WORKPLACE
ISSUES

POLICIES
AND
PROCEDURES

*Sedentary work
and
psychosocial hazards*

Get back to WHS basics:

**policies and
procedures,
consultation and
codes**

Work Safe
TASMANIA

From the **Executive Director**

Robyn Pearce
Executive Director, WorkSafe Tasmania

Consultation is an absolutely fundamental part of creating a safe workplace. It underpins and supports every decision and action you take to improve the health and safety of your workers.

I'm passionate about genuine consultation and have spoken about it many times. And I'm pleased to say there's an article in this edition that captures the essentials of consultation — so you can move beyond mere compliance (consulting is a requirement of our WHS laws) and use it to shape a robust and positive safety culture in your workplace.

Consulting with your workers should be obvious. Why? Because as the people 'on the floor', workers have direct experience and knowledge of tasks, operations, equipment and processes. They will have good insights into what will work to improve safety, and what won't.

But I'd encourage employers to expand your scope of who you consult with to include health and safety representatives (HSRs).

HSRs are a valuable bridge between employers and workers. They can help you tap into that experience, knowledge and insight that your workers have.

HSRs represent the WHS interests of workers in their work groups, and as such can convey to employers important information to consider when making decisions about WHS.

If you've got a small workplace, you can probably talk directly and in person with your workers fairly regularly. But perhaps you have a larger organisation, or you have diverse workers (like field workers and office workers), or worksites around the state? Then having HSRs, who can communicate with you because they're part of those locations or work groups, can be your consultation solution.

There is a process to go through for HSRs to be elected. Your workers can ask to have an HSR, or you might like to suggest creating HSR roles and consultative mechanisms. You will need to consult and agree with your workers on the different workgroups in your business as you might have an HSR for each workgroup. Then seek nominations and hold an election. I strongly encourage HSRs to be trained in their role so they can best support workers, and the safety of your business.

Once in place, invite HSRs to the table when you're creating or reviewing your safety policies and safe work procedures, when you're thinking about buying new equipment or chemicals, or when you next conduct a risk assessment or workplace inspection — anything that affects the health and safety of your workers.

HSRs are not expected to be experts in WHS. Their role is to be a communication link between employers and workers — willing and able to raise matters on workers' behalf and ensure their concerns are considered. This makes resolving WHS concerns not just easier, but more robust, too: together you'll come up with solutions that everyone can get behind.

Properly trained HSRs do have powers to issue notices and to cease work to ensure safe work environments for the workers they represent. Don't be alarmed by this. We can get so focussed on achieving outcomes that we might not see or hear all the concerns our workers have. I think you'll find that having HSRs delivers so much value in helping you make your workplace safer and healthier and fulfill your WHS obligations. HSRs can help in every decision and action you take to improve the health and safety of your workers.

If you've never considered HSRs at your workplace or want to do more to support the ones you do have, our Advisory Service can help set you in the right direction (go to worksafe.tas.gov.au/advisoryservice). We also have online resources for HSRs to help them fulfill their role (go to worksafe.tas.gov.au and search for 'HSR').

RAISING THE ^RED FLAG FOR WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

L to R: WorkCover Tasmania Board's Dr Rob Walters, The Mind Games' Sherri Ring and WorkSafe Tasmania's Robyn Pearce and Vicki Tabor

The Mind Games was established in 2019 as a corporate team building event, to raise awareness about workplace mental health and contribute to research through a partnership with Menzies Institute for Medical Research.

Five years on, The Mind Games has become a movement, with businesses participating and supporting the event. The event has raised over $240,000 for research into workplace mental health at Menzies — an incredible effort made all the more impressive considering that events were held during the COVID pandemic.

Achieving tangible benefits and results

Through these fundraising events, The Mind Games community has played a key role in normalising conversations about mental health within workplaces around Tasmania, in a range of industries and sectors; and created a business community of like-minded leaders to champion mentally healthy workplaces.

Other outcomes include supporting the 'Realising the opportunity of prevention and promotion strategies for a mentally healthy and productive Tasmanian workforce' white paper (you can find this at menzies.utas.edu.au/ by searching for 'UOT220907'.

## A partnership with great synergy

Gold sponsors for The Mind Games 2024 are the WorkCover Tasmania Board and WorkSafe Tasmania.

Creator of The Mind Games Sherri Ring says the synergy between the three organisations has lifted the core message about mentally healthy workplaces to a whole new level.

