



How health and safety representatives can assist you to make your workplace safer

Information for employers and managers



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.

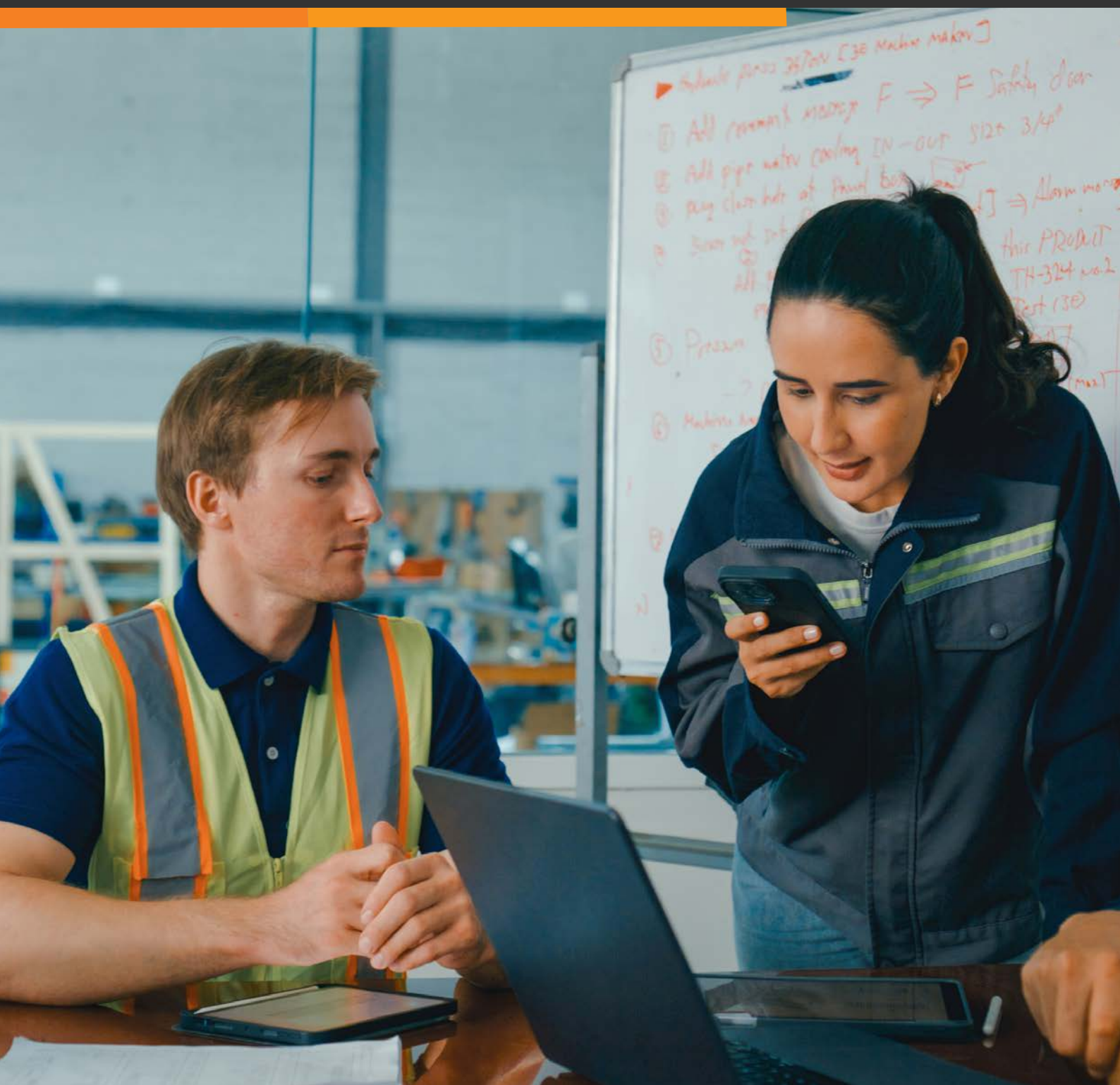
In this guide:

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 you as an employer take to improve the health and safety of your workers.

Your 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.

Do you need Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs)?

HSRs play an important role in workplaces as a recognised mechanism for worker consultation and working to ensure healthy 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 your business.

If you have a larger organisation, or you have dispersed workers (like field workers and office workers), or worksites around the state, then HSRs can really assist by communicating with you across those locations or work groups, and can be your consultation solution.

HSRs can positively impact your workplace in a number of areas including:

- improving worker involvement;
- helping the employer to identify the potential risks;
- helping the employer to identify better safety controls;
- improving the safety culture of an organisation;
- empowering workers;
- helping the organisation to reduce incidents, injuries, and potential near misses;
- reducing the cost of incidents, injuries and potential near misses, and
- increasing productivity, and efficiency.

HSRs can act as a bridge between employers and workers

HSRs are elected by workers of the work group they will represent, and they represent the WHS interests of these workers.

HSRs can convey to you important information to consider when making decisions about WHS. They can help you tap into the experience, knowledge, and insight that your workers have.

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. They'll aid communication and cooperation in your workplace.

This makes resolving WHS concerns easier, and more robust. Together you'll come up with solutions that everyone can support.

The functions and powers of HSRs

The functions and powers of HSRs are set out in our WHS laws. They include:

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

An HSR 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 they represent work
- attend interviews between one or more of the workers they represent and a WorkSafe Inspector and/or the employer.

Properly trained HSRs 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. This can help you make your workplace safer and healthier, and fulfil your WHS obligations. HSRs can help in every decision and action you take to ensure the health and safety of your workers.

How to create HSR roles in your workplace

Your workers can ask to have an HSR, or you might like to suggest creating HSR roles as a consultative mechanism for your workplace. You will need to consult and agree with your workers on the different workgroups in your business. Then seek nominations and hold an election. Any worker within a work group is eligible, unless they have previously been disqualified.

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.

Support your HSRs

By providing your HSRs with training, resources and facilities, communication and feedback, they can really support the workers they represent. They can help you create a safe and healthy workplace for your workers and help you meet your legal obligations under WHS laws

Think of trained HSRs as an asset to your business, providing you with valuable WHS support.

How to work together with your HSRs

Once in place, involve HSRs when you:

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

Essentially, collaborate with your HSRs when you do or consider anything that affects the health and safety of your workers.

HSRs don't remove your right to make decisions. Rather, they help you to comply with your consultation requirements under the WHS laws.

List of HSRs

If you have HSRs in your workplace you must display in the workplace an up-to-date list of each HSR and Deputy HSR (if any) for each work group. Employers must also provide a copy of the up-to-date list to WorkSafe Tasmania. An online form is available on WorkSafe Tasmania's website.

Working with WorkSafe Tasmania Inspectors

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

If a WorkSafe Inspector needs to visit your workplace on a WHS matter, they will meet with you and will also invite the relevant HSR for the work group to accompany them on site. They will also meet with them 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 your HSRs with formal identification of their HSR role and of the workgroup they represent. They'll be able to show their identity card to WorkSafe Inspectors when they visit your workplace
- provide confirmation that they are authorised to issue Provisional Improvement Notices (PIN).

HSR identity cards are free of charge and can be used by HSRs in their day-to-day HSR activities and when they 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.

HSRs 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 Card 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'.

If you've never considered HSRs at your workplace, or want to do more to support the ones you do have, WorkSafe Tasmania's Advisory Service can help set you in the right direction. Go to worksafe.tas.gov.au/advisoryservice for more information or to request a visit.

Notes

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