



New Zealand Institute of Safety Management

UCS HEALTH &
NSR SAFETY REPS

Guidebook

setting you up for
success in your new role

July 2023

Contents

Welcome 3

HSR Knowledge Wheel 4

Things you need to know 5

Hazard and risk management 5

Monitoring, evaluating and validating controls 5

Understanding the conflict between
work as done versus work as imagined 8

Advocacy and dispute resolution 9

Engagement, participation and communication 10

Things you need to be aware of 12

Causes of accidents and ill-health 12

Risks 13

Knowledge about hazards in your workplace 14

Investigation and understanding the sequence of events 14

Health protection and promotion 14

Controls 15

Preparing for emergencies 15

Health and safety management 16

Law and regulation 16

Injury management and rehabilitation 17

Channels of communication 17

Managing vulnerable workers 18

Change management 18

Ethics 18

Managing yourself 19

Skills you can develop 20

Who you are 20

How you undertake the role 20

How you develop 21

Where to find more information 22



Explore the Guidebook

Navigating your way around the HSR Guidebook is easy.

- Use the Contents list opposite, or
- Use the section tabs on right hand side to take you to the start of the different sections.

If you need to get back to the Contents list, simply click the footprint tab.

Ina kite koe tētahi mea hē, hakatikangia. Ina kore, ka kite koe ki taua hē.
If you see a problem, fix it. If you fail to do so, you become part of that problem.

Dame Rangimārie Naida Glavish DNZM

Welcome

So, you've been made a health and safety representative (HSR). It's an important role. As an HSR, you can help save someone in your workplace from serious injury, ill-health, or worse. It's a job worth doing but how do you set yourself up for success and ensure you do it well?

You will already have a good knowledge of your workplace through doing your everyday job and this is the most important thing. You may need to learn a bit more but you don't need to know everything to get started. This guidebook introduces you to the health and safety concepts you're likely to come across in your role as an HSR.

This guide is in three parts:

- 1. Knowledge** - things you need to know to be a great HSR;
- 2. Awareness** - things that you need to be aware of; and
- 3. Skills** - the skills you can develop while in your HSR role.

Once you're a confident HSR, you will set yourself up for a great future in your current workplace and in your career going forward – and you might just save a few lives along the way!

To be a great HSR you need to have the courage to **speak up. It's easy to say, but not always easy to do. Sometimes you need to stand up to different power structures in your organisation, and other times you must challenge the accepted way of doing things.**

Building trust is necessary to ensure your co-workers know you are someone they can depend on, and it will help you get to the truth of matters.

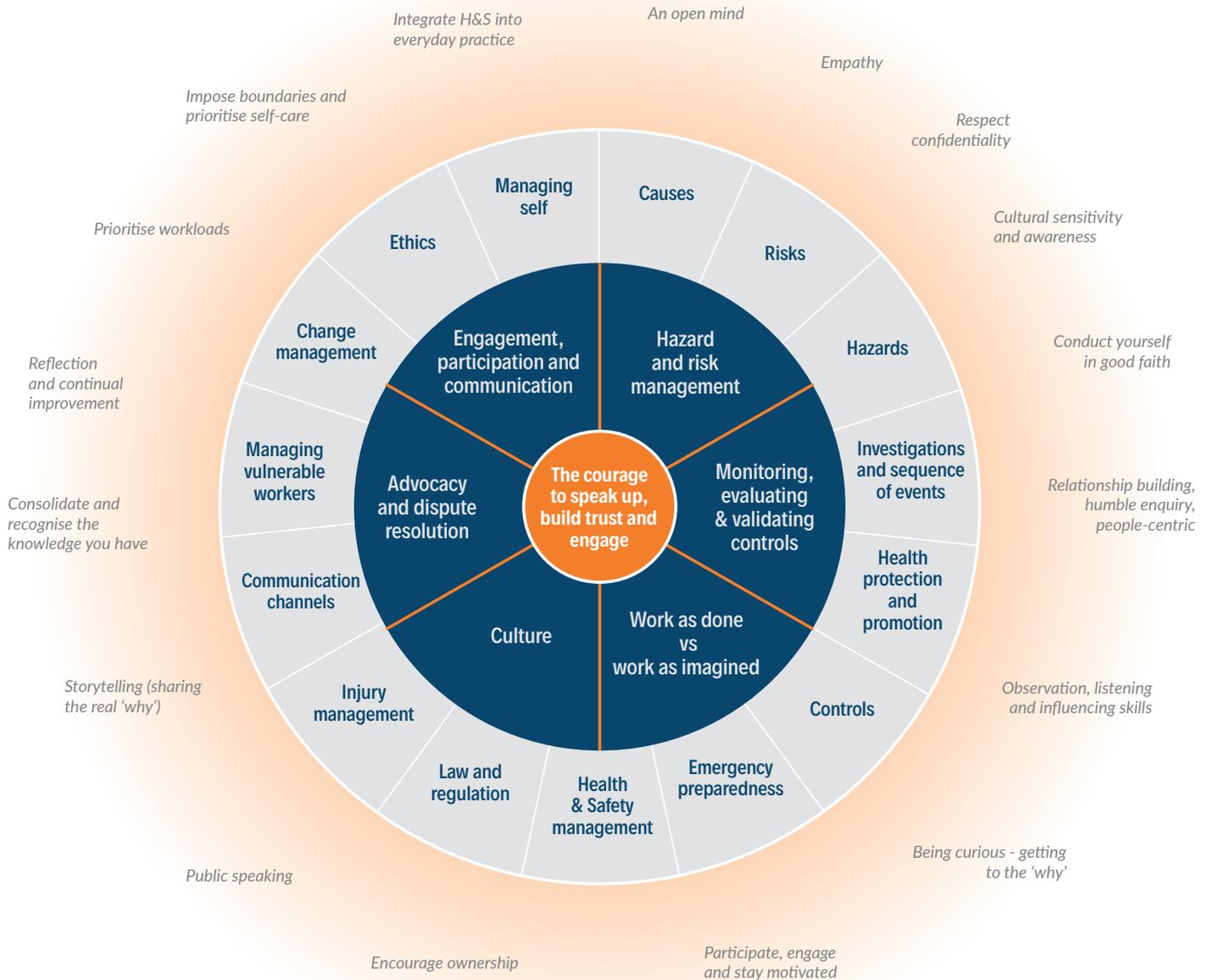
Engaging well with others means you can positively influence outcomes at work. This makes your role as an HSR much easier to do.