'We are thrilled to be working with WorkSafe Tasmania and the WorkCover Tasmania Board,' said Sherri.

'We believe this partnership sends a clear message to the Tasmanian business sector that we all need to prioritise mentally healthy workplaces, and through our Gold Sponsors we are able to highlight the support, resources and services that are available.

'The ultimate output for The Mind Games is more research funding for Menzies to address workplace mental health. The research findings then come back to benefit organisations around Tasmania.'

THE MIND GAMES

RACE FOR RESEARCH 2024

WorkSafe TASMANIA   GOLD SPONSORS   WorkCover TASMANIA
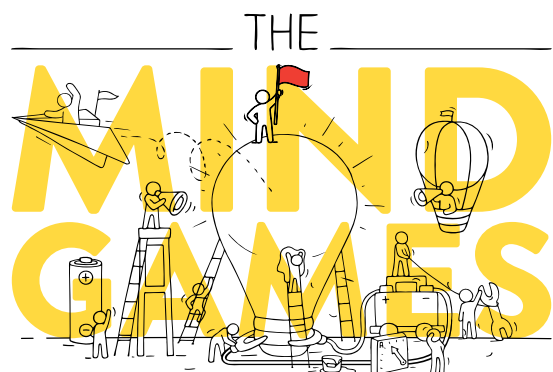
* Pictures taken by Al Bett and the Mind Games team at the Mind Games 2024 Launch at PW1.

PLANNING FOR SAFETY

Improvements in WHS only happen with planning; how complex your planning is depends on how complex your organisation and operations are.

Do some research and set (your) scene

First, what laws apply to your operations? There's the WHS laws of course, but do you need to comply with other industry-specific laws, Australian Standards and codes of practice to ensure the safety of your workers? List them all, and keep this list up to date.

Next round up the licences, certificates of competency, registrations, approvals or exemptions, and notifications relevant to your business and workers. Examples include the requirements for high risk plant, construction industry induction cards and even driver's licences. Keep a register of what is required, the workers who hold them, and copies of the documentation/proof.

Also think about:

- the WHS risks and hazards in your workplace and in your industry
- your operations and physical work environment
- your past WHS performance (for example, incident reports)
- any risk assessments you've done
- changes in technology that affect your operations
- your workforce and your safety culture.

What do you want to achieve? Objectives and targets

Objectives can be broad, and cover the whole organisation.

Targets are the detail, the 'how'. Targets should be specific, especially as they apply to your departments/business units/workgroups.

For example:

- your objective is 'Provide WHS induction training to all new workers'
- your target is 'Induction training to be provided to 100% of workers within their first week of employment'.

Set achievable, measureable and motivating targets to make your workplace safer and healthier.

Involve your workers to develop these objectives and targets. It's important that everyone identifies with and contributes to your objectives and targets.

Once they are done, integrate these objectives and targets across all the teams and functions of your business. Make them integral to your every day work. Communicate your objectives and targets on noticeboards, in staff emails and newsletters; and provide regular updates on them. Workers will then see safety as part of their routine activities, not just for the obviously dangerous ones.

What about KPIs?

Remember, what gets measured, gets done! Performance indicators are measures of the actions you've taken to prevent and reduce injuries.

So, in our example above, what percentage of your new workers were actually given induction training in their first week on the job?

Tracking how you're going can demonstrate you're on the right track, or help you see where you need to work harder and smarter.

Now make your plan

All this work can be pulled together into your safety management plan, which you can keep simple and straightforward. State:

- your legal requirements
- who has responsibility for what
- your hazards and risks
- your safety objectives, targets and performance indicators, including the how (resources, actions) and the when

- the policies, procedures or other tools you have in place to support achieving your safety objectives
- how you'll consult with your workers to develop the safety plan, and tell them about it once completed.

Your plan might also include, for each year:

- the number of workplace safety inspections you'll do
- the number of safety meetings you'll hold
- the lost time injury frequency rates (or equivalent) you want to achieve
- how many polices and procedures you'll review or write.

Keeping it on track

State how you'll monitor your plan. This is to see if you're making the improvements you desire, if your targets are realistic, if your resourcing is adequate — or whether you need to take a different approach.

Changes to your plan are inevitable. Changes in your operations, industry, clients, workforce, technology and laws can impact your business and so affect your WHS outlook. So review your plan regularly (say once a year) or whenever changes happen that affect your organisation.

Safety policies and procedures:
WHY AND HOW TO?

