators.



Building a stronger safety culture

The AV Health and Safety Strategy recognises we can improve our safety outcomes by building our safety culture. We need to move on from a culture that has primarily been focused on patient safety first and paramedic safety second, where injuries were widely accepted as part of the job.

To be successful in improving safety and reducing harm to our people, we need to mature our safety systems. We also need to build a culture where safety is understood as everyone's responsibility and we are continually improving practices and performance beyond compliance. This will put us on a pathway to building our safety resilience.

Organisations that have built a strong safety culture have progressed through the development levels of the Safety Maturity Model (See Figure 1 below). Currently, based on self-assessment, our safety culture reflects vulnerable and reactive characteristics. We do meet the basic legal compliance requirements with safety policies, procedures, reporting systems and communication channels in place as required by the OHS Act 2014 and WorkSafe Victoria.

The AV Health and Safety Strategy is the roadmap that will enable AV to move to a proactive culture through targeted investment in a series of key initiatives over a three year period.

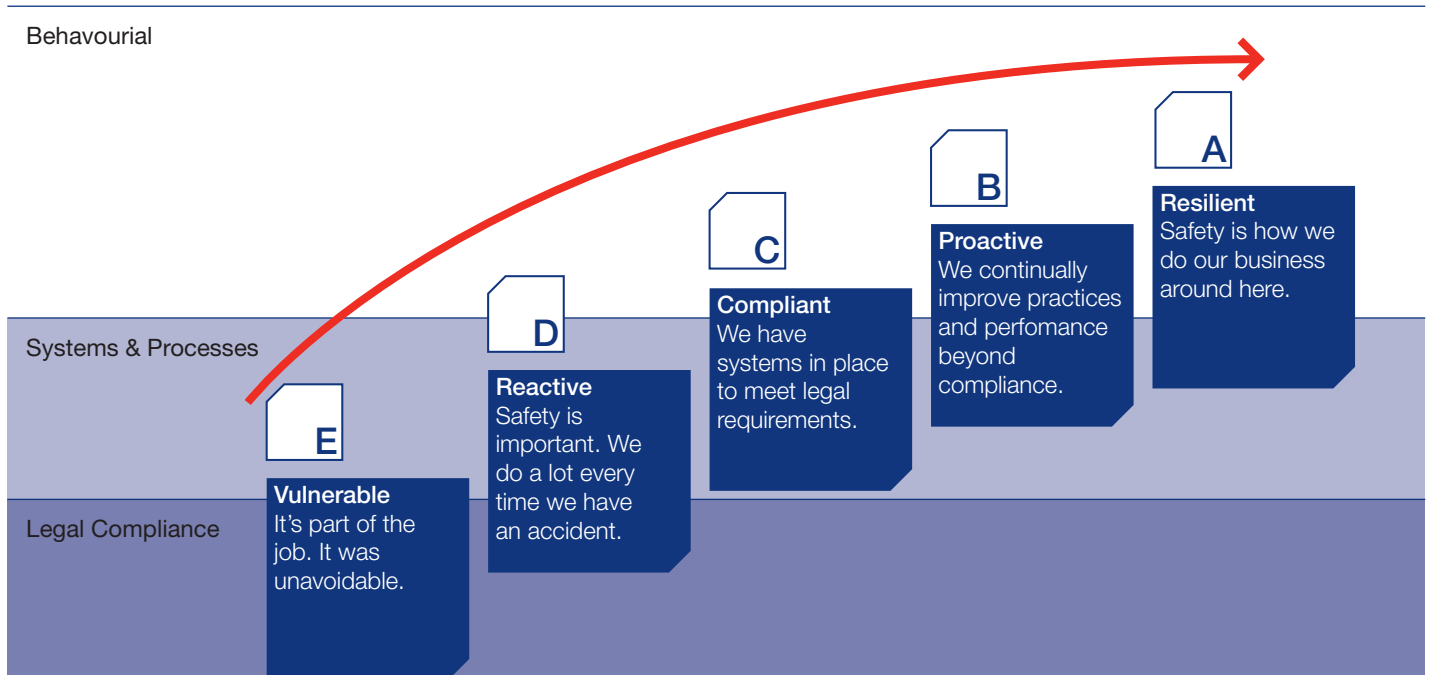


Figure 1: AV is committed to moving up the safety maturity curve to be more proactive and to put us on the path to being more safety resilient.