As well as these attributes, you will need to build your knowledge in other areas. On the next page you'll find the HSR Knowledge Wheel, which lays out all the knowledge, skills and attributes you can develop throughout your role as an HSR.

This guidebook breaks the information down further and provides a brief explanation of the terms we have used. It will give you awareness in these subjects, but to develop your skills further in the "things you need to know", we recommend you undertake training.

If you want to be able to use the full functions and powers available to HSRs under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA), such as Provisional Improvement Notices (PINs) or cease unsafe work, you must complete the NZQA unit standard 29315. However, an HSR who has not attended this initial training can still carry out HSR functions. The HSWA requires PCBUs to allow each HSR up to two days' paid leave a year to attend health and safety training. Once you have completed the initial unit standard, we recommend you look to undertake training in the subjects listed in the critical knowledge circle.

HSR Knowledge Wheel



Core attribute - this is central to who you are and how you conduct yourself.

Critical knowledge - the knowledge you need to have and be able to apply to routine, well-known situations.

Awareness - the content you need to understand the meaning of and how it might apply to your workplace.

Essential skills - these are a range of skills that, once developed, enable you to be an effective HSR.



Things you need to know

Hazard and risk management

Difference between hazard and risk

A hazard is anything that can cause harm to anyone in your workplace.

A risk is the chance of that harm happening to you or your fellow workers or the public.

For instance, think about an LPG gas bottle. It has a number of hazards associated with it. For example it's heavy, it contains a compressed gas, and the gas is flammable. In trying to determine what the risks are, we need to think about when and where somebody might be exposed to each of these hazards.

Having thought about this, we then need to consider how to control each of those risks to ensure that nobody is hurt. This is called risk management.

Think of an example in your workplace. Even if there has never been a problem before, what's something that could be an important hazard? Now what's the risk? What are the chances that the hazard might hurt someone?

Prioritisation of critical risks

While anyone getting hurt is not OK, we should be mostly concerned about those situations with the potential to do the greatest harm. These are known as critical risks.

For instance, we should worry more about the forklift hitting a person with the potential for death or serious injury than the driver trapping their finger in the seatbelt.

Together with your workers, try writing down a few risks you know about in your workplace, and then rate them with the critical risks at the top (those that could lead to a serious injury or death) with the less important risks at the bottom (those that might be a nuisance but aren't going to kill anyone). This is a simple way to prioritise critical risks.

Monitoring, evaluating and validating controls

Every organisation should have a hazard register, some people call this a risk register. This is a list of all the hazards that are in your workplace and the way your organisation plans to get rid of them. Or, if some hazards simply can't be eliminated, the hazard register will set out ways to reduce the risk of injury or ill health to people in the workplace brought about by that hazard. This is called a control.

The hazard register should be updated often, and everyone in the organisation should be focussed on how to get rid of, or reduce the possibility of harm from the hazards. As an HSR, you will play an important part in this process.

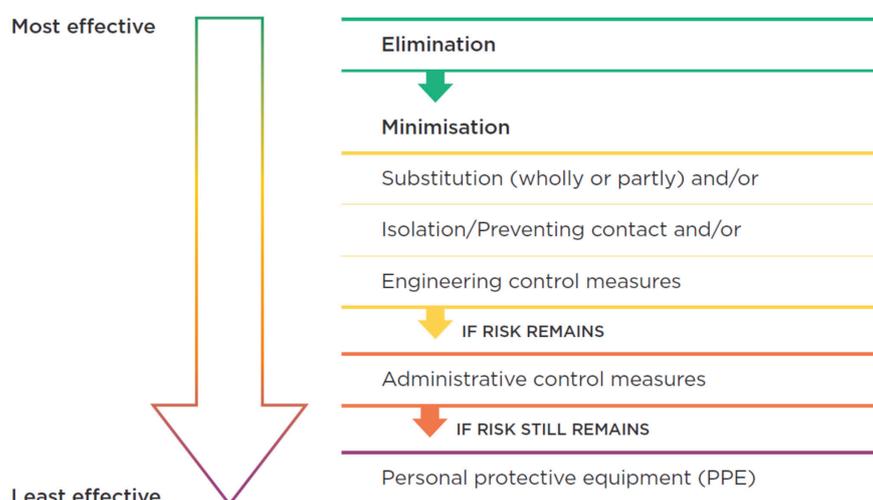
Having identified the hazards and the means of controlling them, we then need to implement those controls, ensuring they are in place and are effective. We do this by checking periodically that the controls are being followed and that the hazard and risks have been managed.



All organisations should use a technique called the 'Hierarchy of Controls' for dealing with hazards. The Hierarchy of Controls has been proven over the past 100 years as being the most effective way to deal with hazards.

