

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:

- Sedentary Work Risks
- Achieving Business Resilience
- SNG Report

Sedentary Work Risks

Workplace health and safety risks such as manual handling and injuries from interactions with plant equipment and vehicles have been recognised since the beginnings of the workplace safety movement in Victorian times, and office-based risks such as repetitive strain or occupational overuse injuries have been widely recognised in more recent times.

New categories of work-related health risks are rarely added to the compendium, however recent research is indicating a whole new area of risk of which workers and safety professionals alike need to be aware – that of sedentary work.

Sedentary work (specifically meaning too much time spent sitting, versus just generalised inactivity) is increasingly common in the modern workplace. The growth of both the computing and service industries has meant that an increasingly large proportion of the population spend the working day seated at a desk.

For some time now the medical professional has been researching the health effects of this growth in sedentary behaviour (e.g. [here](#)), but only in recent years has the weight of evidence become sufficient to raise significant public health concern; especially since taking regular exercise before or after work has been found not to mitigate the effects of sitting too much (e.g. [here](#)).



The evidence is now convincing enough for doctors to question whether employers are providing a safe system of work in accordance with their legislative obligations, if they allow their employees to sit for extended periods of time (refer to a relevant report [here](#)).

The message is for employers to “provide systems of work in which workers sit less, move more, and move more often”.

There is a range of possible actions which employers can take to reduce the risk to their sedentary workers. These include:

- Instituting standing or walking meetings
- Ensuring workers take regular breaks that involve activity, such as walking
- Redesigning tasks so that regular changes to posture are required
- Encourage regular postural changes, e.g. always standing when taking a phone call, alarms or software that interrupt the user to encourage a moving break
- Encourage drinking lots of water; the water helps to energize the muscles and prevent fatigue and actively requires a change in posture to visit the kitchen and the bathroom
- Providing adjustable standing desks
- Providing exercise breaks within the work day, e.g. a yoga class
- Redesign the workplace so that layout encourages movement.

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

Achieving Business Resilience

In the context of the pace of change in the modern business world (especially related to technological developments, cyber risks and instant communications), a reactive approach to business continuity management is no longer an option.

The range of unpredictable potential business interruptions is simply too large and too far-reaching not to take a proactive and preventative approach.

An IT-based disaster recovery approach, essentially reactive in nature, is no longer sufficient to mitigate the many business risks now facing most organisations. For this reason, practitioners increasingly have been turning to the concept of business resilience.

Broadly speaking, the concept of business resilience refers to the idea of building into the organisation, and specifically its personnel, the capacity and skills to act in times of stress with initiative and good judgement, potentially without access to the usual IT support and related tools, to achieve the best possible business outcome.



Business resilience can be broken down into three interacting elements within the organisation; strategic resilience, operational resilience and process resilience.

Strategic resilience deals with broader areas of both threat and opportunity to the business, such as fluctuations in market share, impacts from regulatory changes etc. Operational resilience refers to the ability to respond to every-day business threats, such as cyber risks, utility failures, loss of plant and equipment etc.



Process resilience refers to the underlying systems upon which the organisation relies to function, such as IT and other technological systems, business processes and management systems.

With strengths and capacity in all three areas, an organisation is well placed to respond proactively to potential business interruptions.

Critical to the development of business resilience are two fundamental areas: accurate assessment of critical functions, and effective development and empowerment of the staff.

Without properly identifying, analysing and mitigating the vulnerabilities of critical business functions, these high risk functions may not be readily recognised in a time of crisis and therefore not appropriately prioritised. A thorough, and regularly reviewed Business Impact Analysis is required to achieve this information.

Without people who understand the way the business works and (in the context of a knowledge of the key principles of risk management and business continuity management) the business objectives and critical business functions, there will be no-one to undertake critical responses in a timely fashion when crisis strikes. Planned implementation of the business continuity program, good quality and broad-based training with refreshers, and regular testing exercises are the keys to empowering the staff. Regular testing and thorough debriefing will also help to ensure that the business continuity program (and the staff) continually improves.

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

SNG Report

The third quarter Safety Networking Group meeting was held on 21 August, hosted by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.



Brad Bick, the Director Work and Electrical Safety Policy sharing details of Queensland's Health & Safety performance and insights into the *Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015* that is currently tabled to go before Parliament in September. The Amendment Bill looks to adjust the entry permit provisions, remove the current 24 hour notice required for HSRs to request the assistance and access to the workplace and reinstate the power for a trained HSR to direct workers to cease work if they have a reasonable concern that the work would expose the worker to a serious and immediate or imminent risk to their health and safety. The Bill also amends the current WHS incident notification provisions to include an additional requirement to notify the Regulator when a worker is absent for more than four days due to a workplace injury (reinstating the notification requirement from the repealed *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*).

Rhett Moxham, the Manager Workers Compensation Policy provided an update in relation to the changes to the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015*. Rhett indicated that the Bill is part of the Government's commitment to remove the 5% threshold while ensuring the rights of injured workers to effective rehabilitation. The Bill will amend the process for common law claims, but will retain the simplified administrative process.



Sharon Vandermaat presented details of the approach taken to implement PERforM within the City of Gold Coast's City Maintenance Branch. PERforM is based on the core principle that the worker is the expert in performing their work tasks and it provides a framework to help employers engage with workers to identify, assess and control manual task risks. After an initial survey identified a number of areas to be targeted for improvement, and following the training of the nominated 'PERforM Facilitators' WHSQ's PERforM Risk Assessment Tool was applied to a range of high risk manual tasks. Following the assessment a series of engineering, design and procurement controls were implemented to mitigate the impacts of the manual tasks. Sharon detailed that the program led to impressive reductions in both cost and the number of 'body stressing', strains, soft-tissue and occupational overuse claims and costs within City Maintenance Branch. The key to the success, from Sharon's perspective was empowering the workers and the follow through by Management.

Lindsay Shorley seconded these 'keys to success' in his presentation, exploring the challenges of implementing participative ergonomics with large and diverse organisations drawing on his experience within QR's Infrastructure Services. Lindsay indicated that the process and risk assessment tools needed to be embedded within the Safety Management systems. The other key learning from Lindsay's experience was that while targeting excessive exertion, long-duration or awkward postures, and assessing the specific

movement patterns there was also a need to consider cumulative tissue damage occurring over time. Large geographically spread organisations with diverse operations present challenges in relation to the visibility and sharing of assessment and risk controls. Lindsay explored how on-line assessment tools (such as ErgoAnalyst) facilitate enhanced visibility and reporting functionality across larger organisations, enabling assessments and control strategies to be circulated efficiently with the benefits shared and lessons applied quickly.

The next SNG meeting is earmarked for late November 2015.

ABOUT THE SNG:

In 2005 QRMC founded the Safety Networking Group for senior safety professionals working in the greater Brisbane metropolitan area. QRMC continues to coordinate and arrange for speakers to present at quarterly meetings and discuss information on contemporary WHS issues. Group members also share information from their workplaces or industries, which other members frequently find interesting and useful.

More information on the Safety Networking Group can be found on our website. Senior safety professionals contemplating attending meetings in Brisbane can contact QRMC to express an interest.

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