We must look after our people better

Delivery of excellent patient outcomes should not come at a cost to our own people's safety, health and wellbeing.

AV's workforce has experienced an unacceptable level of injury, violence and psychological distress, which impacts on our people's health and wellbeing and on our ability to deliver a health service to the community.

AV has significant opportunities to improve our safety performance and look after our people better through the AV Health and Safety Strategy.

For example, we can: *

- ▶ Reduce the rate of injuries to our people, which is currently 1,600 employees each year
- ▶ Enhance operational reliability by reducing the number of shifts lost to injury each year, which currently sits at 15,000 shifts
- ▶ Improve our lost time injury frequency rate (LTIFR), which is currently greater than 100
- ▶ Reduce workers' compensation claims, which currently occur at a rate of eight standard claims per 100 full time employees per year.

* All data current at January 2016

Safety to me is ensuring my team, my partner and I go home to our families in the same condition we were in when commencing work. It is having the confidence to challenge unsafe practices and to work together to achieve our goals while looking after the physical and mental health of each other.

Olivia Howarth
Senior Team Manager (Acting)
Yarra Junction/Millgrove



Major causes of injury we will address

Disclosure of our current state is an important baseline for measuring the impact of the AV Health and Safety Strategy. We're committed to being transparent about the safety issues AV is seeking to address and improving our safety performance.

There are a range of causes of injury to be addressed, with manual handling injuries making up the vast majority of compensation claims for the past two financial years:

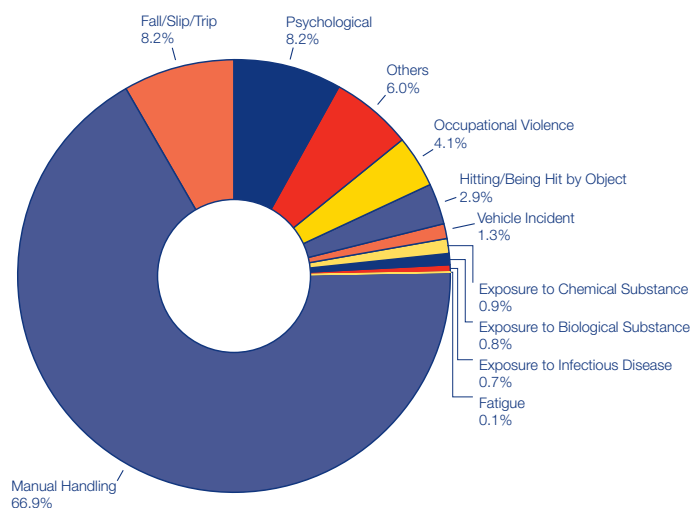


Figure 2: Claims profile 2013-2015

As an ambulance service we have a basic ethos of caring for the welfare of others, therefore the welfare of our own staff should also be held in the same high regard. The reasons for making workplace safety a priority include: the cost both financially and personally to employees through reduced quality of life as a result of workplace trauma, both physical and mental; the financial costs to the organisation and the community in rehabilitation, insurance and legal liability; and the lost time and reduced productivity of staff due to absent staff, retraining of new staff and loss of skilled staff. Most importantly, our staff should feel safe in their workplace knowing their welfare is important to Ambulance Victoria.

Paul Felicetti
MICA Paramedic





Manual Handling

A strong focus is required to address preventable manual handling injuries given the impact to our people as well as the workforce availability and financial cost.

- ▶ Over the past two financial years 67% of injuries at AV were manual handling injuries.
- ▶ Handling of patients and stretchers are the two highest reported causes of manual handling injuries.
- ▶ The most common injury is back pain/strain.
- ▶ As well as the impacts on injured employees, which can sometimes be career ending, manual handling has a significant financial impact with claims accounting for more than 60 per cent of AV's WorkCover premium in 2014-15.
- ▶ The number of compensable days lost due to manual handling injuries in AV for WorkCover claims received in 2014-15 was 8,875, which is approximately \$5.3 million in employee replacement costs (As at 30 November 2015).

Psychological Injury

Our care for the safety and wellbeing of our people must also cover their psychological health and wellbeing.