There are many versions of the Hierarchy of Controls; below is the diagram provided by WorkSafe New Zealand.

Hierarchy of Controls ¹



It is best to eliminate any hazard you have in the workplace. If the hazard no longer exists, there is no risk: it cannot hurt anyone.

For example, instead of using a solvent based paint, you use a water based one. This removes the hazard of a flammable and potentially toxic product.

If (and only if) there is no possibility of eliminating a hazard, then you need to isolate it from people (or isolate people from the hazard). You can do this with guards or simply distance, ie. keep it away from people (or people away from the hazard). The hazard will still exist, and may under some conditions hurt people, but if the isolation (separation) is effective, the risk from that hazard should be very low.

If you can't eliminate the hazard, or isolate it from people, then there is high risk. The organisation must try to minimise the risk by using personal protective equipment (like safety glasses etc.) or other measures such as limiting exposure time through work rosters, imposing rules of behaviour etc. But in doing this, the organisation is asking their people to work right beside the hazard or, in some cases, inside the hazard (eg. dangerous fumes etc). The risk to people is high!

Alongside the controls of elimination and isolation, the [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#) (HSWA) asks us to consider substitution and engineering controls. Substitution means you attempt to find a safer alternative to the source of the hazard. For example, rather than using a ladder to reach something at height, you might use a scissor lift. Engineering control measures include physical ways to assist with making the job safer. This could be guards on machinery or perhaps a trolley or hoist to move a heavy load.

Usually, we find that control measures come from different categories within the hierarchy of controls, for example guarding and a safe system of work and training in how to clear blockages. No matter what though, if minimisation is used to control the risk from the hazard then you will need to have a system to monitor the control to ensure it is still working/doing the job intended.

¹ Diagram taken from WorkSafe New Zealand's [Hazardous Substances Risk Management Quick Guide](#)



As an HSR, you should think about each hazard on the hazard register and how it is being controlled.

The more you can influence your organisation to eliminate the hazard, or at least isolate it, the better off your workplace will be. If everyone decides that all the organisation can do is minimise it, through personal protective equipment or rules, warning signs, work practices etc., then the risk is high and your input into workplace safety will be critical. It's an important job being an HSR!

The hazard register should be talked about often and updated whenever anyone finds a significant new hazard.

Most organisations will also have maintenance registers. These record when equipment and vehicles etc. are due for routine maintenance. You should have access to these, and you can check that everything on site is up to date and working as it should.

Some worksites will also have monitors to detect gases, noise or other things in your environment that could harm people. You may need to learn about these things and check that your workplace is a healthy place to work in.

Accidents and incidents

What's the difference?

An **accident** is when someone gets hurt.

An **incident** is when the same thing happens but no-one is injured.

Organisations keep an **accident and incident register** to record these events and learn from them.

For example, if a forklift comes out the warehouse door and hits someone (an accident), then we need to take action to ensure this doesn't happen again. But if you see the forklift narrowly missing someone as it's coming out the door, this should also be recorded (as an incident). This is also often called a 'near miss', and by looking carefully at the situation we can learn from it and act to ensure that the same event doesn't turn into an injury.

Accident and incident investigation

If a serious incident does occur, it is likely that the organisation will conduct an investigation. There are many different techniques for accident and incident investigation, however, there are two elements of investigation you should avoid:

-  Firstly, pointing at a person who was nearest to the accident (often the victims themselves) and saying, "they did something stupid" is completely unhelpful and little will be learned from this approach.
-  Secondly, when you try to ensure the same thing doesn't happen again, remember your Hierarchy of Controls and avoid selecting a low-level control (minimisation). For instance, putting up a sign saying "**Beware of Forklift**" is unlikely to ensure the accident never happens again.

Your job will be to represent your fellow workers and ensure their voice is fully heard in the investigation. You have a right as an HSR to be involved in any workplace investigation. A good investigation will look at the hazard involved and why it resulted in the accident, the exact nature of how the person was injured, and what steps were taken after the accident. When this is done well, without trying to find someone to blame, then the steps the organisation needs to take to prevent it happening again will become clear to everyone.

Every investigation must carefully document the events that led up to the accident. It's important that this is done in good faith being non-judgemental and fair to everyone involved. This involves not jumping to conclusions too soon.



There is a common mistake people make called **What You Look for is What You Find**. This means that people often decide that they know why the accident happened too early, ie. they make an instant judgement on what happened and simply explain the accident by pointing out that one thing. If you do that, you may miss the opportunity to find an important factor that you could change to ensure the accident doesn't happen again.

Duty Holder Reviews

If there is an accident at your workplace which is notifiable to WorkSafe, they may ask your organisation to carry out a Duty Holder Review. This is a formal investigation which gets reported back to WorkSafe. As an HSR you are required to participate in any Duty Holder Review undertaken in your workplace and to sign off the report that goes to WorkSafe. A specialist team in your organisation will investigate what happened. As a person with a good knowledge of the worksite, you will have the opportunity to look at the sequence of events from the worker point of view and describe what happened.

There is an explanation of this process on the WorkSafe website:

www.worksafe.govt.nz/the-toolshed/tools/duty-holder-review

Understanding the conflict between work as done versus work as imagined

You can easily recognise 'work as done versus work as imagined'. It happens often.

We can make safety rules which sound sensible and we write these down, but if we go into the workplace we may see the work is being done completely differently to how we imagined.

There may be many reasons why written processes aren't followed. It could be because the solution is slow or impractical, or inadequate training has been provided, or we didn't explain why the process should be followed in the first place.

The rules are what we (and management) like to think is happening (work as imagined), but when we look at the way people are really working (work as done) – it's often completely different, and sometimes very dangerous.