> When you say 'safety management', most people think 'policies and procedures', with good reason: these are the foundations of creating safe and healthy workplaces by ensuring everyone is (literally) on the same page.

▶ Why have a WHS policy

A policy shows you're committed to preventing work-related injury and illness. Even if you have a small business and employ only a handful of workers, you can't afford to assume everyone knows what's required with WHS. A policy ensures that everyone knows what is expected.

▶ What your policy should contain

State the responsibilities of everyone, and the rules and standards you expect everyone to follow. This reinforces the message that although you as an employer have a responsibility for safety, everyone else is responsible too.

You can delegate WHS tasks to others (for example, managers or first aid officers) but as the employer, you still have overall responsibility for WHS.

▶ State what management will do

Start with a statement about your overall safety goal or aim, any measurable safety targets you're working towards, and/or specific safety issues you want to address.

Then state the how, in practical terms, you'll do those things.

Include your commitment to providing and maintaining:

- a safe work environment
- safe equipment, structures and systems of work
- the safe use, handling and storage of equipment, structures and substances
- adequate facilities for workers (such as toilets and tea rooms)
- the information, training, instruction or supervision workers need to work safely
- the monitoring of worker's health and workplace conditions to prevent injury or illness.

▶ State what workers will do

Workers have rights and responsibilities, so state the rules and standards you expect them to follow:

- take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- take reasonable care that what they do (or what they don't do) doesn't adversely affect the health and safety of others
- comply with any reasonable instruction given by managers/supervisors
- co-operate with any reasonable WHS policy or procedure that they've been told about (you may want to mention what these are).

Other rules might include:

- reporting all incidents and near misses immediately
- reporting all known or observed hazards to their manager.

Involve your workers as you develop your policy so it becomes a shared commitment to WHS.

▶ Other matters to consider

- Note your risk management process. Does your policy reflect the nature of your workplace activities and the scale of safety risks you have?
- List any Australian Standards and laws (including those for WHS) you must comply with.
- State how you'll consult with workers to include them in WHS decision making.
- List how you'll provide WHS information to your workers, contractors, volunteers and visitors.
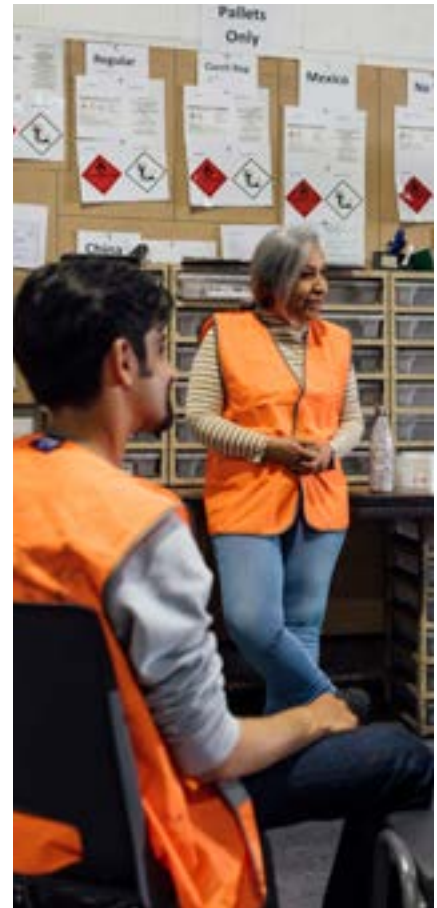
- State how you'll implement your policy.
- Make sure the policy is supported and signed off at the highest level; for example, the managing director or chief executive officer.

▶ Communicate your policy

Display your policy prominently in your workplace. Tell everyone about it at staff or toolbox meetings, emails and in inductions so everyone knows what they should expect from you, and what is expected of them.

Review your policy regularly (at least once a year) to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

Get it right every time with
SAFE WORK PROCEDURES

Safe work procedures are a practical and consistent way for everyone to commit to safety. They clearly:

- document the sequence of steps for doing a task safely
- incorporate the appropriate risk control measures into those steps.

When trained how to use a safe work procedure, everyone in your workplace will know the safe way to do their job, and will work the same way. They won't need to guess or make things up as they go along.

Be specific

Make sure your safe work procedures are specific to the work tasks, equipment and chemicals in your workplace; and if necessary, each worksite in your organisation. This is especially important when/where:

- procedures are for activities that carry risk: such as construction work or using hazardous chemicals
- work tasks are complex or detailed
- there are specific requirements for emergency procedures
- there are specific certification/licensing requirements for workers using certain equipment or performing certain processes/tasks.

