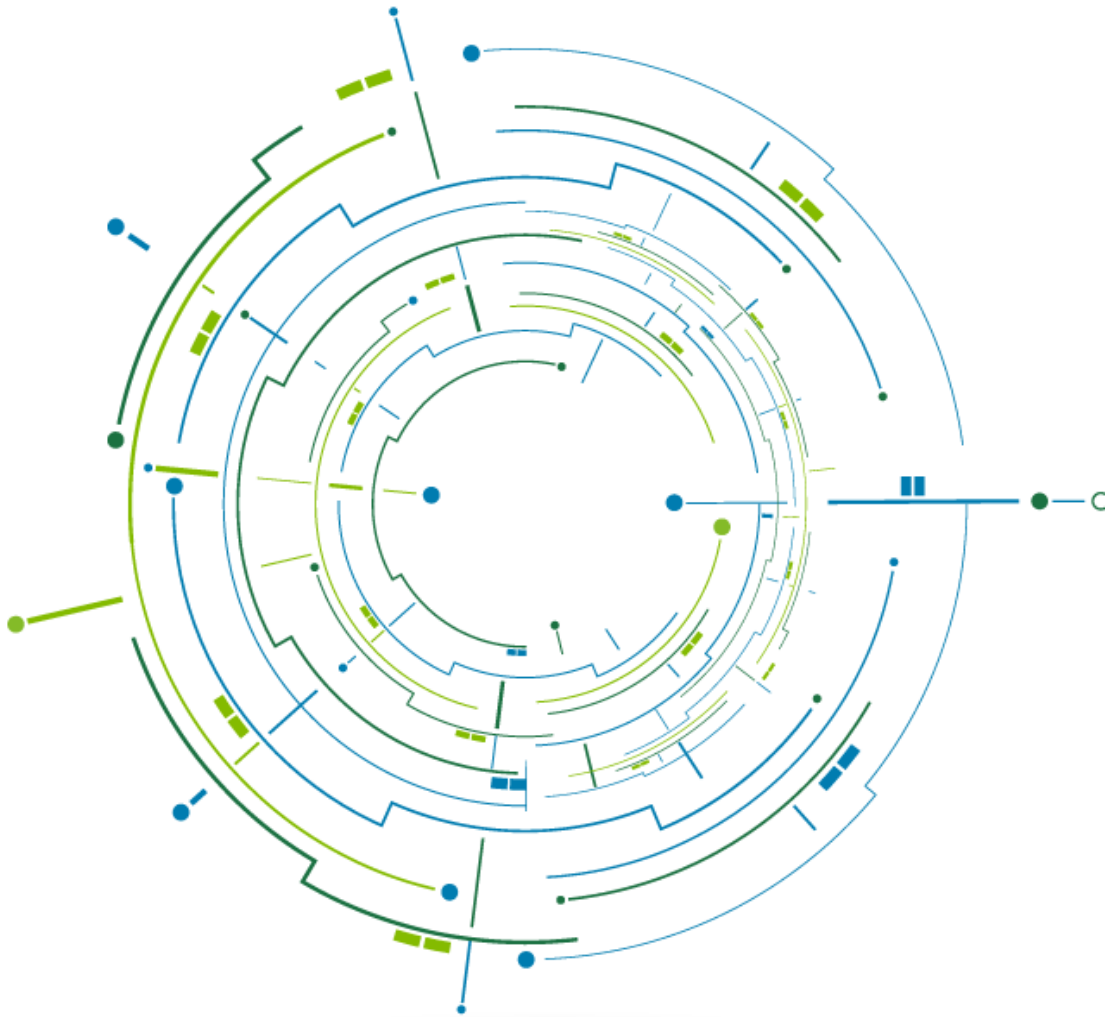


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Navigating OHS in the workplace.

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September 2024

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Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving work environments, the importance of occupational health and safety cannot be overstated. Safety in the workplace is a complex issue, and managing the safety function can be challenging.

