



How you can help create safe and healthy workplaces as health and safety representatives

Information for health and safety representatives (HSRs)



Please note

This information is for guidance only and is not to be taken as an expression of the law. It should be read in conjunction with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012*, the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022*, and any other relevant legislation. To view, go to the WorkSafe Tasmania website at worksafe.tas.gov.au.

In this guide:

HSRs = Health and Safety Representatives

WHS = work health and safety

Most samples and templates are available at worksafe.tas.gov.au; search for 'tools and templates' unless different search terms are given in this guide.

We welcome your feedback on this guide. Send to: wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au



Consultation in the workplace is required by legislation and is also a fundamental part of creating a safe workplace. It helps with every decision and action made to improve the health and safety of workers.

Workers have direct experience and knowledge of tasks, operations, equipment and processes. They will have good insights into what will work to improve work health and safety (WHS) and what won't.

As a Health and Safety Representative (HSR), you can help with the consultation and communication between workers and employers to ensure a safe and healthy workplace.

Why be a HSR?

HSRs play an important role in workplaces as a recognised mechanism for worker consultation and working to ensure health and safety risks are identified and managed appropriately. HSRs may be elected in small, medium, or large enterprises. Any worker (or group of workers) may ask for a HSR to be elected to represent them on work health and safety matters.

Not all workers feel comfortable raising health and safety ideas or concerns with their employer, which is why HSRs in the workplace are so valuable, no matter what the size of the business.

Also, if you work in a larger organisation, or one with dispersed workers (like field workers and office workers), or worksites around the state, HSRs can play an important role in ensuring effective consultation between everyone.

HSRs can act as a bridge between employers and workers

As a HSR, you are elected by workers of the work group you will represent, and you represent the WHS interests of these workers.

You can convey to employers and managers important information to consider when making decisions about WHS. You can help employers tap into the experience, knowledge and insight that the workers you represent have, particularly in relation to risks in the job, which workers see firsthand, and may have great ideas for solutions. You'll aid communication, consultation and cooperation in your workplace.

As a HSR, you're not expected to be an expert in WHS. Your 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.

The functions and powers of HSRs

The functions and powers you have as a HSR are set out in our WHS laws. They include:

- representing the workers in your work group for WHS matters
- investigating complaints from the workers you represent about WHS
- asking about anything that appears to be a risk to the health or safety of the workers you represent.

You may:

- ask for a health and safety committee to be set up
- accompany a WorkSafe Inspector during an inspection of any part of the workplace where the workers you represent work
- attend interviews between one or more of the workers you represent and a WorkSafe Inspector and/or your employer.

HSRs who have completed an approved training course of up to 5 days have the power to issue Provisional Improvement Notices (PINs) and cease work notices for the work group, to ensure safe work environments for the workers you represent. This can help your employer make your workplace safer and healthier, and fulfil their WHS obligations. You can help in every decision and action your employer takes to ensure the health and safety of you and your co-workers.

How to become a HSR in your workplace

You and the workers you'll represent can ask your employer to have a HSR, or your employer might suggest creating HSR roles as a consultative mechanism. Your employer will need to consult and agree with workers on the different workgroups, then seek nominations and hold an election.

Elections could be:

- informal; for example, with a show of hands
- formal, using ballots
- conducted with the help of a union or other organisation or person.

Being supported in your role as a HSR

Your employer should provide you with HSR training, resources and facilities, communication and feedback. This will mean you can really support the workers you represent, and help your employer create a safe and healthy workplace and meet their legal obligations under WHS laws.

As a properly trained HSR, you can be an asset to your workplace, providing your employer and their business with valuable WHS support.

How HSRs and employers can work together

Your employer should involve you when they:

- create or review safety policies and safe work procedures
- think about buying new equipment or chemicals
- conduct a risk assessment or workplace inspection.

Essentially, employers should collaborate with you when they do or consider anything that affects the health and safety of their workers.

As a HSR, you don't remove your employer's right to make decisions.

Working with WorkSafe Tasmania Inspectors

Inspectors are committed to working with you, your employer and others to ensure compliance with the WHS laws and ensure a safe and healthy workplace for you and the workers you represent.

You can invite a WorkSafe Tasmania Inspector to come to your workplace to help resolve WHS disputes. Inspectors can also attend a workplace if WorkSafe receives a complaint.

In any situation, if a WorkSafe Inspector needs to visit your workplace on a WHS matter, they will invite you to accompany them on site if the matter relates to the work group you represent. They will also meet with you separately to discuss if there are any health and safety concerns at the workplace. Find out more about WorkSafe Inspectors and how they can help at worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/inspectors.

HSR identity cards

Identity cards for HSRs are available through WorkSafe Tasmania on application by the HSR.

Having a HSR identity card will:

- provide you with formal identification of your HSR role and of the workgroup you represent. You'll be able to show your identity card to WorkSafe inspectors when they visit your workplace
- provide confirmation that you are authorised to issue PINs.

HSR identity cards are free of charge and can be used by HSRs in your day-to-day HSR activities and when you interact with a WorkSafe Tasmania Inspector. HSR ID cards are not mandatory. An elected HSR does not have to hold a registered HSR ID card to exercise their powers.

You can apply by downloading the Health and Safety Representative Identification Card Application Form from worksafe.tas.gov.au. Please also read our flyer HSR Identity Cards Program available at worksafe.tas.gov.au.



Resources

You can find more detailed information about the topics covered in this guide at worksafe.tas.gov.au by searching for 'HSRs'.

Notes

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

1300 366 322
www.worksafe.tas.gov.au

For more information contact

Phone: 1300 366 322 (within Tasmania)
(03) 6166 4600 (outside Tasmania)

Fax: (03) 6173 0206

Email: wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au

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