Consult with your workers

Consult with your workers as you develop your safe work procedures, as they often have first-hand knowledge, experience and ideas about how to reduce safety risks, make improvements and find solutions.

What to include

- A description of the task.
- The person/position responsible for supervising the task (if you use a person's name, make sure you update the procedure if that person leaves or is no longer responsible for supervising).
- A step-by-step explanation of the stages that make up the task, from beginning to end.
- An explanation of the potential hazards and control controls for the task.
- Any other safety precautions to be taken while performing the task.

OTHER SOURCES

Look at information from manufacturers, suppliers, operator's manuals and relevant codes of practice.

WHAT ARE
Codes of practice?

Codes of practice provide practical, detailed information on how you can achieve the standards required under the WHS laws.

Codes don't replace these laws, but can help you understand what you need to do to comply with specific regulations and provide a safe and healthy workplace.

Codes for all workplaces

There are codes that apply to all workplaces, regardless of your size or the work you do. Some of these are How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks, First Aid in the Workplace, and Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination. Using these codes will help you comply with what the WHS laws require for these issues.

For example, the Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination code — which has been recently updated — discusses the kind of information to share, the most effective ways of workers and employers consulting with one another, and how to consult with others you do business with (such as labour hire organisations and contractors). There is also a useful consultation checklist that you can copy and start working with.

Codes for specific tasks and hazards

There are also codes that deal with specific tasks or hazards, such as Demolition Work, Hazardous Manual Tasks, and Managing Risks of Hazardous Chemicals in the Workplace. These provide practical guidance for managing specific WHS issues.

For example, the Welding Processes code guides you through conducting the risk management process for welding tasks and how you could consult with your workers on this matter. It details specific hazards (such as lead, radiation and burns) and gives examples of practical ways to control those hazards in your workplace.

Like regulations, codes deal with particular issues but they don't necessarily cover all hazards or risks which may arise. So you must consider all the risks associated with the type of work you carry out at your workplace, not just those listed in the relevant code (or regulations).

Are codes legally binding?

Codes of practice are admissible in court proceedings as evidence of what is known about a hazard, risk or control.

Codes may be used to determine what is 'reasonably practicable' in the circumstances that the code relates to. In other words, what you should have known about a hazard and its risks, and what you could have done to manage them.

It's recognised that equivalent or better ways of achieving the required WHS outcomes may be possible. For that reason, complying with codes is not mandatory — providing that any other method used provides an equivalent or higher standard of WHS than suggested by the code.

An inspector can also refer to a code when issuing an improvement or prohibition notice.

Don't forget: new codes are released, and existing codes updated regularly. So check our website at worksafe.tas.gov.au (search for 'codes') to ensure you're using the most up to date code.

Where to find the codes

You can find all the codes of practice and a brief summary of each one at worksafe.tas.gov.au.
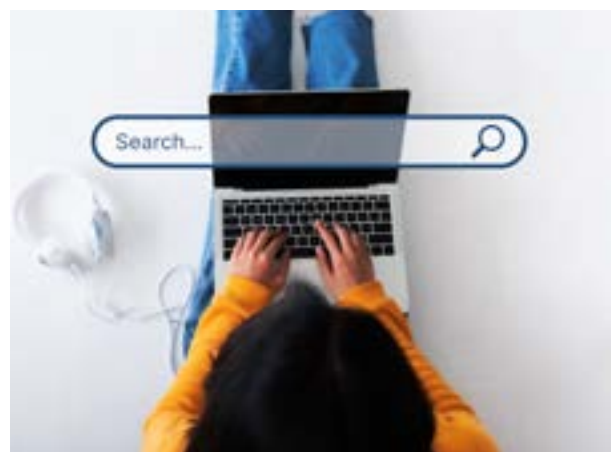
Are you
SITTING DOWN?

Well, stand up!

Workers across many industries and occupations report that they are sitting often or all the time at work. Daily screen time has grown, and there is a continued drift away from manual jobs towards sedentary jobs.

It's not just office workers. Transport workers and people operating equipment or machinery (such as crane drivers) also have sedentary jobs.

What's the problem?

Prolonged and uninterrupted sitting is associated with health problems such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, musculoskeletal disorders, some cancers — even premature death.

These negative health effects are due to not moving enough, not changing posture enough, and lack of or low muscle and energy use.

Compounding this, health problems caused by prolonged sitting remain even if you exercise vigorously every day.

