

Safety

An Element of Connective Cultures



A high-performing and flourishing organisation promotes safe behaviours through the connections between employees.

Workplace safety is both a moral and legal obligation of organisations to provide safe working environments for their employees.¹ A failure to protect employee health and safety can result in business costs associated with injury, compensation, and lost productivity.²

Safety has important business outcomes:

Injury and illness is estimated to cost Australian businesses

\$28.6b

annually.³

In 2021/22, the median cost of compensation paid out for injury and illness was

\$15.7k

with a median of

8 weeks

work time lost⁴

Less workplace safety incidents are linked to high performance and organisational cultures that promote safety behaviours.⁵

Additionally, workplaces who invest in improving work health and safety can see benefits to

**Employee Morale,
Productivity &
Retention⁶**



Safety Culture

Organisational safety culture involves the attitudes, values and behavioural norms that support safe work practices. A strong safety culture can be beneficial for all organisations, irrespective of the likelihood for safety risks. Alongside risk management processes, effective communication is a key factor that underlies safe behaviours in the workplace.⁷

Work health and safety policy should be interwoven with the organisation's values, culture, goals, and behaviours. In this way, leaders can encourage awareness of safety hazards and communicate the organisation's commitment to employee safety and promoting safe behaviours.⁸

Safety in the Office Environment

The workplace safety discourse has often focussed on safety-critical industries that face considerable risks in daily work practices. For example, employees operating heavy machinery hold far higher risk for workplace fatalities than occupations that typically work in an office, such as administrative roles.⁹ This has led many to discount the importance of safety behaviours within 'white collar' occupations.

One of the major risks to employee health within a typical office environment is sedentary behaviour, brought about by prolonged bouts of sitting (i.e., for 30 minutes or more without movement). As benign as sitting may sound, it has been linked with health issues, such as musculoskeletal disorders, mental ill-health and some cancers.^{10,11}

A safety culture that encourages employees to move regularly can help to minimise prolonged bouts of sitting. Standing for long periods may also have negative impacts on health, thus a mix between both could allow for the variation that is needed throughout the workday.¹²



Tips for Connecting to Safety

Make it safe to speak up

Remove fear of retribution

- Make reporting safety incidents achievable and accessible for all employees
- Investigate incident reports before making judgements about a cause
- Focus less on blame and more on learning from safety failures to promote continuous improvement

Value looking out for colleagues

Catch safety hazards if others don't

- Talk about safety and building connections with colleagues
- Tell colleagues when they are working in an unsafe way
- Promote caring for others safety within organisational standards/policy

Align with safety

Interweave safety throughout the organisation

- Reflect commitment to safety in organisational strategy, values, and behaviours
- Maintain risk assessment and management processes across the organisation

Strong safety leaders

Promote importance of safety

- Link safety to organisational objectives
- Remind employees of safe practices
- Build trust with employees to encourage speaking up
- Talk about safety issues regularly to communicate the importance

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