Safety leadership and culture

An overview of the safety leadership and safety culture development process under the OneRMS safety management system (OneRMS SMS)

Contents

Introduction

Safety culture is 'the way we do things around here' and reflects the values, beliefs and attitudes within an organisation. This has a significant influence on what people do and why they do it. A mature safety culture contributes to strong safety performance.

Leadership is critical to developing and maintaining a mature safety culture. Effective safety leadership is a combination of commitment and action that influences others to do the same. Managers and supervisors make a major contribution to determining the safety culture. The decisions, actions and behaviours of these leaders set benchmarks for safety through the systems and processes they put in place and promote and support.

Purpose

This framework provides an overview of the processes involved in developing and fostering safety leadership and safety culture. Those processes include:

- Assessing the level of safety leadership and the safety culture across the agency

- Identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement

- Monitoring and reviewing safety leadership and culture to ensure our efforts to enhance them are relevant and effective.

This framework works in conjunction with the *WHS governance, accountabilities and responsibilities framework*, which shows how sound work health and safety (WHS) governance relates to safety leadership and commitment, due diligence and decision-making.

Scope and context

The *WHS policy statement* affirms our Executive team's commitment to safety. It includes a commitment to creating a just and fair culture that encourages the reporting of hazards and occurrences and in turn organisational learning. These aspects strengthen the safety culture within the agency.

This framework applies to all functions and activities of Roads and Maritime Services (Roads and Maritime).

In Roads and Maritime all levels of management, from the Chief Executive to front line supervisors, are considered to have a responsibility as safety leaders.

System requirements

Requirements under this framework can be found in Appendix A. For all system requirements see the *OneRMS SMS manual*.

Safety leadership and culture

1. Safety leadership and culture programs

Roads and Maritime's safety leadership and culture programs:

- Provide resources, systems and processes to assess, develop, review and continually improve safety leadership and culture

- Provide guidance material and expertise to support the development of safety leadership and a mature safety culture

- Set out roles and responsibilities relating to safety culture development for managers and workers.

Table 1 describes the steps, purposes and processes to develop safety leadership and a mature safety culture. Section 2 describes how to build a mature safety culture.

Table 1: Safety leadership and culture development process

Steps	Purpose	Process
Establish current state of safety leadership	Enables the agency to understand the strengths and weaknesses of its current safety leadership	Assess current safety leadership capability including a strengths and weaknesses analysis
Establish current state of safety culture	Enables the agency to understand the strengths and weaknesses of its current safety culture	Assess current safety culture maturity as a baseline for continuous improvement
Set practical and achievable goals	Aims to improve safety leadership and safety culture	Give direction – where we are to where we want to be
Define safety leadership competencies and behaviours	Helps managers improve their safety leadership Provides the basis for measuring and developing safety leadership	Develop and implement WHS *Safety behaviour competencies*[1]
Identify gaps from current state to future goals	Informs strategies for improving safety culture	Conduct a gap analysis Identify factors that may influence the development of safety culture Conduct a risk-based training needs analysis
Develop safety leadership tools	Educates and supports managers in practising safety leadership and contributing to improving safety culture	Develop tools
Communicate	Promotes and gains acceptance of the importance of safety leadership	Inform the agency of the rationale and benefits of improved safety leadership and its effect on safety culture
Deliver capability training	Improves safety leadership and strengthens safety culture	Deliver safety leadership capability training for senior managers to front line workers
Monitor and review	Assesses whether training has resulted in the desired behaviours Provides ongoing input to future goal setting and development	Conduct surveys and behavioural assessments of safety leadership behaviours in the workplace

[1] Will be implemented in 2017

2. Building a mature safety culture

There are five key indicators of a mature safety culture (Figure 1). Effective safety leadership makes a major contribution to the development of a mature safety culture.

Safety leaders lay the foundations for the safety culture through:

MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Demonstrating commitment, modelling safety behaviours and leading others in improving safety

REPORTING AND LEARNING CULTURE

Encouraging the flow of information – through a culture of reporting – which supports learning in the organisation

WORKER INVOLVEMENT

Supporting and developing worker capability and their involvement in health and safety

JUST AND FAIR CULTURE

Creating a fair and just culture so workers feel they will be treated fairly and consistently

RISK AWARENESS

Contributing to increasing the risk awareness across the agency's operations.

