



## A Guide to Promoting Health and Safety Best Practice

What can you do to ensure employees engage with your health and safety policy, instead of leaving it in the handbook? This step-by-step guide highlights best practice for improving communication methods and employee engagement in your organisation.



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## Introduction

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Health and safety is an expected provision in the workplace. Whether employees are based in an office or project site, employers have a fundamental duty to provide an environment where health and safety risks are controlled.

In the UK, health and safety culture isn't an unfamiliar concept. A survey conducted by the HSE found that [UK-based business managers](#) were more likely to possess documented policies and undertake regular health and safety checks compared to other EU countries. Despite this, 147 work fatalities were reported in [Great Britain during 2018/19](#) – a sobering reminder that risk is always present.

What can your organisation do to mitigate risk? It begins with understanding that effective health and safety policy not only needs foolproof rules and regulations on paper, but also **successful communication** and greater **employee engagement**. Promoting health and safety throughout your organisation will ensure that employees engage with your policy, rather than leaving it in the handbook – helping them stay safe.

This eBook highlights the best practice methods of achieving this, propelling you towards improving health and safety promotion in your organisation.



## Why Is Health and Safety Important in a Business?

A workplace health and safety policy ensures the wellbeing of employees and safeguards employers against costly negligence risk.

In the past, disregard for employee wellbeing was widespread – think hazardous machinery, cramped conditions, and poor processes. Fortunately, historical cases of poor health and safety at work are now [confined to a bygone era](#) – but serve as an apt reminder of why it's important.

Nowadays, there are many reasons why your business should strive to achieve a culture of positive health and safety. Here are some of the benefits:



### Employee Wellbeing

Health and safety incidents reduce employee engagement and damage wellbeing, so preventing them should be a top priority. In fact, an academic study found that [workplace health programs](#), including the promotion of safety culture, are proven to positively impact employee morale.



### Company Reputation

Health and safety failings seriously affect how important stakeholders view your organisation. If you want loyal employees, contractors, and suppliers, a culture of health and safety will future-proof your business.



### Legal Compliance

You're legally obligated to protect your workforce from harm during work – it's that simple. A foolproof health and safety policy that's ingrained within your company culture will safeguard your business against accidents that can snowball into serious legal consequences.



### Risk Management

Health and safety is wholly about promoting good practice – enabling greater productivity both ethically and financially. By promoting a strong health and safety culture, you'll minimise the risk of a serious incident so business productivity can thrive.



### Cost Control

A major incident has the potential to cripple an organisation. Not only in terms of reputation, but also by shouldering your company with serious costs – including missed working days, investigation costs, legal fees, and much more. To summarise, let's reflect on the following quote:



**“If you think safety is expensive, try an accident.”**

Trevor Keltz, renowned safety culture expert.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Trevor Keltz cited by Mary Kay O'Connor Process Safety Center. Trevor Keltz. (ONLINE) Available at: <http://psc.tamu.edu/trevor-keltz>. (Accessed 19 August 2019)



## Who is Responsible for Health and Safety?

In a business, everyone is responsible for maintaining adequate health and safety standards, but ultimately as an employer you're [required by law](#) to set them. Here's a figurative scenario:



A construction employee is working onsite overnight – but fails to wear his necessary high-vis jacket. Due to his low visibility, the worker is struck down by a construction vehicle and isn't discovered until the morning. What vital health and safety procedures were missed, and how could this be prevented?

Firstly, the employer has failed to effectively communicate health and safety protocol, consequently causing the worker to not follow procedure. If health and safety was adequately spotlighted throughout your organisation and woven into your employee's routine, he'd be less likely to miss the crucial step of putting on a high-vis jacket.