- ▶ A National Coronial Information System (NCIS) report published in June 2015 indicated that the suicide rate among paramedics is four times higher than the Victorian average and three times higher than other emergency services personnel such as police and fire services.
- ▶ First responder employees may have higher rates of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), stress and fatigue.
- ▶ Some research indicates that paramedics tend to experience higher rates of PTSD than fire-fighters.
- ▶ Paramedics tend to experience higher levels of organisational stress in comparison to those in other occupations according to some research. This may include risk factors such as:
 - shift-work
 - long working hours
 - repeated exposure to death, violence and trauma
 - difficult interactions with members of the public
 - high levels of responsibility
 - lack of rostering flexibility
 - frequent shift extensions.



Occupational Violence

AV has zero tolerance to violence against our paramedics and volunteers and our people should not have to accept occupational violence as part of their workplace.

- ▶ The Victorian Auditor General's Report Occupational Violence Against Healthcare Workers found that paramedics, alongside other healthcare workers, face particular risk of occupational violence because they often deal with people in stressful, unpredictable and potentially volatile situations
- ▶ There is a general trend of increasing occupational violence towards paramedics
- ▶ Metro regions have the highest rates of incidents
- ▶ The top five suburbs with the highest incident rate are within 5kms of the Melbourne central business district
- ▶ The highest level of aggression occurs on Friday and Saturday nights
- ▶ Over the past three years the total claims cost in relation to occupational violence translates to 711 operational shifts lost.

Safety in the workplace is important to me for many reasons, the most important reason is being able to return home to my family at the end of the day. As a mum of a seven-month-old baby boy, my most important job in life is to care for him, love him and guide him as he grows up. Safety in my workplace ensures that I can return home to be there for my son as well as my husband. Additionally my career as a paramedic is very important to me, it is a needed financial source as well as an enjoyable and rewarding career that I hope to be doing for many years to come.

Katie Wilson
Paramedic Kyneton



Aims of the AV Health and Safety Strategy

The AV Health and Safety Strategy is the roadmap to sustainably improving the health and safety of paramedics and making AV a safer place to work.

It provides an agreed set of priorities for the years 2016 to 2019 on which AV, unions representing our staff, and other stakeholders can focus to improve the health and safety of all AV paramedics.

The AV Health and Safety Strategy will guide all aspects of our commitment to the health and safety of AV paramedics – our investment decisions, strategic planning, policy development and operational matters.

AV will measure and report on our safety performance using detailed key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with the four Focus Areas in this strategy. The high level KPIs are included on page 20.

The AV Health and Safety Strategy adheres to the following principles of person-centred care:

- ▶ Principle 1 – Affording people dignity, respect and compassion
- ▶ Principle 2 – Offering coordinated care, support or treatment
- ▶ Principle 3 – Offering personalised care, support or treatment
- ▶ Principle 4 – Being enabling.

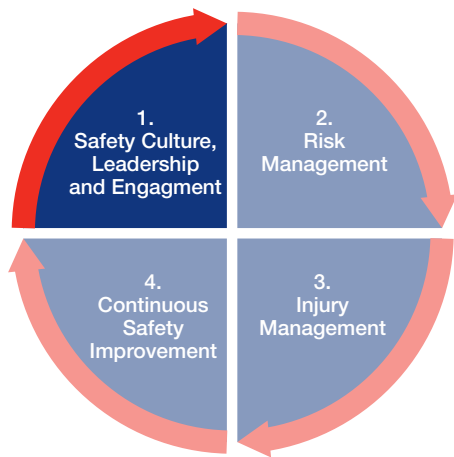
There are many aspects of my role as a paramedic that have the potential to cause a career changing physical or mental injury. By keeping safety at the forefront of my role and always practising a dynamic risk assessment, I am able to keep safe and ultimately return home fit and well to my family and friends while maintaining longevity in a career that I love.