As an HSR, you will be doing a great job if you recognise and speak up about the difference between 'work as done' and 'work as imagined'. Workers who are doing the actual work are often best placed to explain the real hazards and risks that confront them. These conversations between you and the workers form the basis of awareness and support your ability to represent and influence.

Culture

Nationally, we have become a multi-cultural society with different languages and ways of doing things. It's important that we recognise our differences and develop ways to keep us all safe, regardless of our background. If some of your fellow workers are only just learning English, they cannot be expected to immediately understand signs, standard operating procedures, rules etc.

Some cultures may have different approaches to speaking up and dealing with authority than we are used to in New Zealand. They may also not be aware of the standards we expect here in New Zealand compared to other countries they have come from. You will be an important part of making sure that everyone understands the hazards and risks in the workplace and helping to keep everyone safe and healthy.



In New Zealand, we have a framework that has been developed which is a Māori centered approach to managing health and safety. It is effective, culturally responsive, and capable of reducing and preventing the workplace injuries and fatalities that Māori experience. It is called Haumarū Tāngata.

If you would like to learn more about this framework and how you could apply it in your own organisation, refer to the Te Rōpu Marutau o Aotearoa website at www.trma.co.nz or contact admin@trma.co.nz

Safety culture

Just as people have different personalities and ways of behaving, organisations also develop their own ways of doing things. This is often called safety culture. Safety culture is best explained by the term, “...the way we do things around here...”

Some companies get into the habit of always taking risks, others have everyone always taking a deep breath before they do anything and working out how to do the job safely. Often this is driven from the top. If management don't get rid of the obvious hazards and think that taking risks is simply part of the job, then the whole organisation ends up working that way. On the other hand, a safe organisation is one that has a safety culture where management and staff all say, “We get rid of as many hazards as we can and actively manage the risks that come from working with any remaining hazards”. Again, the HSR is a very important part of developing a great safety culture.

Safety is everyone's responsibility. Management should listen to you when you can see that things need to change; and at the same time, all people working on site have a duty to do their best to work safely, under HSWA. Your job will be to remind everyone that it is a team effort, and everyone must work together to achieve a safer workplace and to act as a pathway for helping explain why we need to do things in certain ways and raising issues and concerns.

Advocacy and dispute resolution

As an HSR you may be asked to advocate for your colleagues in Health and Safety matters or help to resolve disputes or conflicts. An advocate is someone who represents, supports, or works on behalf of others to defend their rights or interests. There are two main types of representation; collective and individual.

In collective representation you work with your colleagues to get their feedback through different methods like meetings or by conducting surveys (including anonymous surveys) to find a common view of the issue and find agreement on the preferred solution.

You may not always be able to find a single solution so be prepared to discuss a range of options with your managers. If you are asked to represent an individual, for example when a worker asks you to speak for them at an investigation, it is important to remember that you're there to represent their interests. Make sure you understand what your colleague needs your support with and make a plan with them as to how you will approach the situation in a way that gets their views across clearly. Sometimes you will need to ask for an adjournment if it is clear a resolution can't be reached at the time and then come back to the discussion later. This means taking a break and coming back to it at a later date.

In all cases, think about the best way to communicate the information that you need to get across. Start by explaining the background to the issue, then its impact on the person you are representing. Where possible, it's always a good idea to come with proposed solutions.

Be open to all points of view, ask lots of questions and take good notes including clear action points. **Remember you need to include the worker you are advocating for in any decisions about the solution before it is agreed to.**



Try to resolve disputes early before they escalate but don't be afraid to involve senior managers if required. Your union can provide advice and assistance and sometimes WorkSafe can help too.

It's important to manage potential conflicts of interest where your own wants and needs may conflict with those of the workers you represent. Seek advice on how to handle these but the best policy is usually to disclose the conflict to your colleagues, and probably the Person or Business Conducting the Undertaking (PCBU²). Together you can work out the best way to handle the situation, it may be that another colleague can assist you to represent the workers.

As an HSR, so long as you are acting in good faith and focused on dealing with matters related to health and safety, you are protected under the HSWA from disciplinary or other action.

Engagement, participation and communication

The more you talk about how to prevent people from being harmed in your workplace, the better everyone on site will be.

All workplaces are busy but it is important that you encourage everyone to discuss these things. As an HSR, you should keep an eye on the **hazard register** and on the **accident and incident register**. Talk about things that keep happening but should not, and about some of the higher risks which may not have hurt anyone yet, but can accumulate to cause a serious injury or ill-health or even a fatality.

Ensuring you have a good relationship with management makes it easier to raise concerns as they arise, such as issues from the hazard register. This means keeping them informed about what you are finding and seeing in the workplace that they need to be aware of. You will also need a good relationship with your co-workers so that you can alert them to new hazards and risks and how they can be managed. However, as an HSR you should never compromise your advocacy for workers in the interest of maintaining a good relationship with management, as this is one of the core attributes of your role.

You have been asked to become an HSR because you know what is going on in your workplace and you likely have the respect of your co-workers and management. Take this opportunity to make your worksite a better place.

Worker engagement and participation and representation

Under HSWA, all PCBUs have twin duties to:

1. ensure effective worker participation in health and safety; and
2. engage with workers on health and safety issues.

It is important that as many people as possible have a say in your organisation's safety and, as an HSR, you will have a large role to play in making this happen.

Organisations need to have systems in place to ensure that when they are thinking about making a change that may affect the health or safety of workers they seek workers' input and feedback into that process - this is called **engagement** under HSWA. As an HSR this engagement must include a chance for you to give feedback.