SAFETY LEADERSHIP

Figure 1: Five key indicators of safety culture – all influenced by safety leadership

These key indicators influence one other. For example, the level of worker involvement will influence the reporting and learning. The level of reporting and learning will affect the level of risk awareness. The level of just and fair culture will influence the extent of reporting and learning.

2.1 Management commitment and leadership

Commitment to safety is demonstrated through action. Safety leadership is demonstrated by a willingness and ability to influence others to manage WHS effectively. Examples of senior management commitment to WHS and associated actions in Roads and Maritime include:

ENDORSEMENT

Personal endorsement by the Chief Executive and directors of the *WHS policy statement* and *WHS Strategy 2015–19* (WHS Strategy)

ACCOUNTABILITY

Inclusion of safety accountabilities in the position descriptions of the Chief Executive, directors and other safety leaders

REVIEW

Regular reviews of safety performance and risk information to drive continuous improvement

OVERSIGHT

Executive oversight to ensure safety is integrated into all business strategies, plans and operations

TOOLS

Development and refinement of tools to support leader contributions to improve the safety culture.

Roads and Maritime's Executive team demonstrates leadership and commitment to WHS. They establish processes to ensure:

- WHS hazards are systematically identified; risks are assessed, evaluated and prioritised; adequate resources are allocated; and appropriate action is taken to improve WHS performance
- Opportunities are identified to align with the OneRMS SMS and action is taken to improve WHS performance
- OneRMS SMS processes and requirements are integrated into operational and service delivery processes
- The importance of effective WHS management and leadership is communicated
- Practices that foster a mature safety culture are promoted.

Safety leaders prioritise safety by documenting effective WHS strategies in their divisional delivery plans and making sure those strategies are implemented. This is demonstrated by providing sufficient:

- Budget for WHS solutions
- Opportunities for influential WHS communications
- Training in better WHS practices
- Support to workers
- Discussions and references to relevant WHS topics in everyday work conversations and decision-making activities.

Managers consistently demonstrate their commitment to safety in all areas of Roads and Maritime as detailed in our *WHS policy statement*. This creates a shared vision of the importance of health and safety and is achieved in a variety of ways, including:

- Worker interactions such as scheduled safety engagements, everyday conversations and meetings, leaders modelling mature safety behaviours
- Safety communications like safety messages and newsletters
- Promoting, modelling and using available frameworks of safety leadership behaviour, such as WHS *Safety behaviour competencies*[2] and guidance manual.

2.2 Reporting and learning culture

A strong reporting culture is essential for a mature safety culture. We see evidence of this when workers routinely report hazards and occurrences openly and honestly.

A reporting culture is developed by:

- Management encouraging and supporting reporting so we can learn. This includes investing in, promoting and providing training for workplace reporting systems
- Managers having effective, engaging and fair safety conversations. The *Just and fair conversation tool*[2] supports safety leaders with suggested just and fair responses to workers who are involved in or report occurrences. The *Safe LEADAR* tool[2] guides leaders in effective safety conversations with their workers that encourage reporting
- All workers reporting hazards and occurrences to the WHS Reporting Line (1300 131 469) when they are identified
- Defining expected behaviours of leaders and workers that supports reporting and learning. These expected safety leadership behaviours are outlined in WHS *Safety behaviour competencies*.[2]

An effective learning culture means we draw appropriate conclusions from any WHS information we collect. A strong learning culture is reflected in the changes implemented to improve systems, procedures and equipment, based on learning from past situations or occurrences.

[2] Will be implemented in 2017

A learning culture is built by:

- Analysing hazard and occurrence reports to identify, respond to and minimise unsafe conditions

- Encouraging workers and others to use the WHS Reporting Line to provide feedback and ideas for improvement

- Facilitating effective communication, feedback and sharing of information. This is outlined in the *Safety assurance*, *Occurrence management and investigations*, *Safety promotion* and *Safety planning and performance reporting* frameworks

- Including all levels of the workforce and industry partners in ongoing safety culture assessments. This increases involvement in the development of a safety culture and provides opportunities for issues or concerns to be raised which may contribute to reporting and learning

- Acting on outcomes of surveys and assessments. Actions taken should be reported in management briefings and staff communications

- Applying lessons learnt from evidence-based research, risk intelligence from our industry partners and other industries

- Ensuring learning opportunities are available to workers.

