GOOD HEALTH AND SAFETY MEANS GOOD BUSINESS

PUBLIC REPORTING OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY BY ORGANISATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

WHY REPORT ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY?

There is increased public and government interest in the concepts of corporate social responsibility and future sustainability being addressed by organisations. Public reporting by these organisations meets the call from major stakeholder groups for more disclosure by them on a wider range of economic, social, ethical and environmental concerns. It also demonstrates an attitude of responsibility, accountability and transparency on the part of the organisation.

An organisation demonstrating its commitment to the health and safety of its employees meets one element of social corporate behaviour.

Organisations that are leaders in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) are proud of their commitment to OHS and their investment in the health and safety of employees.

Other organisations that have made a more recent commitment to OHS, and see health and safety as a critical component of their business, may start reporting on their OHS progress. Public reporting creates transparency and openness concerning health and safety performance and helps to drive improvements from investors and other stakeholders.

GOOD OHS – GOOD BUSINESS

Good health and safety management, like good environmental management, is an indicator of business health. Poor OHS management, like poor environmental management, can lead to costly liabilities.

Good workplace health and safety performance can be used to promote an organisation to investors.

Public reporting demonstrates health and safety is a high priority for management and directors and provides an opportunity to recognise employees’ contributions to the organisation’s achievements for the year.

If serious incidents have occurred, the organisation can report how the incidents have been addressed and detail measures put in place to prevent any recurrence.

Effective public reporting on health and safety will show an organisation:

- is committed to managing and improving its health and safety;
- measures and compares its OHS performance;
- has achieved improvements in workplace safety and employee welfare;
- takes a systematic approach to OHS risk management; and
- is committed to broad-based, corporate performance improvement.

Public reporting on OHS performance

WorkSafe Victoria has worked with The Australasian Reporting Awards (ARA) Inc, a group concerned about the quality of business and financial reporting, to establish criteria for OHS reporting. The Occupational Health and Safety Reporting Award were introduced in 2000 to recognise excellence in reporting activities that promote health and safety in the workplace.

A report should highlight the importance of health and safety in its structure and content. It needs to be presented clearly, succinctly and in plain language and be easy to navigate. OHS reporting should include indicators on OHS management, OHS performance, independent verification and the encouragement of continuous improvement.

To assist organisations with including OHS in their public reporting, attached is a listing of ARA health and safety criteria, with details of the types of activities that can be reported.

Further support and advice

www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

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OHS MANAGEMENT CRITERIA

OHS management covers the organisation’s policies, plans and strategies to improve health and safety.

1. Clear commitment to OHS by the organisation
Demonstrate OHS is a high priority for the organisation by including:
• The organisation’s vision on OHS.
• A commitment by the chief executive/board on leading an OHS culture.
• A commitment to achieving best practice.
• Corporate OHS goals such as zero harm, reduction in occupational illness or exposure.

2. Demonstrate OHS is embedded in general management systems
This section should outline how health and safety is incorporated at senior levels of management and throughout the organisation, for example:
• The organisation’s OHS performance is monitored and reviewed regularly by senior management and the board.
• Responsibility for OHS is at the highest level of the organisation.
• Managers’ health and safety performance is measured and linked to remuneration.
• Health and safety is incorporated in business planning, purchasing and contracting policies, and design of the workplace.

3. Key OHS objectives and/or specific strategies
This section should describe the objectives and strategies for the reporting period, such as:
• The organisation’s strategic OHS goals.
• Areas targeted, the reasons for selection and expected results.
• Items in the OHS plan requiring action.
• How changes to workplace culture and safety performance are integrated into operations.

4. Record future OHS targets
This would cover yearly targets within a long-term strategy and be reviewed in subsequent reports to show the organisation follows through on commitments, such as:
• Reduction in workplace incidents, injuries, illnesses and exposures.
• Development and implementation of OHS projects.
• Achievement of recognised standards in OHS management.
• Achievement of best practice.

5. Record the resources allocated to OHS
Resources allocated by the organisation to improve health and safety can include:
• Number of qualified persons employed or engaged to advise on OHS.
• Budget allocated for OHS training.
• Budget allocated for upgrading equipment, processes or practices for OHS purposes.
• Availability of information and assistance to employees on OHS.

6. Address, where appropriate, specific OHS issues
There is a range of OHS issues which may require attention. What is in place to deal with:
• How work is undertaken across the organisation?
• The OHS performance of the organisation?
• Compliance against OHS laws?

7. Provide evidence of OHS consultation with employees
There is a legal requirement to consult with employees on issues that may directly affect their health and safety. Evidence of OHS consultation may include:
• The establishment of a consultative framework for consulting with employees.
• The establishment and operation of an OHS committee.
• Incorporating health and safety representatives in the consultation process.