Organisations also need to provide opportunities for workers to raise issues and be included in the decision making around health and safety issues - this is called **participation** under HSWA. A common way to do this is by agreeing a Worker Participation Agreement (usually agreed between the PCBU, HSRs and unions if there are any onsite) that sets out the ground rules for participation and engagement.

² A PCBU is a broad concept used throughout HSWA to describe all types of modern working arrangements which we commonly refer to as business.



There are also rules around your role and rights as an HSR or member of a health and safety committee - this is called **representation** under HSWA. You will have learned about this in your initial training and the Government Health and Safety Lead has produced a useful guide to the HSR role:

www.healthandsafety.govt.nz/a-z-topics/reports/booklets-and-brochures/health-and-safety-representative-role-clarity-resource-for-h-and-s-representative

You must be confident that your fellow workers are able to be heard if they have a concern about any hazard on site. Some of the ways this can happen are:

- Enlisting **your help** to raise issues with management.
- A robust **incident reporting** procedure.
- A **safety committee** that meets regularly and considers health safety issues. For more information on health and safety committees check out the WorkSafe website: www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/health-and-safety-committees
- Your **union** will usually have a say in how safety is managed in the workplace.
- A '**stop rule**' where any worker(s) can stop what they're doing if they're not completely sure that it's safe.

Your task will be to ensure that everyone has a chance to have a say about health and safety.

Communication and conflict management

As you will know, not everyone always agrees on the best way to keep your workplace safe from injuries and ill health.

It is important that you try to understand everyone's point of view and work towards a shared understanding of what is needed. This should be based on proven ways of managing safety while taking everyone's opinions and attitudes into account. This is never easy but, as an HSR, you need to have the respect of a broad range of people across the worksite. It may be that you need to undertake some training in facilitation skills. Facilitation skills teach you that it's not necessarily about being an outspoken leader, it's about finding ways of letting everyone have their say and encouraging participation in reaching a common goal.

In very tricky situations, it may be that you must reach out to experts to assist in change management or conflict resolution, such as unions. People in the organisation (including yourself) may need some extra training to achieve a cooperative and safe place to work.

You will also have to influence your managers occasionally, and this can sometimes be challenging. But if you can set out the truth of the health and safety situation, and persevere with an open approach, you can find a way for your manager to hear you. No manager or board member sets out to deliberately allow their staff to be hurt in the workplace, but sometimes they need to be persuaded to be open to different views. Often, they will listen to the HSR because you're the person who knows what's going on!

Things you need to be aware of

Causes of accidents and ill-health

Work is mostly about the use of energy. Energy produces forces which, will move things and people and if the force is greater than a body can withstand, it will cause an injury or ill-health to that person.

The forces produced using energy in the workplace include:

- mechanical force (eg. forklifts, quad bikes, machines of all sorts);
- gravity (eg. slips, trips, and falls);
- chemical (eg. burns, poisons, skin conditions);
- electrical (eg. electrocution, burns);
- psychosocial (eg. bullying, harassment);
- heat (eg. burns, dehydration);
- and many others.

These are all hazards that need to be eliminated or controlled (see the Hierarchy of Controls).

Unhealthy workplace conditions

This may involve the way we work.

- Are we sitting or standing for long periods?
- Is the lighting, heating, ventilation, office furniture etc. right for the job?

It also includes environmental factors like heat, air quality, and issues such as the effect of noise on hearing loss, chemical exposure on skin, fume and air contaminant exposure on lung function and many other harmful conditions.

As an HSR, you will be very familiar with the worksite and are well-placed to identify these problems every day and have some say in how they are dealt with.

What healthy work looks like

A healthy workplace is one in which workers and managers work together to improve the work environment to protect and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all people within it.

A healthy workplace looks at the:

- **physical** work environment; and
- **psychosocial** work environment, which includes things such as the organisation of work and workplace culture.

In terms of your work environment, there are specific entitlements that workers have. The following link details the workplace and facility requirements that all workers are entitled to expect from their employer. Ultimately the responsibility for providing a healthy workplace rests with the PCBU.

www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/businesses/general-requirements-for-workplaces/workplace-and-facilities-requirements



Fatigue and stress

Fatigue and stress can be brought about by many things:

- high workload and poor rosters;
- call outs and extended overtime;
- possible redundancy;
- workplace bullying and harassment;
- conflicts with other workers, bosses, patients, clients or members of the public;
- blurred boundaries between work and non-work hours, the impact of work on life and life on work etc.

Fatigue and stress are not injuries like cuts and burns but they can contribute to deteriorating mental health conditions and accidents resulting in physical injuries.

Mental health

Mental health is an important part of the working environment and organisations have a responsibility under HSWA to ensure they are providing a workplace which looks after the mental health of staff.

The mental health of staff can be affected by psychosocial factors such as:

- stress;
- hostility;
- management processes;
- job design;
- lack of support network;
- company culture.

These can lead to depression, feelings of hopelessness, and can also affect our physical health.

Our environment

Sometimes you may be asked for your input into environmental matters. For example, when what we do as part of our normal work may damage the environment. This could be our air extraction system, wash-down water and where it ends up, and what we do with waste products.

As an HSR, you may also be asked to investigate this on behalf of your fellow workers. It is important to remember that changes or decisions made on environmental matters might have an impact on the health and safety of others, and it's important to seek specialist advice where needed.

Risks

Your organisation may have its own method of assessing risks in the workplace and you may be required to contribute to working out how best to address various risks. Remember that the risk is only there because the hazard has not been adequately dealt with. The best way to reduce risk is to identify the various hazards and use the Hierarchy of Controls to ensure each hazard cannot harm your fellow workers.