A reporting and learning culture requires effective information flow and channels to communicate safety matters. Roads and Maritime achieves this by:

- Applying the *WHS policy statement* and *WHS Strategy* supported by the *WHS governance, accountabilities and responsibilities framework*

- Implementing safety communication initiatives proposed in the *Consultation, cooperation and coordination* and *Safety promotion* frameworks

- Providing feedback to people who report hazards and occurrences

- Implementing the *Safety planning and performance reporting framework*, which provides for the effective transfer of information between individuals, business units and divisions and to and from our industry partners

- Defining the required safety leadership behaviours that support information flow, and reporting and learning, as set out in WHS *Safety behaviour competencies*[3]

- Providing tools that enable managers to have effective safety conversations that focus on proactive reporting and learning, such as the WHS *Safe LEADAR* tool.[3]

[3] Will be implemented in 2017

2.3 Worker involvement

Active worker involvement in safety management contributes to a strong safety culture. Examples of worker involvement include the reporting and being involved in or consulted about decisions and actions taken to manage safety issues. Safety leaders support this by encouraging participation and involvement in decisions and solutions to safety issues.

Active worker participation contributes to eliminating and controlling hazards, and is supported by:

- Providing training that increases workers' sense of ownership of WHS and encourages them to take responsibility. WHS training for frontline workers, supervisors and managers is set out under the *WHS capability and training framework*
- Informing workers of changes and decisions likely to affect them and listening to their concerns and suggestions. This is outlined under the *Consultation, cooperation and coordination framework*
- Engaging workers in effective safety conversations using tools such as the WHS *Safe LEADAR* tool[4]
- Practising and modelling safety behaviours. The *WHS Safety behaviour competencies*[4] defines effective behaviours for safety leaders that encourage worker participation.

2.4 Just and fair culture

Roads and Maritime acknowledges the importance of a just and fair culture under the *WHS policy statement*. A just culture exists when we acknowledge that honest mistakes are made, systems will fail and workers are treated justly and fairly when they report or are involved in occurrences.

In a just and fair culture, clear lines are drawn around acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Safety occurrences are analysed to determine individual, environmental (workplace) and organisational contributing factors and identify opportunities for improvement to enable organisational learning. This does not mean we will have a no-blame culture. Unsafe actions that are clearly intentional or negligent are distinct from actions that are unintentional and will be dealt with separately by human resource performance management systems.

Roads and Maritime supports a just culture by ensuring managers and supervisors:

- Demonstrate care and concern towards workers' health and safety as their priority to ensure workers:
    - Feel they can report issues or concerns and are being treated just and fair
    - Are aware of how safety occurrences are analysed fairly and consistently
    - Are aware that this is not a no-blame culture. Individuals are accountable for their own behaviour and intentional unsafe acts or negligent behaviour is not acceptable and will be managed by human resource performance management systems.
- Use the *Just and fair conversation tool*[4] to focus on what led to the actions and to uncover any systemic issues before identifying any matters that may require further advice
- Request the support of trained investigators (WHS Branch) who have an understanding of human factors and the mechanism of human error. This supports the business to adopt a just and fair investigation process as per the *Safety assurance* and *Occurrence management and investigations frameworks* (confidentiality is maintained throughout the course of all investigations)
- Read and understand WHS *Safety behaviour competencies*[4] which define effective and non-effective behaviours for safety leaders, including behaviours that support a just and fair culture. These behaviours are linked to capabilities set out in the *NSW Public Sector Capability Framework*.

[4] Will be implemented in 2017

2.5 Risk awareness

Risk awareness has two components:

- Risk perception – the extent to which hazards and risks are seen or recognised
- Risk tolerance – the extent to which an individual or group is willing to tolerate known hazards and risks.

Safety leadership influences risk awareness as leaders and managers 'set the tone' for the extent to which their teams are made aware and educated about hazards and risks, and the extent to which they are willing to tolerate certain risks.

Roads and Maritime supports the development of a culture with increased risk awareness by:

- Leading the implementation and maintenance of this risk-based OneRMS SMS
- Engaging in safety communication (as proposed in the *Consultation, cooperation and coordination* and *Safety promotion* frameworks), which includes sharing information about hazards and occurrences to increase risk awareness
- Developing the components of the *Occurrence management and investigations framework* that involve analysing and sharing information about hazards and occurrences
- Maintaining and using the Agency Safety Risk Register (ASRR) to drive business decisions and seek assurance about the effectiveness of risk controls
- Implementing an active safety leadership training program, which includes training and opportunities for managers and workers to:
    - Practice the identification and management of hazards and risks
    - Review case studies
    - Practice threat and error management in simulated or real work scenarios
- Engaging workers in effective safety conversations using tools such as the WHS *Safe LEADAR* tool[5]
- Practising and modelling safety behaviours
- Implementing observation programs to understand actual behaviours in the workplace to identify contributing factors to risk, which then inform conversations between managers and workers. Feedback or trends should inform future training topics and areas where we require additional awareness or risk management.