If you do not have targets, NOHSC’s National Occupational Health and Safety Strategy 2002-2012 has minimum targets which may be a starting point (www.nohsc.gov.au/nationalstrategy/ current at 25.11.05).
8. Address, where appropriate, the OHS management of contractors

Contractors are deemed employees in most cases and are due the same protection as permanent employees. Parties responsible for a contractor's health and safety must fulfil those responsibilities.

- Tenders for projects requiring contractors to have OHS systems in place.
- Workplace induction training provided to all contractors.
- Issue resolution procedures available to contractors.

OHS PERFORMANCE

OHS performance is about how well an organisation puts into place its policies, plans and strategies.

1. Provide both negative and positive OHS key performance indicators

This gives an overall picture of the performance of the organisation for the reporting period, and should include:

- Lead indicators, such as:
  - proactive prevention measures;
  - number of internal audits/inspections conducted; and
  - health surveillance of employees; and
- Lag indicators, such as:
  - number of work related injuries;
  - number of lost time injuries; and
  - number of serious injuries.

2. Where a fatality is recorded, the organisation's response and preventive actions should be detailed

An investigation process following workplace incidents is implemented and followed and the outcomes include:

- Acknowledgement of the impact to family, friends, colleagues, organisation and the community and actions to prevent recurrence.
- Other actions taken, such as recognition of deceased worker, sponsorship of worker's family.

3. Compare the current year's OHS performance with that of previous years and/or against industry benchmarks

The most obvious is comparison of the organisation's performance against previous years. Comparisons can be made within the organisation of similar operations and externally against industry peers.

- Number and/or rate of injuries.
- Number and/or rate of incidents.
- Number of WorkCover claims.
- Cost of injuries to the organisation.
- WorkCover premiums.

4. Record details of OHS training

All types of on or off-the-job training may be offered, such as awareness, induction, supervisor, senior management, specific issue, OHS committee, refresher or tertiary. Reporting can include:

- Numbers of employees and managers trained (including evaluation comments).
- Current and future training targets.

5. Where appropriate, record the outcomes and actions of OHS audits

This section can include details on audits undertaken by external specialists or by internally qualified personnel on:

- Findings, both positive and negative.
- Actions planned or undertaken.

6. Where appropriate, record any regulatory interventions, prosecutions and adverse publicity orders and subsequent actions taken by the organisation

Inspections by WorkSafe may be undertaken relating to re-active issues, such as complaints, the occurrence of an incident, a serious injury or a fatality as well as proactive matters relating to specific projects. Reporting on intervention by WorkSafe may include:

- The number of inspections conducted by WorkSafe Victoria inspectors (including reason(s)).
- The outcome of visits, voluntary compliance (where compliance was achieved at the time of the visit) or notices issued and action taken.
- Prosecution and outcomes of prosecutions, including:
  - conviction, order to undertake an improvement project, adverse publicity order, an enforceable undertaking, dismissal, fines, costs.

HOW TO REPORT ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION

Do the results stand up to scrutiny? Is the organisation willing to allow independent verification?

1. Record the results, where appropriate, of any internal audits and the follow-up by the corporation

The value of an audit is in the follow-up action taken.

- The type of audit carried out.
- The results, either positive or negative.
- The action taken.

2. Record any OHS awards or certificates the organisation has received

To go through the rigorous processes to gain recognition from OHS bodies and regulators shows to prospective investors, customers, employees and other stakeholders the organisation takes its OHS obligations seriously.

- Achievement of OHS management accreditation.
- Nomination/award for WorkSafe awards for organisation, health and safety committee or health and safety representative.
- Nomination/award by other recognised OHS bodies for organisation, representative of organisation, or health and safety representative.

3. Provide details, where appropriate, of the organisation’s contribution to improving OHS within its industry

The organisation may be prepared to share its knowledge and understanding of OHS controls relevant to the industry to benefit others, for example:

- Sponsorship of training or development award(s), e.g. for apprentices.
- Member of industry OHS group, role performed and support given.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

An organisation engaged in continuous improvement shows that it is striving for excellence, something prospective investors and employees would be seeking.

1. Provide details of any OHS innovations

The introduction of changes or programs which may not necessarily be work related, but which may affect work safety of not only employees, but suppliers, customers, visitors, etc.

- New programs, campaigns, etc, e.g. employee wellbeing programs.
- Capital investment plans, e.g. to reconfigure a workplace to manage traffic more effectively.
- Research and development outcomes.

2. Where appropriate, give examples of a problem-solving, consultative approach to creating solutions for identified OHS issues

It is about consulting with people who have knowledge of the issues and can contribute in a meaningful way at all phases of a process. It also ensures ownership and commitment to workplace change.

- Team based approach to assess, develop and implement controls for a workplace issue such as prevention of falls.
- Changes made through the health and safety committee.

3. Demonstrate that the organisation has kept abreast of OHS best practice in its industry

Many organisations benchmark themselves against their industry peers. Again this tells stakeholders that the organisation wants to do better and is aiming to be the best in its field.

- Where the organisation wants to be in best practice.
- The standards of best practice being measured against and the results.
- Actions taken to improve performance.