What can you do?

You should try not sit for longer than 30 minutes without a break. As well as getting up to make a cuppa or go to the loo (that is furthest away from you), you could:

- vary work tasks throughout the day so that there's a change in posture and different types of muscles are used
- stand to read a document
- stand when you're on the phone
- walk to deliver a message to a colleague rather than emailing them
- use the stairs instead of the lift
- eat lunch away from your desk. Walk to a local park or greenspace.

The responsibility does not fall solely on individuals. Workplaces can promote and support a standing-friendly culture by encouraging standing meetings (or parts of meetings) and encouraging managers to model standing behaviours and regular movement.

'Environmental' options workplaces can introduce are:

- investing in height-adjustable desks that are stable and easy for workers to control and adjust
- moving waste bins, printers and supplies away from individual offices/workstations to more central locations (to encourage people to walk to them).

HOW TO CONSULT
FOR A SAFER WORKPLACE

Having a safety policy and set of safe work procedures in place, machine guarding on your equipment, locked storage for your chemicals, mechanical aids to lift heavy loads — all are important for the safety and health of your workers.

But underpinning all these measures, and crucial to their ongoing success, is consultation with your workers. It's the essential foundation of every step you take to improve safety and health in your workplace.
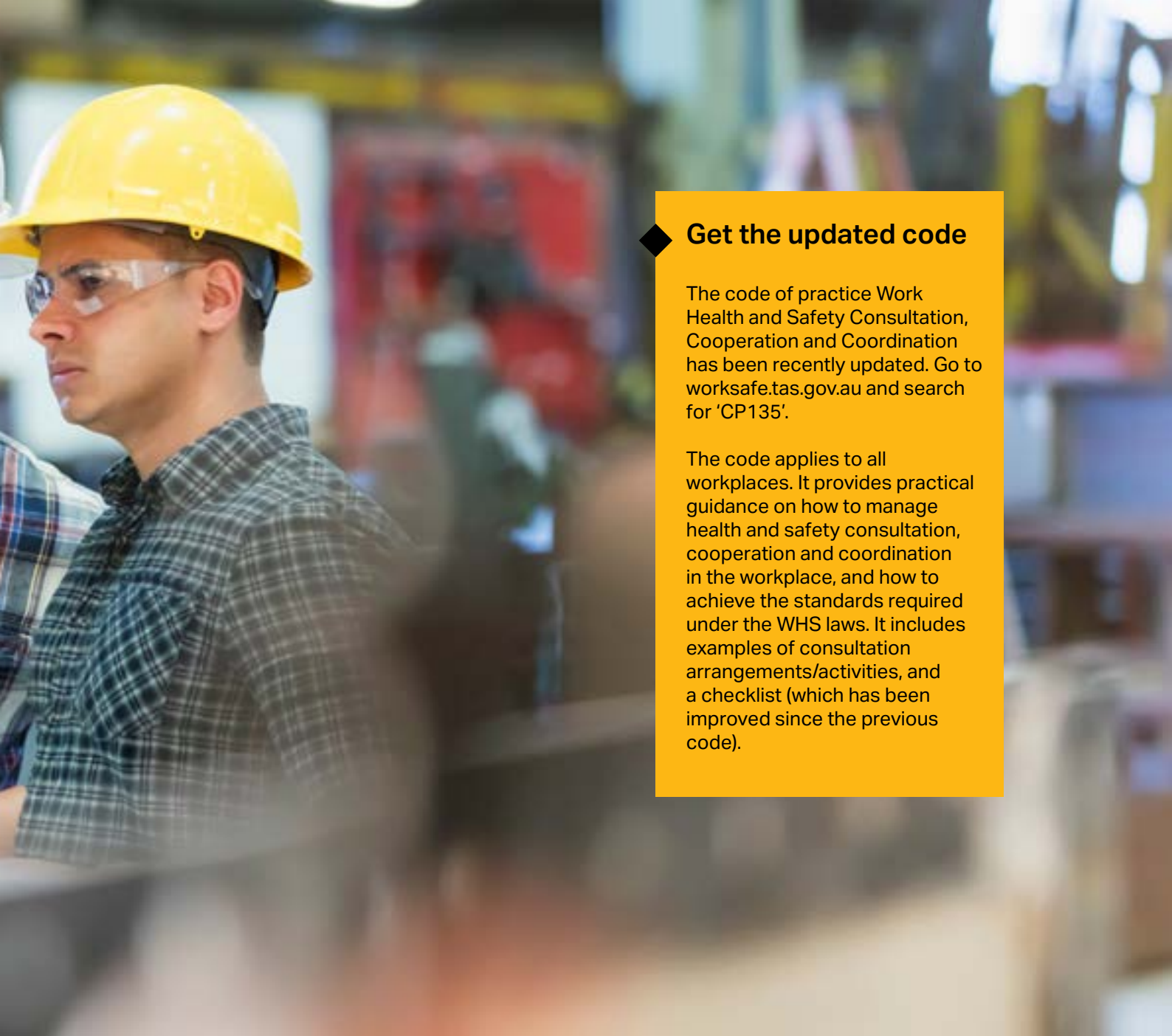
What is consultation?