Occupational safety and health is a multidisciplinary field that focuses on the recognition, prevention and control of hazards in the workplace to promote workers' health and well-being. One of the primary reasons why occupational health and safety is crucial is to protect workers from potential hazards and prevent work-related accidents, injuries and illnesses.

Implementing effective occupational health and safety measures in various workplace environments such as industries, infrastructure sites, hotels, hospitals, offices and warehouses, is vital to ensure the well-being of employees and contractors. This protects employees from harm and improves their overall job satisfaction and well-being. Failure to prioritise occupational health and safety can have serious consequences. Work-related injuries and diseases pose a significant burden on organisations and society.

Occupational hazards continue to pose a significant threat to worker well-being globally. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates a staggering 2.3 million workplace deaths and 340 million occupational accidents annually. These figures underscore the immense human cost of inadequate safety measures, translating into staggering economic losses valued at ~3.94% of the global GDP.

Challenges

Absence of risk-based approach in establishing a robust safety framework, processes and procedures

Reactive safety culture and resistance to change

Absence of training need analysis to design training programme according to job-specific requirements

Inconsistent and nonstandard approach for incident investigation

Non-revision of safety protocols and procedures after incidents

Lack of periodic performance evaluation of staff and contractors

Reasons for accident

Organisational influences

- Organisational culture: An organisation's culture can support or hinder health and safety efforts. A culture that values safety will encourage employees to report hazards and follow safety protocols.
- Workplace design and processes: Using the right processes and technology to conduct various operations helps mitigate risks arising from inherent hazards in the workplace such as physical, chemical and biological.
- The safety of a workplace can be influenced by its design and layout, with factors such as lighting, ventilation and ergonomics playing a role in the risk of accidents and injuries.
- Organisational policies and procedures: Clear and effective policies and procedures can help prevent accidents and injuries. Organisations should have guidelines for reporting hazards, conducting safety inspections and responding to emergencies.
- Resource management: Adequate resources and training are essential for maintaining a safe workplace. Organisations that invest in skill development, safety equipment and personnel are more likely to achieve better safety performance.

Supervisory factors

- Inadequate supervision: Supervision plays a crucial role in promoting occupational health and safety in the workplace by monitoring and enforcing safety protocols. It also helps identify and mitigate residual risks in the workplace due to different operational challenges.
- Inadequate professional guidance and training: Capacity building of employees and workers helps promote a proactive safety culture by increasing awareness, motivating enforcement and fostering continual improvement.
- Lack of job-specific training increases the likelihood of injuries and ill health in the workplace.
- Failure to resolve identified issues: Failure to address identified deviations or unsafe conditions can result in accidents that cause injuries. Mitigating hazards in the workplace is crucial to maintaining a safe working environment. Unreported near misses and unresolved residual risks can raise the risk of future accidents.



Unsafe acts

- Decision errors: Intended behaviour leading to unfavourable outcomes.
- Skill-based errors: Errors due to lack of skill, attention and wrong technique.
- Violations: Routine or exceptional violations.

The cost of accident prevention is far less than the cost of accidents

The cost of an accident is described as the “impact on a company’s costs that would not have been incurred if the injury/accident had not occurred.”

Worksite accidents and illnesses pose significant challenges for employees and companies. The total cost of each workplace incident can exceed initial expectations, particularly if you are unprepared. Apart from the direct costs covered by workers’ compensation insurance, the indirect costs of a single accident can accumulate rapidly, potentially impacting your business in the future.

The cost of accidents and ill-health can be linked to an iceberg. The visible or direct costs are similar to the tip of the iceberg. However, the hidden or indirect costs, which are unrecoverable, lie below the waterline and are often much greater.