Knowledge about hazards in your workplace

You may need to learn more about each hazard in your hazard register so that you can help reduce the risk it presents. For instance, if you work in a noisy workplace you may need to know more about how noise can cause people to go deaf (occupational hearing loss).

For example:

1. How noise causes damage and how it can be controlled

What is noise? What can high noise do to us? How can we control it using the hierarchy of controls?

2. Definitions, and methods of measurement

What is too loud? How do we measure it? What equipment do we use to measure it and how can we be sure the results are accurate?

3. Damage, injury, and health outcomes

How can noise damage our bodies? What will be the likely short-term and long-term results of exposure?

4. Where can we find information on what to do about noise?

Worksafe has some excellent information on noise and what to do about it:

www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/noise

Investigation and understanding the sequence of events

When an accident or incident happens you may be asked to take part in an investigation, including by representing workers involved in the accident or incident.

For any accident or incident you, and the other people investigating what happened, will have to look at all the essential factors that led up to the exchange of energy (force) that caused the injury or ill-health. This is usually a detailed look at all the things in the workplace that were necessary for the injury to happen. You will also look at what happened after the injury. Did the organisation have adequate first-aid equipment, evacuation procedures etc?

As an HSR, you will have a good understanding of the way your workplace works and your input to this investigation will be very helpful to preventing something similar happening again.

A WorkSafe investigation is a purposeful, structured process of inquiry that helps WorkSafe establish facts or find something out, and helps them to decide what action to take (if any). WorkSafe views HSRs as an important and valuable participant in any investigation and they want to create a positive relationship with you. After all, you are providing the worker voice. Something to know is that, as an HSR, you are a worker so any interview conducted by WorkSafe is voluntary and if you choose to participate in the investigation you are entitled to have someone with you when WorkSafe are interviewing you.

Health protection and promotion

As an HSR you will help to ensure your workplace has systems in place to check workers' health. Do we actively encourage health of our workers; are there healthy eating plans; do we actively support exercise plans and a healthy lifestyle etc?

The answers to these and other questions may depend on the culture of your organisation but your input to management of systems to support the general health of your co-workers will be very important to their wellbeing.



Your health and safety committee might want to consider whether your organisation could benefit from engaging one of the professions that provide specialist health services and programmes for workplaces, such as an Occupational Health Nurse, Occupational Therapist or Hygienist etc.

You can find out more about what these specialist health and safety professionals do at:

www.hasanz.org.nz/our-members

Controls

Controls are measures to prevent injury (eg. from machines and vehicles or falls from height) and are used as part of the Hierarchy of Control of hazards in your workplace. Your job is to work with your workers and the PCBU to ensure that the measures are fit for purpose, asking questions like:

- Does it really contain the hazard?
- Does it really keep people away from the hazard?
- Is it regularly checked to ensure it still works OK?
- Are people sometimes overriding the measure, in which case it is ineffective even if this doesn't happen often.
- Is it just symbolic? For example, road cones are not a physical barrier, they're just a sign that there may be danger there.

Remember the principle of 'Work as Imagined versus Work as Done'. Is the measure really controlling the hazard or are we just assuming it is?

Preparing for emergencies

As with looking at control measures and whether they are working, you will also look at things like possible emergencies (floods, fire, earthquakes etc.) and check whether your organisation is truly prepared.

- Does our workplace have an emergency plan (this is required under HSWA) and were workers engaged with on the plan?
- Are our emergency drills (eg. fire drill) good enough?
- How can we reduce the loss of life and property by reducing the impact of disasters and emergencies?
- What would be the impact of disasters and emergencies? Do we need stronger buildings, flood control, raised buildings, etc?
- Does our workplace meet current building codes or standards?

First aid and medical services

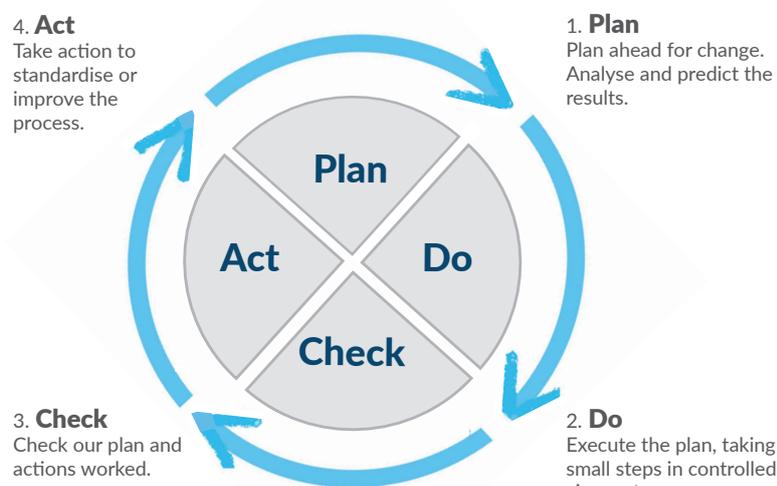
- Do we have first aid equipment to deal with a possible injury?
- Are staff trained in first aid so they can help?
- Do we need access to advanced medical services?
- Do we need to upskill our own team (eg. paramedics on remote work sites)?
- Should we select certain doctors in the area and advise them what they may have to face when injured people are brought in?
- Do we need specialist medical supplies or equipment?



Health and safety management

All companies must have a health and safety management system and as an HSR you will be an important part of this. A good health and safety management system is a tool which allows businesses to regularly review and improve their health and safety performance. This process is called continual improvement.