Consultation means providing your workers with information and taking into account their views before making decisions affecting WHS: so, before writing your WHS policy and safe work procedures, before buying the trolley for moving supplies, and before installing the machine guarding.

By drawing on the knowledge and experience of your workers (and their representatives), contractors and volunteers, you can make informed decisions about how the work in your business should be carried out safely. Workers have valuable first-hand knowledge, experience and ideas about how to reduce safety risks, make improvements and find solutions.

When must you consult?

Consultation is legally required under our WHS laws. There are some very specific times when you must consult, including:

* when identifying hazards and assessing risk, and making decisions about what measures you'll put in place to reduce or remove those risks

* when proposing changes to your work environment, processes, practices, or purchasing decisions (for example, of chemicals or equipment) that affect workers' health and safety.

Get the updated code

The code of practice Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination has been recently updated. Go to worksafe.tas.gov.au and search for 'CP135'.

The code applies to all workplaces. It provides practical guidance on how to manage health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination in the workplace, and how to achieve the standards required under the WHS laws. It includes examples of consultation arrangements/activities, and a checklist (which has been improved since the previous code).

What specifically does safety consultation look like?

Examples of consultation include:

- discussing new initiatives face to face with your workers, or sending emails where you ask your workers for their input and feedback on existing challenges

- having WHS representatives and committees who are active and engaged, regularly talking with you and with your workers.

- engaging with workers through safety sessions at inductions, toolbox meetings, and training sessions.

- welcoming your workers' input, giving it serious consideration, and giving feedback on whether or not the input is being accepted.

Think beyond mere compliance

As well as shaping your hazard management, genuine and thorough consultation can contribute to a positive, robust workplace culture, where everyone has shared safety values, where safety is top of mind always, and prevention is prioritised.

In best practice, it moves beyond compliance and means co-designing solutions with safety intentionally part of the process design. It's where everyone thinks and acts safely.

A safe workplace is more easily achieved when everyone involved in the work communicates with each other and works together to identify hazards and risks, talks about any WHS concerns, and works together to find solutions.

And the benefits of those outcomes are higher productivity, less staff turnover, and less stress leave.

Isn't that what you want to achieve for your workplace?

Prevent and manage

Psychosocial hazards in the workplace

It's been over a year since the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022 were updated to explicitly set out legal requirements for workplaces to prevent psychosocial hazards from occurring and manage them when they do.

What are psychosocial hazards?

Psychosocial hazards include bullying and other disrespectful behaviour and traumatic events.

They also cover hazards that relate to job characteristics, design and management. These include high or low job demands, lack of role clarity, inadequate support or recognition, poor change management, and more.

Sometimes workplaces don't adequately recognise that these are hazards; many people think they are just 'part of the job'.

But these matters become hazards when they are severe, prolonged or long term, or they happen often. They are hazards in their own right and can also lead to others, such as bullying.

The cost of psychosocial hazards

Work-related mental health injuries — including those caused by psychosocial hazards — have longer recovery times, higher costs, and require more time away from work than any other injury. They cause disruptions because of staff turnover, absenteeism, fractured workplace relations between workers, and even bad business reputations.

Consult with your workers

Managing psychosocial hazards is the same as managing physical hazards: you must do a risk assessment where you identify if they are happening, or have the potential to happen, then develop control measures to reduce or remove their risks.

Start by consulting with your workers. They often have first-hand knowledge, experience and ideas about how to reduce risks, make improvements and find solutions.

Workers may talk about hazards in different ways. For example, with job demands, they may say they feel stressed, burnt-out, worried or unmotivated. They may raise concerns about the workload, tasks or timeframes. You might see workers rushing or making a lot of mistakes, which may indicate job demands are too high.