Rene McGrath Ambulance
Paramedic Castlemaine

We will know our safety culture is improving when:

- ▶ Safety leadership is evident at all levels of the organisation.
- ▶ Workplace health and safety is valued and considered in all decision making.
- ▶ Individuals hold themselves accountable with few 'at risk' behaviours occurring. They look out for each other's safety.
- ▶ Safety is embedded into everyday work practices.
- ▶ Senior leaders communicate to employees about safety regularly, consistently and clearly.
- ▶ We have a collective understanding of key risks and measures to mitigate them.
- ▶ We develop and implement health and safety initiatives that are targeted at key risk areas.
- ▶ We regularly monitor the impact and effectiveness of initiatives.
- ▶ There is regular communication with employees regarding safety risks.
- ▶ Our people receive prompt medical treatment, which reliably informs return to work pathways.
- ▶ We have an injury management system that delivers early intervention strategies and flexible return to work options.
- ▶ We achieve sustainable return to work outcomes for our workforce.
- ▶ We have a collaborative partnership with our WorkCover agent ensuring excellent service delivery and best possible financial outcomes for AV.
- ▶ AV has policies, procedures and systems that enable effective safety management.
- ▶ It's easy to be informed, easy to communicate and easy to share learnings about safety.
- ▶ We understand what knowledge and skills are needed.
- ▶ Our systems inform our workforce regarding safety.
- ▶ We have high functioning safety consultation mechanisms.





Focus Area 1

Safety Culture, Leadership and Engagement

Leadership, communication and training are essential to create an effective safety culture. Strong safety leadership must be role-modelled by the Board of Directors, the Executive team and managers, and be visible through all levels of the organisation. A culture of safety in our organisation means everyone is accountable for their own safety and for that of their colleagues. Safety is a whole of organisation responsibility.

The introduction of an AV Safety Accountability Framework will clearly define expected safety roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. All employees will have the safety responsibilities of their delegation clearly identified to ensure that we can recognise and hold people accountable for fulfilling these responsibilities. Management of safety performance against these responsibilities will be measured and included in performance reviews and career progression considerations.

At an organisational level, we will track our progress and maintain momentum by introducing revised organisational safety key performance indicators aligned to the four Focus Areas in the AV Health and Safety Strategy that will drive ownership and accountability for AV's safety performance. The high level KPIs are included at page 20.

Safety Leadership Training Days have now been introduced to engage our workforce and build ownership of safety by our people for ourselves and our colleagues. This training is designed to demonstrate the importance of safety culture and safety leadership, and how it can be applied at AV. It also lays the foundation for a tailored safety leadership program to further enable our senior leadership team to lead AV's safety performance improvement.

To acknowledge our achievements and maintain organisation-wide commitment to continuous safety improvement, annual Safety Forums will start in 2016. These forums will encourage the ongoing integration of work health and safety principles into work practices.

▶ Actions

Safety accountability framework: Establish a Safety Accountability Framework that clearly defines roles, responsibilities and accountabilities to build accountability and ownership of safety across the organisation.

Safety key performance indicators: Establish detailed KPIs aligned to the four Focus Areas that represent the organisational commitment to improved safety performance.

Safety leadership training: Establish Safety Leadership Training Days based on best practice research that is tailored to the ambulance service environment, risks and experiences. Delivery of this safety culture and engagement program to all operational staff to commence in 2016 Continuous Professional Development program.

Annual Safety Forum: Establish an annual Safety Forum, starting in 2016. Include a safety leadership reward and recognition program.

Safety performance linked to position descriptions and performance reviews: Safety delegations and accountabilities to be clearly articulated in position descriptions and link these responsibilities to performance reviews to ensure employees can be recognised and held accountable for their safety performance.

Safety communication program: Support the implementation of the AV Health and Safety Strategy through effective delivery of key safety messages.





Focus Area 2

Risk Management

AV will take a strong risk management approach to safety, which means that high and frequently occurring risk activities must be identified and targeted for reduction. Risks are identified through communication with employees and analysis of incident data and trends.

The major safety risks for AV that are identified and addressed in this strategy are:

- ▶ Manual Handling
- ▶ Occupational Violence
- ▶ Alcohol and other Drugs.

Our risk-based approach will develop and implement solutions to eliminate or control safety risks based on risk assessment. This assessment and treatment of risk will draw upon expertise from across all sectors of the organisation to ensure that risks are appropriately identified and managed. Planning for future prevention initiatives will be informed by comprehensive causal factors analysis to more deeply understand our risk factors. The risk management approach will be supported by an organisational commitment to fund programs to improve the overarching health and safety of our people.