Secondly, this absence of health and safety awareness caused the employee to overlook it due to lack of understanding – outlining a **cyclical dilemma of responsibility**. In reality, both employer and employee are responsible in the end. To cut through the noise, here's a straightforward outline of each party's responsibilities:



### Employer Responsibilities

**"Safety is the most productive business."**

- **Outline** a comprehensive health and safety policy
- Conduct **thorough risk assessments** where applicable
- **Inform employees** of potential risks on premise
- **Clearly display** policy
- **Consult employees** about H&S
- Provide **clear information and training**



### Employee Responsibilities

**"Safety starts with me."**

- Remain **informed** about health and safety policy
- Follow **best practice** procedures
- **Mitigate risk** where possible
- **Inform others** of health and safety risks where applicable
- Maintain **good communication** and reporting procedure with employer

Considering this list, what health and safety regulation are you **legally responsible** for?





## Health and Safety Law and Regulations

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The UK Health and Safety at Work Act 1947 secures employee rights to a work environment that controls health and safety risk. As an employer, you are required by law to protect your workforce from injury or illness at work. This includes your **employees, indirect employees, or any member of your supply chain** that are on your premises. Failure to do so is not only dangerous, costly, and negligent, but also damaging to employee morale and company reputation.

Additionally, malpractice can result in a regulator or local authority acting under criminal law against your business, or the person(s) affected claiming compensation under civil law.

Depending on your industry, legal responsibilities may become inflated in **environments that carry greater risk**. For example, agriculture, forestry, construction, and defence. However, even an office-based business should mitigate risk where possible – by implementing rudimentary protocols such as fire safety training or electrical tests in an office space.



## The Five Steps to Promote Health and Safety

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It's clear that no matter where you work, who you work with, or what work you're doing – health and safety is paramount. But, achieving a strong culture of health and safety is reliant on employees adopting and adhering to your policy.

With this in mind, [here's five best practice steps to promote health and safety in your organisation.](#)



### Step One: Find the Competent Person

A '**competent person**' refers to an individual with the combined skills, experience, training, and knowledge to adequately apply health and safety protocol in your organisation. In theory, this individual can successfully monitor health and safety autonomously – and promote best practice amongst your workforce.

Frankly, you wouldn't put 'Clumsy Carlson', who is notorious for misplacing work keys, in charge of health and safety. So aside from firstly drafting a comprehensive health and safety policy, you'll need to identify competent person(s) to help you meet your duties. You should consider:

- Attitude towards health and safety
- Number of years of experience
- Skills in relation to work environment
- Relationships
- Performance focus
- Physical ability
- Formal qualifications (not required, but preferred)

If none of these attributes match the members of your workforce, or health and safety is deemed to be complex or high-risk, you should get help [from an external resource](#). This should be an advisor or consultant who matches the above qualities, is qualified with relevant training and – most importantly – is covered under insurance.

For many, it's preferable to manage health and safety in-house, as an external advisor may overlook important issues that your internal teams face on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, external help can be a costly drain on your resources.

To tackle this, many organisations now use [online health and safety management software](#) to oversee vital management, empowering them to manage and promote H&S autonomously, while saving both time and money. However, competency should always remain a necessity – not an afterthought. Remember to consider this:



“Safety is not a gadget – but a state of mind.”

Eleanor Everet, safety expert.<sup>iii</sup>



<sup>iii</sup> Eleanor Everet cited in Riadh Habash (2019). Professional Practice in Engineering and Computing: Preparing for Future Careers. Taylor & Francis Group.



## Step Two: Assess Your Health and Safety Management

How are you managing health and safety in your organisation? If your employees are still writing reports on paper to be physically filed away into the depths of a long-forgotten desk drawer, then how effective is your management – really? Or, if your methods of management are already digital, are they efficient?

Promoting best practice **requires improved management processes**. By reassessing the pain points in current administration structure and adopting improved and efficient methods, you'll **renew engagement amongst your employees** and create a system of information sharing that **continually promotes best practice**.

Here's a list of health and safety management features to look for:

### ✓ Portable Management

Your health and safety management solution should be 'mobile'. Preferably, you should use an online system that's accessible from anywhere, such as a platform employees can log in to, or a [handy mobile application](#). This enables users to manage H&S no matter where they are, so they can track, share, or find important information on the go.