Make sure you have a way for workers to report psychosocial hazards to you, and treat their concerns seriously and respectfully. And when you're introducing any changes, make sure everyone knows what's being done.

◆ **Resources**

We've curated resources on our website to help you create a mentally healthy workplace. Go to worksafe.tas.gov.au and search for 'mentally healthy'. These resources include the People at Work survey, which is supported by Australian WHS regulators, including WorkSafe Tasmania and the WorkCover Tasmania Board. It will guide you through doing a psychosocial risk assessment, using the survey,and interpreting the results and develop an action plan. Go to peopleatwork.gov.au

Manage psychosocial hazards in a practical way

The ways to prevent and manage psychosocial hazards are varied as the hazards themselves. So grab the code of practice Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work. It goes into practical detail about all psychosocial hazards and ways how you can deal with them. Go to worksafe.tas.gov.au and search for 'psychosocial'.
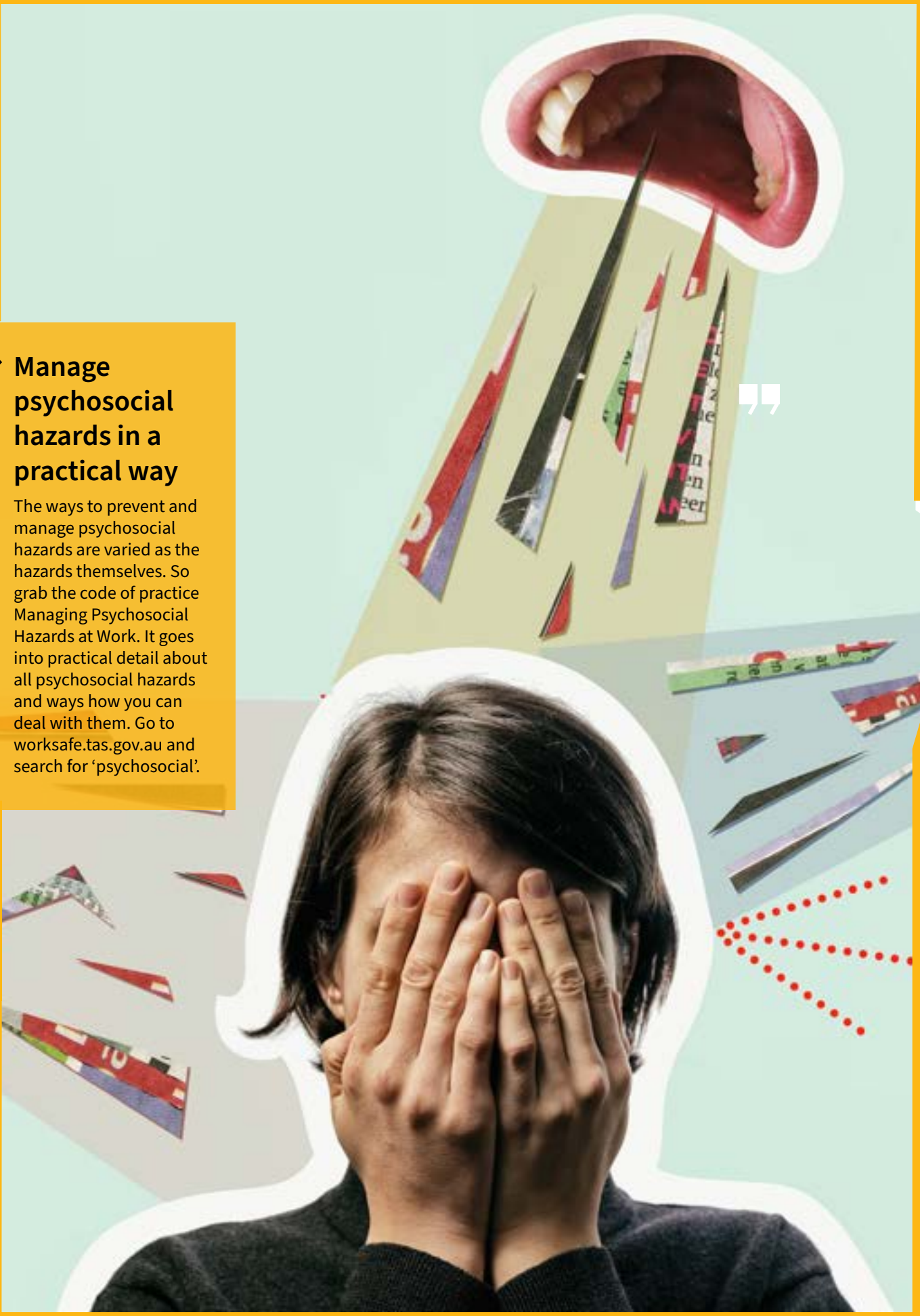
NEW INDUSTRY SNAPSHOTS:
Use our data to guide your WHS

WorkSafe Tasmania's new Industry Snapshots (reporting on 2022) are an engaging and easy to understand tool that workplaces can use to prevent and manage injuries and identify opportunities for WHS improvements.