Here is a common way of showing how to go about continual improvement:



Decision making

All decisions on health and safety need to involve the organisation's workers. This is where you, as an HSR, will be especially valuable. It's very important that you listen to the concerns of your fellow workers and that you talk to the management about these concerns and what to do about them.

Who's who in safety management?

Depending on the size of your organisation, there may be many people involved:

- **Workers** can often instantly recognise the hazards and risks that confront them.
- **You** as an HSR (and other HSRs).
- The **health and safety committee**, where management and workers come together to discuss and agree how to improve health and safety in the organisation.
- The **safety team**, who provide specialist advice and help set up and manage the system (the hazard register, the training system, accident reporting and investigations etc).
- The **management team**, from the Chief Executive to the front line supervisors, who are responsible for managing the risks day to day as part of general business operations.
- **Unions**, who have a mandate to look after the interests of their members (including health and safety). There may be one or multiple unions on site.
- The **Board of Directors**, who are Officers of the PCBU and the people who determine the strategy and priorities for health and safety within the organisation.

Law and regulation

In New Zealand, HSWA sets out who is responsible for the safety of workers, contractors and visitors on your worksite(s). Depending on the type of work you are doing, there are some regulations that must be followed under this law. But in general, the law says that the PCBU is responsible for the safety of all people at your workplace.



The law also sets out the rules relating to your role as HSR and the PCBU's duties to foster engagement and participation.

WorkSafe is the Government department responsible for enforcing this law.

You can find out more about WorkSafe New Zealand on their website:

www.worksafe.govt.nz

Some useful WorkSafe guidance on the law is here:

www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/getting-started/introduction-hswa-special-guide

www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/businesses/worker-engagement-and-participation/good-practice-for-worker-engagement-participation-and-representation

There are also other laws or regulations, such as the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act and the Resource Management Act, which may have an impact on the way your organisation works.

Injury management and rehabilitation

When people are injured or become ill because of their work, getting them back to work is important to your organisation and to the people themselves. You may be asked to help with this process by working with the injured person, their manager, an occupational therapist or nurse, or other medical people, to get them back to work in a way that benefits everyone.

ACC provides some excellent advice on their website:

www.acc.co.nz/im-injured/financial-support/return-to-work

www.acc.co.nz/im-injured/getting-back-to-work/recovery-at-work-guide

Channels of communication

You will already know that communication is not just about talking to each other. There are many ways to get our messages to those who need to hear them. The more formal ways include signs, emails, presentations etc. but there are other less formal ways such as casual conversations in the lunchroom. Your organisation is required to provide you with support and assistance to communicate with the workers you represent.

Many organisations use **toolbox talks** to remind people about the hazards that may remain in the workplace. A 'toolbox talk' is a brief meeting of a work team at the start of each day. These are often led by the supervisor or HSR and provide the opportunity to discuss work being done on the day to be sure everyone is focused on doing the job in the safest way possible.

There can also be barriers to getting our messages across. Things like mistrust of management, or individuals who create a lot of noise around change, or language barriers, can all prevent your health and safety messages from being effective. When we want to share our messages, we need to use all the forms of communication that are available to us.

Again, your success as an HSR will depend on your ability to focus on the truth of the matter. Stick to the idea of preventing hazards from hurting or causing ill-health to your workmates, and representing workers in engaging on health and safety issues, and you will be doing a wonderful job.



Managing vulnerable workers

People are all different. You may have to step in to point out that some people cannot work safely at all times. People of different abilities (and disabilities), age, skills, cultural backgrounds etc. will all present challenges when it comes to potential injury and ill-health.

Perhaps they didn't understand the signs, rules, or training?

Perhaps they are distracted by things going on at home?

Or maybe no-one has noticed that their mental health is affecting their wellbeing?

None of these things are easy to manage but part of your role as an HSR will be to keep an eye out for vulnerable workers and help them work with management and co-workers to be confident they are not exposed to injury or ill-health (physical or mental).

Change management

Every workplace will change over time. It could be something simple like a new process or piece of machinery being introduced; a new boss or owner; a restructure or redundancy program. This can result in psychosocial problems in your workplace or even new physical hazards because of the change. You will probably not be able to manage the change process yourself, but you will be an important part of a team that has to find how to make the change as successful as possible.

Once you have worked through the issues, and a decision has been made to move forward with the change, remember the **Plan, Do, Check, Act** cycle we mentioned earlier. Your input on the change process will be very important to the success of the change.

A simple change implementation process might look like this:

1. Plan for the change, what's involved, who's involved and how long it will take.
2. Consult all those involved to ensure you have considered all the important issues.
3. Promote what you are doing, so people aren't surprised.
4. Review to ensure you've made changes based on feedback you've received.
5. Consolidate, look closely at how the change went. What could you do better next time and what worked well that you should keep on doing?

Big changes might involve bringing in specialists in change management who will work with you to ease the process, or it might be a minor change that will simply involve good communication and cooperation across the organisation. Either way you, as an HSR, can minimise the possibility of harm by being aware of the impacts of any change and by involving your fellow workers in the decision-making process.

Ethics

As a worker, you will be expected to act responsibly, meeting your organisation's codes of conduct (check if they have anything like this) and behaving in an ethical way. Role modelling ethical behavior re-emphasizes safety when it becomes overlooked during difficult or busy periods.

New Zealand Institute of Safety Management (NZISM) has a Code of Ethics for the health and safety profession. It is a set of behaviours that outlines how NZISM expects its members to conduct themselves at work. You can read more about this here:

www.nzism.org/code-of-ethics



Managing yourself

This role won't always be easy, but it will be personally rewarding.

Workplaces must ensure that they are designing work in a way that does no harm. You may have to learn some new skills and find different ways of coping with stress and pressure.

