

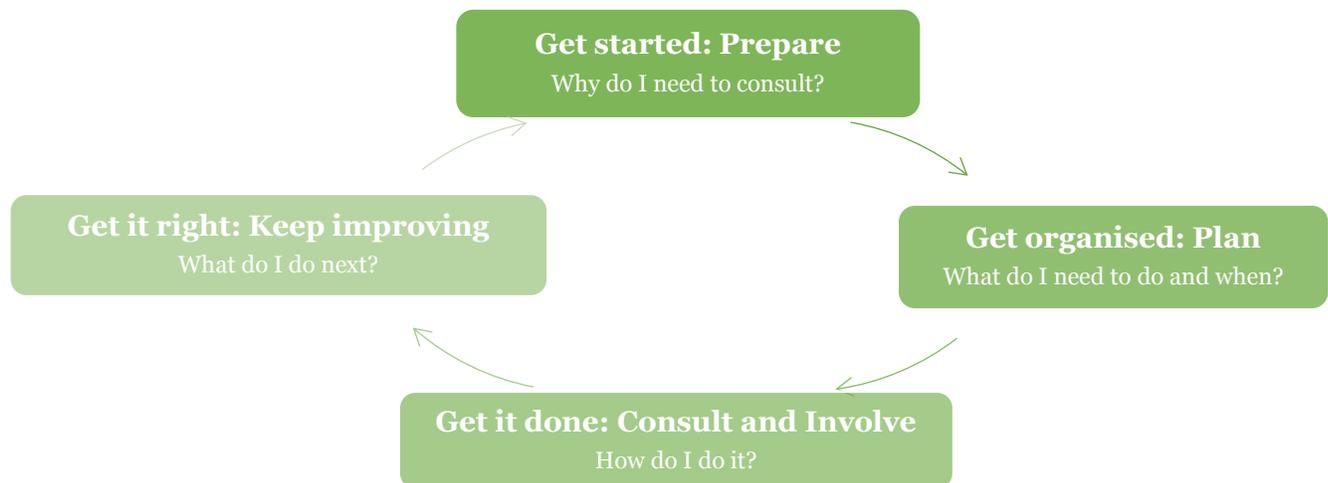


Safety Bulletin 78

Involving your workforce in Health & Safety

Consultation on health and safety is simply a two-way process between you and your workforce where you:

- talk to each other about issues;
- listen to their concerns and raise your concerns;
- seek and share views and information;
- discuss issues in good time; and
- consider what employees say before you make decisions.



Get started: Prepare

Accident rates are lower where the workforce genuinely feel they have a say in health and safety matters than in workplaces where the workforce does not get involved.

Workforce involvement in health and safety management relates to a more positive health and safety climate. In poor health and safety climates, accident rates are highest among workplaces where the workforce does not feel that they can have a say.

Stronger workforce involvement means better control of common workplace risks such as slips and trips – very effective in 76% of cases where the workforce felt they were always consulted but only very effective in 40% of cases if they thought they were rarely, or never, consulted.

Employers and managers can learn about the risks through consultation – the risk of stress and slips and trips occur practically everywhere, but awareness of them is higher where there is workforce involvement (62%) compared to where there is no involvement (28%).



Aside from the companies legal duty to consult, workplaces where the workforce are involved in taking decisions about health and safety are safer and healthier. Your workforce influence health and safety through their own actions and they are often the best people to understand the risks in their workplace.

Talking, listening and co-operating with each other can help:

- identify joint solutions to problems;
- develop a positive health and safety culture where risks are managed sensibly;
- reduce accidents and ill health, plus their related costs to your business;
- bring about improvements in overall efficiency, quality and productivity;
- meet customer demands and maintain credibility; and
- comply with legal requirements.

77% of the workforce felt encouraged to raise concerns in a good health and safety climate compared to 20% who felt encouraged to do so in a poor health and safety climate.

Get organised: Plan

What affects how you involve your workforce?

When planning how best to involve your workforce, you need to consider the following factors about the business, the workplace and the type of workforce that will have an impact on how you can engage with them.

The business

- Structure of the business.
- Management style.
- Organisational and safety cultures.
- Trade union recognition and employment relations.

The workplace

- Size of workplace.
- Location of sites.
- Types of work done.
- Degree and nature of inherent dangers.

The workforce

- Size of workforce.
- Diversity of the workforce.
- Employment structures (eg direct employees, agency and contract workers).
- Work patterns such as shift systems, part-time etc.
- Offsite, remote or mobile workers.

These factors will affect whether you consult individuals or representatives, the methods you use, organisation of inspections and investigations, and co-ordination between committees, among other things.



Get it done: Consult and involve

When consulting and involving your workforce or their representatives you need to consider:

- what your duties are when consulting representatives;
- methods of involving your workforce;
- how to involve representatives in investigations and inspections; and
- how to set up a health and safety committee and make it work well.

What are the companies duties when consulting health and safety representatives?

The company has a duty to:

- allow representatives paid time to perform their role and to undertake training;
- provide facilities and assistance;
- provide information.

The company must provide your workforce with facilities they may reasonably need to carry out their role. Although the needs of health and safety representatives will vary from workplace to workplace, in general you should make sure they have access to equipment and assistance such as:

- a telephone and office area where they can have a private and confidential conversation as part of their role;
- suitable storage space for paperwork, records or reference material, such as a lockable cabinet or desk;
- internet facilities;
- communication and distribution facilities like a photocopier and a notice board to circulate information to the employees they represent; and
- time with senior management to discuss health and safety issues whenever an individual from the workforce may reasonably need to.

The company should also allow representatives to have facilities for investigation of hazards, complaints, and incidents, including private discussions with the workforce. This does not mean that the management representative cannot be on the premises at the time of the investigation.

The company has to provide any health and safety information that they have which will let your health and safety representatives fulfil their role. You should already have relevant health and safety information as part of your health and safety management system, such as copies of risk assessments or accident records.

Get it right: Keep improving

Make sure your arrangements for workforce involvement are effective as possible and covers how you can keep improving by:

- monitoring performance;
- reviewing progress; and
- knowing what to do when things become challenging.

Once you have been consulting and involving your workforce for a while and given each other time to adjust to the processes you or the company have set in place, you should start thinking about how to



keep improving over time. Realistically, there are likely to be some things that work really well, others that could work better, and some things that need to be approached in a different way. Even when some things are working well, changes over time may mean they do not remain effective.

For effective workforce engagement, review progress regularly and consistently monitor performance with your workforce and representatives. It allows you and the company to continue improving the way you work together to enhance health and safety.

Should you require any assistance with involving your workforce in Health & Safety please contact us on info@wpsafety.co.uk or 01268 649006



Source: HSE