What the snapshots tell us

The Industry Snapshots demonstrate the importance of using data to improve the safety and wellbeing of Tasmanian workers.

The Industry Snapshots detail safety performance data and trends in all industries across the state, comparing data from the current year to previous years and also between industries.

By doing this, we can learn which areas we need to improve to make sure our workplaces are safe, healthy and productive.

How you can use the snapshots

If you're an employer, manager or WHS officer, you can read your relevant Industry Snapshot to understand causes of injury and incidents in your industries. You can use the data to guide how you prevent and manage these from occurring to your workers, and identify opportunities for WHS improvements.

Key findings for Tasmania

Findings of note from the 2022 Industry Snapshots include:

- there were 15% fewer injuries in 2022 compared to ten years ago, but the proportion of serious injuries (those requiring at least one week of work) has increased from 36% to 46% in that time

- body stressing remains the most common cause of injury, and injuries resulting from mental stress have increased by 47% in the last ten years, now making up 16% of all serious injuries

- injuries from mental stress have increased in recent years and now make up 16% of all serious injuries

- half of Tasmania's workforce are employed in one of four industries: Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail, Education and Training, or Accommodation and Food Services

- almost 1 in 4 workers seriously injured in 2022 worked in Health Care and Social Assistance.

How WorkSafe uses the data

The Industry Snapshots also highlight the areas WorkSafe Tasmania will focus on with each industry to improve WHS performance, and to inform its strategic priorities and work with unions and employer associations to reduce injury rates in Tasmania.

The WorkCover Board Tasmania works with WorkSafe Tasmania to produce the Industry Snapshots each year.

One of the WorkCover Board's regulatory functions is to collect and publish statistics and analyse data and trends to inform decision making and future strategies about WHS.

Find your industry snapshot

Find the 2022 Industry Snapshots for your industry at worksafe.tas.gov.au/snapshots

▶ The injuries

7,021
injuries across the state in 2022

46%
of injuries in 2022 resulted in at least one week off work
compared to 36% ten years ago

10.2
serious injuries per million hours worked in 2022

85
work related deaths in the last ten years
✝ 60 workers
✝ 25 bystanders

Serious injury frequency rate increased slightly
from 9.8 to 10.2
serious injuries per million hours worked
over the last ten years

▶ The people

55–64 year olds
reported the highest serious injury frequency rate of all age groups

Occupations with the highest percentage of serious injuries

11% Miscellaneous Labourers

9% Personal Carers and Assistants

5% Cleaners and Laundry Workers

Almost
1 in 4
workers seriously injured in 2022 worked in Health Care and Assistance

Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services reported the biggest increase in serious injury frequency rate in ten years

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services reported the biggest decrease in serious injury frequency rate in ten years

▶ The causes

The most common causes of injury across the state:

1 **Body stressing**

2 **Being hit by moving objects**

3 **Falls, slips and trips**

4 **Mental stress**

FOUR THINGS TO DO NOW THAT YOU'VE READ WORKPLACE ISSUE

1 **MANAGE PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS**
Claims for mental health injuries continue to go up. Learn more about psychosocial hazards on page 12 – and commit to identifying and managing them in your workplace.

2 **GET DATA FOR YOUR INDUSTRY**
Read your Industry Snapshot to understand injury causes in your industry: use the data to prevent them occurring to your workers to and identify opportunities to improve your WHS. See page 14.

3 **START PLANNING YOUR SAFETY**
A safe workplace only happens with planning. If you've been leaving it to chance, get started with our guidance on page 4, then read how to create safety policies and procedures on page 6.

4 **CONSULT, COMMUNICATE AND COLLABORATE!**
What ties everything together this edition? Consulting with your workers. It's crucial for everything you want to achieve in a safe and productive workplace! See page 10 and our Executive Director's column on page 2.

Work Safe TASMANIA