[5] Will be implemented in 2017

3. Safety culture assessment

Assessing the behaviours of individuals and the context of their work situation helps to understand the strength of the safety culture and safety leadership. A snapshot of attitudes and perceptions towards safety at any point in time also helps to understand the safety climate that reflects the underlying culture.

Roads and Maritime implements safety climate and safety culture assessments. This identifies areas of strength and areas for improvement to continue to build and sustain a mature safety culture. Themes and trends we identify are assessed to shape future safety leadership programs.

4. Reviewing safety leadership and safety culture

The Roads and Maritime Executive WHS Committee regularly reviews the safety leadership and culture program.

WHS Branch facilitates initiatives to improve safety leadership and culture, including responses to:

- Changes in the legal or regulatory environment and Roads and Maritime processes
- WHS leadership capability training outcomes and feedback
- Incorporating research findings into leadership development programs.

Roles and responsibilities

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Executive (including directors)	• Review safety leadership and culture program improvement initiatives and outcomes • Ensure divisions implement safety leadership and culture program requirements • Ensure staff are trained to incorporate safety leadership behaviours into their daily tasks.
General Manager, WHS	Provide strategic guidance and direction for WHS activities to develop safety leadership and safety culture within Roads and Maritime.
WHS Branch	• Support the agency in implementing the safety leadership and culture program to build a mature safety culture • Develop safety leadership capability • Manage and review programs.
Line managers, supervisors, team leaders	• Ensure workers are made aware of their WHS responsibilities • Encourage and support hazard and occurrence reporting • Ensure consultation arrangements are in place • Ensure workers are provided with appropriate resources, training and education in safe systems of work • Ensure the conditions at the workplace are monitored for the purpose of preventing illness or injury to workers.
All safety leaders	• Demonstrate effective leadership to build a mature safety culture • Engage in effective safety conversations with workers • Model mature safety behaviours.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Due diligence	Taking every precaution, so far as is reasonably practicable, to protect the health and safety of workers and others who carry out work for, or on behalf of, Roads and Maritime.
Duty holder	Refers to any person who owes a WHS duty under the *WHS Act* including a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), designer, manufacturer, importer, supplier, installer of products or plant used at work (upstream duty holders), an officer and workers. More than one person can concurrently have the same duty in which case the duty is shared. Duties cannot be transferred.
Governance	How an organisation is directed and controlled. Governance can include organisational structures, management roles and the scope of the power and authority they exercise and the frameworks established for making decisions.
Officer	Broadly, an officer is a person who makes, or participates in making, decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of the organisation's activities – see section 4 of the *WHS Act*.
Safety climate	Refers to psychological characteristics of workers (i.e. 'how they feel' about safety) at a certain point in time. The safety climate is the 'current mood and morale' of workers in relation to safety.
Safety culture	Refers to 'the way we do things around here' when it comes to safety. Safety culture reflects the values, beliefs and attitudes that are held within an organisation that influence what people do and why they do it.
Worker	A person is a worker if the person carries out work in any capacity for a PCBU as per section 7 of the *WHS Act*.

Appendices

A. OneRMS SMS requirements

Safety leadership and culture		
SLC1	**Demonstrate active safety leadership**	Roads and Maritime leaders demonstrate active safety leadership that is consistent, visible and regular across all operations and levels. The *WHS policy statement* informs the behaviour and commitment of safety leaders. See *WHS governance, accountabilities and responsibilities framework.*
SLC2	**Monitor the state of the safety leadership and culture and set practical and achievable goals**	Roads and Maritime assesses the maturity of its safety culture to identify strengths and weaknesses as a baseline for improvement.
SLC3	**Promote a strong reporting and learning culture**	Roads and Maritime safety leaders encourage the reporting of hazards and occurrences including near misses and actively seek to share lessons learnt at all levels. See *Safety assurance*, *Occurrence management and investigations*, *Safety promotion* and *Safety planning and performance reporting* frameworks.

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Feedback

Contact WHS Branch with feedback on this document at *onermssms@rms.nsw.gov.au*