Risk reduction initiatives may include investments in things such as new equipment, training and awareness.

▶ Actions

Causal factors analysis: Undertake comprehensive causal factors analysis to develop a deeper understanding of our risk factors and the interrelationship between them.

Manual Handling: Develop a multi-pronged approach to minimising manual handling risks. This includes: ongoing design and equipment improvements such as the \$18 million roll out over 18 months of powered stretchers into the entire fleet of Victoria's ambulances; paramedic task specific pre-employment physical capacity assessments; a revised manual handling education strategy and an infield manual handling training model.

Mental health and wellbeing: AV's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019 will operationalise support for the mental health and wellbeing of AV paramedics, first responders, non-operational staff and family members. The strategy is based on three key principles:

- ▶ Mental Health is everybody's responsibility
- ▶ A person-centred approach to mental health and recovery
- ▶ Individual's needs change throughout their employee life cycle.

Occupational Violence: Deliver the Occupational Violence program, which implements recommendations of the Victorian Auditor General's Report 'Occupational Violence Against Healthcare Workers'. This includes reviewing the effectiveness of our policies and procedures to minimise occupational violence exposure and incidents. A targeted training program will be rolled out to address the specific needs of paramedics. Ongoing community engagement and education regarding AV's zero tolerance to violence is also a key feature of this program.

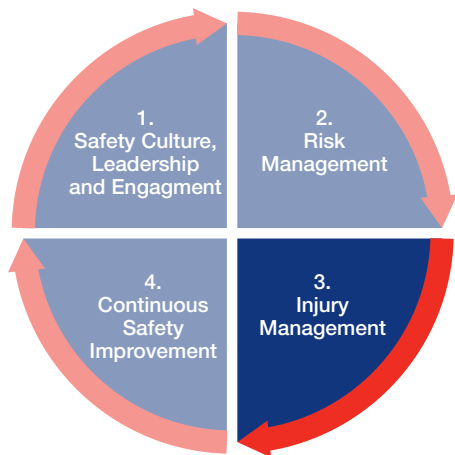
Alcohol and Other Drugs: Develop and implement AV's Alcohol and Other Drugs policy and procedures; and deliver education and training for managers and employees to ensure the safety of our workforce and the community we serve.

Occupational Vaccinations: AV is committed to protecting our staff, our patients and the community from illnesses such as influenza. In the Department of Health and Human Services' 'Statement of Priorities' a 75% vaccination rate of all AV paramedics is stipulated.



Safety is everyone's responsibility





Focus Area 3

Injury Management

AV is committed to ensuring the best quality support services are provided to our people when they are injured in order to promote their recovery and return to work. The response, support and services provided to an employee who has been injured sends a powerful message of value and respect to our paramedics.

Effective injury management is not only the right thing to do for our people, it also makes good business sense. Supportive leadership as well as early and effective injury management processes and procedures will deliver the best return-to-work outcomes for our people, ensure as many employees are operationally available as possible and help reduce compensation costs.

The provision of opportunities to resume on-road duties is essential to achieving our workforce availability KPI of a 10 per cent reduction per annum in hours lost to injury.

▶ Actions

Early intervention program: Establish an early intervention program to identify and implement opportunities to provide injury management services as early as possible – within the first 24-48 hours of an injury occurring.

Preferred Treaters Network: Establish a network of preferred treatment providers so that injured employees receive medical assistance from healthcare professionals who understand AV duties and work collaboratively with AV's injury management team.

WorkCover agent partnership: Strengthen partnership with our work cover agent to create better workplaces to support our injured staff. Establish joint KPIs covering strategic claims management and medical and like claims, and related services.

Transitional duties: Review and enhance arrangements to ensure the timely, transparent and consistent management of ill and injured employees, including provision of transitional duties and safe duties to help staff remain at work or return to work as soon as possible following an injury.





Focus Area 4

Continuous Safety Improvement

Achieving continuous improvement is an important aspect of developing our safety maturity. The review of AV's policies, procedures and systems will help us drive and enable continuous performance improvement across all Focus Areas of the AV Health and Safety Strategy.

We will undertake a comprehensive audit of AV's current safety management system to provide clarity regarding current strengths and opportunities for improvement.