Remember, if your fellow workers are having problems, then you may also need help, or perhaps you're struggling with your own mental or physical health problems. Remember to reach out to your medical advisor or manager. Your organisation may have a professional health advisor, or an Employee Advisory Programme (EAP) and your union, friends and whanau may also be able to help.

Your employer has an obligation to provide support for you as an HSR, including release time to do your job and to provide you with the resources you need to do your job.

Looking after yourself is just as important as taking care of those around you. As you grow into the job, you will earn the respect of people around you and you will broaden your knowledge of health and safety. And you will learn how to deal with the many types of people in your workplace.

Most importantly, you will contribute to creating a workplace where everyone goes home healthy and safely at the end of each day!



Skills you can develop

Who you are

An open mind. Being able to keep yourself open to the ideas and views of others is an important part of the role. Not only will this help you learn more about the people you work with, but people are more likely to share information with you when you are able to hear what they have to say without pre-judging them.

Empathy. The ability to understand another person's thoughts and feelings in a situation from their point of view, rather than your own.

Keeping confidences. You are in this role because you are trusted. When people know they can talk to you privately in confidence, they will be more willing to work with you on safety matters.

Cultural sensitivity and awareness. This means being aware of your own cultural beliefs and values and how these may be different from other cultures. You also need to learn about and honour the different cultures of those you work with, know that these differences exist, and that none are better or worse, right or wrong.

Conduct yourself in good faith. This is covered earlier in the guidebook; it simply means you operate honestly, you do what you say, and say what you do.

How you undertake the role

Relationship building, humble enquiry, people at the centre. This means you put people at the heart of your decision making. It is seeking to understand others, getting to know them, asking questions, and building that trusted bond with your co-workers.

Observation, influencing and listening skills. Being able to listen to what is being said, and sometimes what is NOT being said, will be a great skill to master.

Being curious. This is about questioning the information given to you, making up your own mind about a situation, and being interested in learning more.

Participate, engage, and stay motivated. Understanding why you do this job is going to help you to stay motivated. Make sure you know what it is that you enjoy about being an HSR and ensure that you do plenty of it. If it's getting around the factory floor and talking to your workmates, then do that regularly. There will be times this is tough, so being clear about what motivates you to do this work will help you through those difficult times.

Encourage ownership. Safety is everyone's responsibility. This simply means encouraging workers to own their role and keep themselves and others safe.

Public speaking. Not everyone enjoys speaking to a crowd but this will be part of your role. Every time you speak in public you get more confident, so take the opportunity to practice as often as you can.



Story telling. Being able to share your story with people will go a long way to creating an understanding about who you are and why you do this work. People connect to real life events, rather than instructions alone, so if there is a reason why you do something a particular way at work, and there's an opportunity to share that, go for it. The stories behind our decision making are the most powerful way to get people to understand why we do things, and the way we do them.

How you develop

Consolidate and recognise the knowledge you have. This is about understanding what you do know. You know a lot more than you realise! A good place to start is to work through the HSR Knowledge Wheel and identify the subjects you are confident in: that's the stuff you already know. From there you can build a list of the subjects you need to learn more about.

Reflection and continual improvement. Being able to look back on things that have happened and understand what worked well and what might need to be improved for next time.

Prioritise workloads. Learning how to prioritise work is an important skill, especially when you have a lot on. The easiest way to prioritise is to figure out what's urgent and important - and start there.

Impose boundaries and look after yourself. Being able to set personal boundaries is important to managing your own self-care. You're no good to anyone else if you have no energy left, so ensure you are clear about what you can and can't do. Your PCBU needs to provide you with paid time to do your HSR role rather than expecting you to do things in your own time.

Integrate health and safety into everyday practice. This means that we think about keeping ourselves and others safe no matter what we are doing.

Where to find more information

As an HSR, you will not be expected to know everything. But as you start to think about the hazards in your organisation, and how they might hurt your colleagues, you will look for greater knowledge.

It is important that you get the best information you can – from reliable sources. Don't just do a Google search for (say) "noise". You need to go to websites that are based on good science.

Here are a few suggestions:

New Zealand Institute of Safety Management

www.nzism.org

NZISM is New Zealand's largest professional association for health and safety practitioners and has developed REP-CENTRAL - a section of their website devoted to supporting HSRs.

REPCENTRAL

REP-CENTRAL collates useful information and tools from many different sources and is the perfect launch pad when you are searching for support in your HSR role. www.nzism.org/hsr-central

WorkSafe New Zealand

www.worksafe.govt.nz

WorkSafe's website has a lot of great advice on many health and safety matters.

Government Health & Safety Lead

www.healthandsafety.govt.nz/about-us-2/who-we-support/hsrhub

GHSL supports those working in health and safety within Government agencies. They provide some great material that they are happy to share.

Health and Safety Association of New Zealand

www.hasanz.org.nz

The Health and Safety Association of New Zealand (which includes NZISM) has a register of consultants and advisers.

OHS Body of Knowledge

www.ohsbok.org.au/bok-chapters

This is an Australian source of information written by experts in their field.

Cochrane

www.cochrane.org/evidence

This is a long-established health site that provides plain-English explanations of complex health issues, all based on scientific evidence.

Your union

<https://union.org.nz/find-your-union>

This link takes you to a page where you can find the union that represents the industry you work in.

Thank you to all the HSRs and NZISM members who participated in the development of the Knowledge Wheel and without whom we could not ensure that this framework was truly *designed by HSRs, for HSRs, and supported by the H&S profession.*

A special thank you to Dr Stephen Young for his contribution to the development of the HSR Guidebook.