

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

## Safety Management Systems – Has anything really changed?

In 2014, QRMC's Managing Consultant David Muchow presented at an AIHS Conference asking the question of whether "Your Safety Management System (SMS) was suffering from the obesity epidemic"?

A lot has changed since then, but a number of things certainly have not.

Since then we have seen the emergence of the concept of 'de-cluttering' ... and yet there are still management systems that are verbose in their language, use layers upon layer of documents and display an absence of consideration for the end-user.

Every SMS is developed to ensure that the systems and processes meet the legislative, industry 'best-practice' standards and organisational requirements. But there is a common failure in that the often over-engineered Management System documentation does not position the organisation (i.e. the workforce) to best achieve compliance with these requirements.

There is a need to 'package' all SMSs to position them for optimal operational uptake.

With the introduction of ISO 45001 there is an ideal opportunity to review, rationalise, overhaul and 're-package' your Safety Management System. ISO 45001 and its discussion around 'documented information' can be used as a catalyst.

The other, often overlooked serious consequence of failing to optimise the SMS relates to compliance with Section 39 of the **WHS Regulation** - *The person must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the information, training and instruction is provided in a way that is readily understandable by any person to whom it is provided.* This is obviously asking for management system focussed on the 'end-user'.

The term 'user-friendly' is often thrown into the mix – but are our management systems really 'easy to understand', and if we were to consider the synonyms for 'user-friendly', are our management



systems foolproof, easy to operate and use, practical, simple, straight forward, and uncomplicated? More to the point, would our workforce think they were?

Over the coming months QRMC will explore some of the common issues that contribute to the problem, offering thoughts and strategies that could be employed to position a Management System for easier application, greater efficiency and effectiveness and of course, improved levels of compliance.

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

## Safety in Design

Safety Risk Management has, at its core, a philosophy of eliminating risks to health and safety where reasonably practicable. This is supported and enshrined in Australian Work Health and Safety laws. Whilst there are many ways to achieve this, elimination of safety risks at the design stage can often be easier and more cost-effective, rather than retro-fitting a solution that workers then need to manage on an ongoing basis.

The process of identifying hazards and assessing risks at the design stage has come to be known as Safety in Design and is intended to consider the risks to health and safety throughout the lifecycle of a structure or item of plant - from concept, to design,

to construction, to use and maintenance, and through to its final disposal. According to Safe Work Australia, unsafe design or design-related factors contributed to one-third of fatalities in Australian workplaces.



Safety in Design requires designers to consider many aspects to their design which can impact a person's health and safety:

- The intended purpose of the structure or plant
- How it is going to be constructed and the materials to be used
- Applicable Building Codes and Standards
- How builders, operators and maintainers interact with the structure and the type, location and functionality of its interface
- Access points and guarding of moving parts

The way organisations typically tackle Safety in Design is through the use of consultative forums such as Safety in Design Workshops. Ideally the organisation has an integrated Safety in Design process that incorporates risk management principles, and these workshops are the responsibility of the Engineering or Infrastructure Team. Critical to

the success of the workshop is the participation of individuals with a core knowledge and insight as to how the structure or piece of plant will be designed, constructed, maintained and disposed of. Attendance therefore by a cross-section of designers, construction personnel, engineers, operators, maintenance workers and WHS representatives is essential.

The Safety in Design workshop is geared to promote the discussion of potential risks over the lifecycle of the structure or plant and through the use of a systematic hazard identification process with the aim to eliminate and design out the risks where reasonably practicable. Where this is not possible, the workshop participants follow the hierarchy of controls to determine what measures can be implemented to minimise the risks to worker health and safety. Based on the workshop's outcomes, a Risk Register is then developed that acts not only as a record of the Safety in Design Workshop and all of the risks that were considered, but also as a living document that details the additional risk treatments planned for implementation. This information needs to be communicated to the necessary recipients (i.e. the construction team, the operators, the maintenance team) for each stage of the structure's lifecycle.

In Queensland, the *Safe Designs of Structures Code of Practice* (2021) has just been updated by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and should be consulted for further information on the duties of designers and requirements for the safe design of structures.

QRMC has considerable experience in applying Safety in Design processes across construction projects through to plant re-design and procurement, [contact us](#) for assistance with any of your Safety in Design challenges.