A high-functioning safety management system makes it easier for everybody to manage the business of safety. It makes our system auditable, which will allow us to track and benchmark performance over time. A high functioning safety management system drives consistency, accountability and performance.

▶ Actions

Safety System Review (AS/NZS 4801): Implement an annual comprehensive review of AV's OHS Management System. All assessments to be aligned to AS 4801, relevant OHS legislation, occupational health systems and accepted industry standards.

Health Safety Claims System (HSCS): Full implementation and use of the HSCS, AV's safety incident and claims management platform, to improve data capture capability and identification of trends and emerging risks.

Incident Investigation Framework: Introduce a model for conducting incident investigations with the goal of improving systemic organisational learning from hazards, incidents and near misses.

Safety Consultation Framework: Undertake a comprehensive review of safety consultation mechanisms to improve safety performance.

Review of Designated Work Groups (DWG): Review DWGs to ensure they continue to be fully representative of the workforce.

Health and Safety Representative (HSR) engagement and empowerment: Renew focus on HSR engagement to build advocacy for the AV Health and Safety Strategy and delivery of key safety messages.

Safety training needs analysis: Develop a clear understanding of the safety training required at each delegation across the organisation.



Measures of Success

AV will measure and report on our safety performance using key performance indicators that align with the four Focus Areas in the AV Health and Safety Strategy. These are the high level KPIs.

Safety Leadership

This includes leading indicators that measure and encourage safety behaviours and the quality of actions that transform performance.

Current Rating	Measurement	Target
OHS Management System maturity	Yearly incremental increase in OHS Management System maturity	FY 2016 - 2017 D Rating Achieved – Reactive FY 2017 – 2018 C Rating Achieved – Compliant FY 2018 – 2019 B Rating Achieved – Proactive We continually improve practices and performance beyond compliance.

Workforce availability

This measures the time from employees being injured using data related to WorkCover claims.

Current Rating	Measurement	Target
Reduction in hours lost to injury	Performance is compared to past years and month-by-month progress can be tracked	10% reduction per 100 FTE per annum
Hours lost to workplace injury is significant for AV and impacts workforce availability and operations		

Cost Reduction

Claims costs directly impact premium and are readily monitored, and interventions by AV can have direct impact of this measure.

Current Rating	Measurement	Target
Total claims costs paid for the policy period	Claims costs are tracked to previous year's performance and by month for current year.	10% reduction per annum

APPENDIX

Definitions

Term	Definition
Claims costs	The sum of payments made: including compensation, medical, rehabilitation and legal payments.
Designated Working Group (DWG)	A Designated Working Group is an agreed or determined group of employees who share similar workplace health and safety interests and conditions. A DWG may be made up of employees in one or more workplaces operated by a single employer or employees of multiple employers at one or more workplaces. There can be more than one DWG in a workplace.
Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	Full Time Equivalent. One FTE is one full time job for one financial year. Claims and shifts lost are presented as a rate per 100 FTE. This method provides balanced performance comparisons between organisational units.
Goals	Results the organisation is working to accomplish.
Health Safety Claims System (HSCS)	AV internal technology platform for the end-to-end management of safety incidents and claims.
Health and Safety Representative (HSR)	A Health and Safety Representative is an employee who has been elected by the members of their Designated Working Group (DWG) to represent them, providing a way for their views and concerns about health and safety to be heard by the organisation.
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Agreed measurable goals established at the commencement of the strategy to monitor its progression and success.
Lost Time Injury (LTI)	Lost time injury is an occurrence that resulted in time lost from work of one day/shift or more.
Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR)	Lost time injury frequency rates – the number of lost time injuries per million hours worked.
Median hours lost per claim	The median identifies the mid-point in the time lost claim population.
Median claim duration	The median identifies the mid-point in the length/duration of claims.
Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS)	OHSMS is made up of policies and procedures to assist an organisation manage risks to employee health and safety. The system is usually based on AS/NZ:4801.
Premium	Amount charged for workers compensation cover.
Safety culture	Reflects the attitude, beliefs, perceptions and values that employees share in relation to safety. It is an organisational atmosphere where safety and health is understood to be, and accepted as, a high priority.
Safety leadership	The process of defining the desired state and engaging in discretionary efforts that drive the safety value i.e. engaging in and maintaining behaviours that help others achieve our safety goals.



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