Direct costs

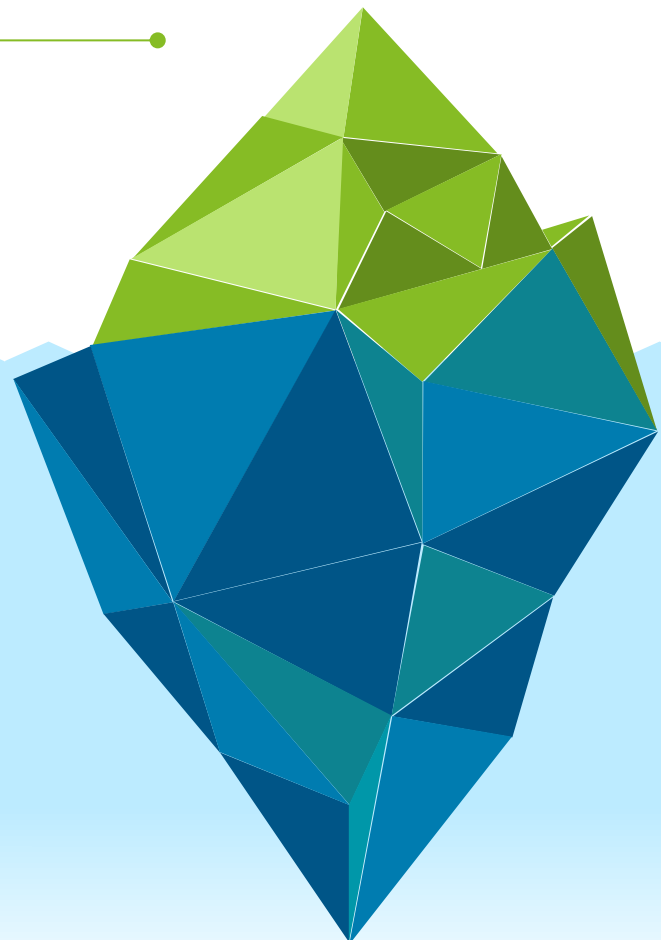
Direct costs of workplace injuries are also considered insured costs that are covered by workers’ compensation insurance. Direct costs include costs such as:

- Medical treatment cost
- Employee compensation
- Lost time wages of the injured person

Indirect costs

Indirect costs are usually uninsured and seen as additional costs associated with injuries. It is important to note that many estimates have described indirect costs as much greater than direct costs. Some examples of indirect costs of accidents are:

- Penalties and fines levied by government bodies
- Losses due to reduced or lost productivity, leading to work stoppages, manpower shortages, incident investigation, poor employee morale, etc.
- Cost of rehiring a temporary or permanent replacement worker
- Training cost of replacement worker
- Clean-ups, repairs and replacement costs of damaged material, machinery and property
- Incident investigation
- Decreased demand due to damaged reputation



Strategies to enhance safety in the workplace

- **Implement a robust safety management system**

A robust safety management system is crucial to mitigating most safety risks. A proactive safety approach, including hazard identification and control, regular equipment maintenance and emergency response planning, comprehensive training programmes, regular inspections, adoption of new technologies and fostering a strong safety culture with stakeholder involvement, is essential to prevent accidents in the industrial environment.

- **Promote data-driven decision-making**

Encourage using OHS statistics and data analysis to make informed, evidence-based policy decisions and allocate resources for OHS interventions.

Create a data governance framework articulating how the data is captured, stored and managed for analytics consumption.

- **Invest in capacity building of employees**

Train employers, managers and workers on OHS best practices, emergency procedures and hazard identification. Conduct regular safety training programmes focusing on sector-specific hazards and safe work practices. Implement continuous education and upskilling initiatives to create a safer and more resilient workforce.

- **Continuous performance monitoring and updating policies**

Conduct periodic safety assessments to identify deviations in the system.

Align policies with evolving industry standards, technological advancements and lessons learned from incidents and assessments. Ensure that policies are dynamic and responsive to changing circumstances.

- **Use of technology**

Exploring and implementing advanced technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT) sensors, wearables and AI to monitor workplace conditions and provide real-time feedback. Using technology for predictive analytics to prevent accidents.

Digitalisation helps organisations and employees to effortlessly manage their responsibilities and strive for continual improvement. With the advent of technologically enabled health and safety tools, organisations can opt for a one-stop solution with streamlined workflows and documentation processes to incorporate the capabilities to collect high-quality data, the technologies to standardise and automate data collection and the resources to perform advanced analytics.

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