✓ **Centralised System**

Secondly, it's important that your chosen health and safety management solution gathers all essential information into one place. Essential process such as a health and safety audit requires an organised environment where information can be found quickly.

Without it, important information can be missed or searching for paperwork can take up valuable time. A centralised system that stores all your H&S data in one place, and is easy to search, can simplify the process – reducing business downtime.

✓ **Communication Portal**

Are you effectively communicating health and safety protocol to your teams? Lacking standardised or easily accessible health and safety management tools can make it difficult for personnel to engage with health and safety.

Look for a solution that enables your workforce to share information with each other – think incident reports, training documents, or audit history – to promote a culture of self-responsibility and autonomous health and safety management in your organisation.



✓ **Online Data Storage**

If an incident occurs on your site, the relevant authorities, such as HSE, will need to conduct investigations at a cost to your business.

Documents and data filed away in physical storage can be difficult to find, creating a lengthy process that's reliant on the investigative body finding the right information quickly – making your organisation non-operational in the meantime.

An online system can simplify this, creating a best practice system that securely stores historical records of all essential data.

✓ **Compliance Indicators**

Can your workforce easily view health and safety compliance status? If the records of your last fire alarm test are on sheets of paper, it's easy to lose track of performance.

More so, a large and complex business performing multiple equipment, employee, or worksite audits requires a management system where this information is easy to view. A management tool that displays [real-time compliance indicators](#) will ensure you're never caught out again.



### Step Three: Improve Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a working approach that promotes a two-way commitment between employer and employee; encouraging mutual understanding and participation in workplace objectives.

Engaged personnel understand what's expected of them, enabling them to confidently carry out their roles. For example, a competent worker who is fully briefed on health and safety and understands its importance is more likely to follow best practice, while encouraging others to do so too.

Research conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that engaged employees were five times less likely to have a safety incident, compared to less engaged personnel. When your people are committed to meeting health and safety objectives, an accident is less likely.

However, greater levels of engagement aren't achievable without efforts by the employer to communicate exactly why health and safety best practice is important, and simultaneously, employers must give a moral and economic incentive to their workforce too.

What are some straightforward methods to begin improving employee engagement?

- Communicate the benefits of health and safety
- Hold regular health and safety meetings
- Listen to and share workforce feedback
- Conduct health and safety opinion surveys
- Record, document, and share your objectives with your teams
- Reward good health and safety practice
- Share stories and discussion of health and safety
- Report industry news to employees
- Provide the resources to independently manage health and safety



Did you know, an American study found that **Monday is the most dangerous day of the week** for workplace accidents? Mitigate risk by planning safety meetings at the start of the week and checking back in with your workforce regularly.

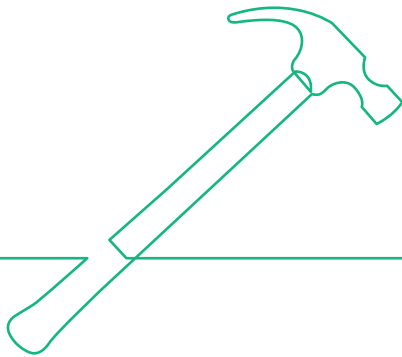
[US Bureau of Labour Statistics](#)



## Step Four: Maintain a Safe Working Environment

As an employer, you are required to provide and maintain a safe working environment alongside compliant welfare facilities. Delivering the correct environment provides the right setting for employees to follow health and safety procedure, enabling personnel to remain compliant and follow best practice in your organisation.

What's more, by maintaining a safe work environment you'll improve employee wellbeing and engagement – the essential components of creating a stronger health and safety culture. In fact, studies show that [engaged employees](#) are more likely to support organisational objectives, so implementing best practice in your environment will nurture health and safety goals.



