

*Insight* aims to provide useful information, links and tips in the areas of Risk Management, Occupational Health and Safety, Business Continuity Management, and other areas relating to management systems and corporate governance.

This issue:

- Considerations for effective safety communication
- Importance of home office risk assessments
- Managing JSAs/job risk assessments

## Considerations for effective safety communication



Ensuring that safety information has been effectively communicated and understood has always been critical to keeping workers safe. In the context of the harmonised *Work Health and Safety* legislation, it is also now an important compliance consideration for organisations to pay attention to the ways in which they communicate and consult on safety issues with all workers.

QRMC's experience in consulting with organisations of all sizes and across many industries has highlighted for us some of the important components for effective safety communication. These include:

### 1. *Know who you're talking to*

If safety communications are to be understood by the target audience and have the intended impact, they must be carefully crafted for the individuals concerned and must reflect the context of the overall organisation. The language and terminology used within the communication should align with the cultural diversity within the workforce, the workers' level of technical understanding, the workplace culture (and cultural maturity), the organisational history and safety performance.

### 2. *Be careful of language*

Negative language, compliance-focussed language and overbearing or officious approaches to safety communications can generally be expected to reduce levels of both attention and cooperation. This can be a major 'turn-off' factor.

### 3. *Pay attention and act*

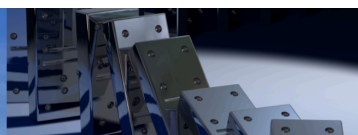
Attend to what workers say, both generally and in response to safety communications. Honest feedback from workers is extremely valuable in understanding how safe behaviours and better outcomes can be achieved within your organisation, but you won't get that honest feedback for long if you don't both attend to and act upon it (and ensure this action is also communicated).

### 4. *Communicate proactively and personally*

Communicate frankly, frequently, and before issues turn into serious problems. Communicating only in response to incidents and/or complaints tends to create an atmosphere of mistrust that prevents important messages from getting through.

### 5. *Demonstrate*

Leaders (from CEO down to supervisors) must set the standards of both behaviour and communication that are expected from the workforce: safe behaviours, open communications, respectful interactions etc. This positive modelling will also help to create a culture resistant to bullying and harassment.



## 6. Use examples

Rather than just presenting bare facts or assertions, use examples to illustrate the safety messages you're communicating – used in moderation 'real life stories' attract attention and can make it easier to understand and remember why the safety issue being communicated is important.

## 7. Positive feedback

When you're giving positive feedback to an individual or group, resist the temptation to mix in a negative rider: the fatal "but". Some people will only hear the negative part. It is recommended that positive feedback is made public while interventions/concerns are kept well separated within one-on-one discussions.

## 8. Give encouragement

People need to feel appreciated. Expressing appreciation for the effort so far and encouragement for the work achieved towards the ultimate goal will help to foster healthy working relationships and keep up morale.

As with any learning process remember the old proverb: *I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.*

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

## Importance of home office risk assessments

A recent judgement involving a Telstra worker injured whilst working from home has highlighted the increasing prevalence of home offices, and raised a number of implications that employers need to be aware of and manage.

The case involved a worker who was injured by falling on stairs in the house in which the home office was situated.

Earlier judgements confirmed that the injury was work-related and compensable.



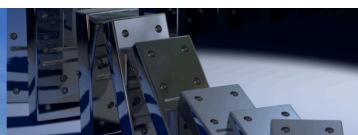
The [recent judgement](#) has confirmed the worker's right for ongoing compensation for a psychological injury resulting from the unrealistic demands of her return-to-work plan, and highlighted again the potential risks arising from home-based work.

QRMC has discussed this case, and the considerations employers should take into account when managing work from home, in an [earlier edition of Insight](#). With the release of this most recent judgement, it is timely to reflect on the issue again.

The most critical requirement for the persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) is to ensure that a thorough risk assessment of work-from-home arrangements is undertaken (and regularly updated).

Such a risk assessment should consider, at minimum:

- Whether the office is appropriately set up from an ergonomic/manual handling perspective
- Whether appropriate and fit for purpose equipment has been installed in the office
- Whether appropriate emergency response processes have been developed and implemented
- Whether workplace environmental conditions, including lighting and ventilation, are adequate



- Whether housekeeping and storage arrangements are appropriate
- Whether the context of the home office is free of hazards (including pathways to amenities in the building, to parking areas etc.)
- Whether properly detailed management processes for safety inspections, communication, etc. have been put in place for managing work from home.

With the regular undertaking of proper risk assessments, and the implementation of identified risk controls, PCBUs can have a greater level of confidence that the safety of those workers operating in a home office environment has been assured.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

## Managing JSAs/job risk assessments

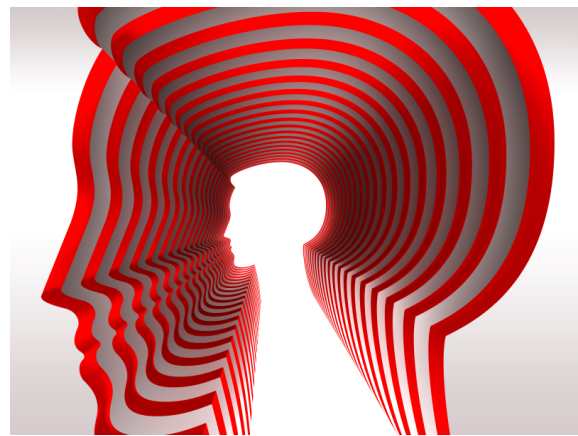
In observing cases relating to legislative safety breaches around the various jurisdictions of Australia (an example from NSW [here](#)), QRMC has noted a recurring pattern concerning job safety analyses or risk assessments. Frequently the incident which has led to prosecution might have been prevented had the risk assessment component been either properly completed and/or properly implemented.

To be successful in preventing incidents and protecting workers, JSAs/risk assessments need to fulfil three criteria. They must be:

1. Specific to the task and thorough, and
2. Understood by the end users, and
3. Properly implemented, and
4. Regularly updated.

To be specific and thorough, a JSA should not be a generic, formulaic document simply purchased or directly adopted from another job. Rather a risk assessment process should

be undertaken for the actual job (and plant, if relevant) involved in order to be sure that the applicable hazards are identified. This assessment process should include consulting the workers undertaking the job.



To be properly implemented, workers need to be trained in:

- the risk assessment process (to promote hazard identification skills), and
- the job or task (this includes developing processes to ensure that new or contract workers are trained too), and
- the developed JSA/job risk assessment itself.

There also needs to be supervision and checks to ensure that the work is being conducted in accordance with the requirements of the JSA, and that it is effective.

To be regularly updated, there should be a mechanism for workers to raise concerns when situations or work conditions change, as these may prompt new hazards or result in changes to the level of the assessed workplace risks.

Also refer to our article from the May edition of *Insight* "[Proper use of Job Safety Analysis](#)".

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

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