This process has a multitude of benefits such as mitigating risk in the environment, setting high standards, and equipping personnel with the right resources to follow procedure. To ensure you're following the right direction, here are the basics [recommended by the HSE](#):

### Hazards

- Display your health and safety policy
- Keep traffic routes obstruction-free
- Use safe materials in the environment

### Maintenance

- Maintain your premises
- Provide compliant work equipment
- Clean and hygienic spaces

### Welfare Facilities

- The correct number of facilities for headcount
- Storage
- Areas to eat and rest
- Drinking water
- Toilet facilities, including basins, soap, and dryers
- Electricity

### Working Environment

- Access to ventilation
- Reasonable working temperature
- Suitable lighting





## Step Five: Create a Health and Safety Knowledge Base



**“I never teach my pupils, I only provide the conditions in which they can learn.”**

*Albert Einstein, academic, physicist, and celebrated visionary. <sup>iii</sup>*

Although organisations should provide teaching and training as standard, your methods of information delivery are integral to promoting health and safety best practice. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Can my personnel independently source the health and safety information they need?
2. Does my current company culture embrace self-responsibility and autonomous learning?

Health and safety should never take a back seat. A temporary worker sourced from a third-party partner should be able to find documents, training, or guidelines. At the same time, it should be straightforward for your internal employees to find your most up to date policies.

<sup>iii</sup> Albert Einstein cited in Walter, G., & Marks, S. (1981). *Experiential learning and change*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

If you don't have a central knowledge base, information can become disparate, disjointed, out-of-date, and difficult to find. If an accident happened, is your workforce equipped with the internal knowledge to react correctly? More so, are they likely to independently learn important knowledge?

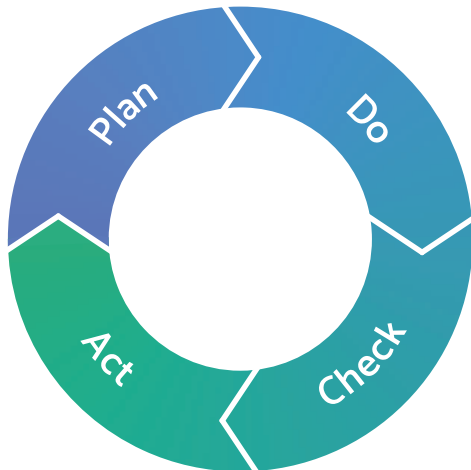
A health and safety knowledge base can be hosted on an internal intranet system, online health and safety management tools, or via your own custom solution. However, if you lack internal resources to deliver information to your employees, then an [outsourced solution](#) can be beneficial. This empowers workers to source information, learn, and embrace a stronger health and safety culture.





## In Conclusion

**Promoting health and safety in your organisation requires your employees to be engaged and reflective about health and safety outcomes.** When an issue occurs, personnel who are equipped with both the tools and internal knowledge to autonomously handle and mitigate risk – presently and in the future – will closely follow best practice. The [recommended HSE model of management](#) highlights this:



## Continuous Learning, Continuous Improvement

When you encourage individuals to continuously **recognise health and safety issues, reflect, review, advise, decide, and reflect again** – you're well on your way to creating a culture that mitigates risk and safeguards your business against an incident.

This process is not only a psychological one, but an administrative one too – especially pertinent to health and safety management methods. Your workforce should be able to independently record, monitor, share, and find essential information – all from a centralised [health and safety management system](#). Without this, a culture of health and safety will be hard to maintain.



If you'd like to learn more about how health and safety management software can help you promote better safety best practice in your organisation, visit [www.safetybank.co.uk](http://www.safetybank.co.uk)



## About Safetybank

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Safetybank empowers organisations to unify safety processes within one easy-to-use platform, available as both a desktop and mobile application.

With insights from leading industry experts, we built Safetybank to streamline health and safety management so teams can record, find, and share information from anywhere, in real-time.

Today, 1,000+ businesses trust Safetybank to manage and ensure compliance across multiple projects and people.

[Learn More](#)

