



SUCCESSFUL HEALTH & SAFETY MANAGEMENT HSG65 (PART ONE)

Brian Butler, Health & Safety and Employment Advisor for the GCMA, writes how human factors influence health & safety performance.

Secretary At Work: July 2008 (reviewed May 2012)

In 1991 the Health and Safety Executive published Successful Health and Safety Management HSG65. The influence this guidance has had on organizations large and small can hardly be exaggerated. It is a practical guide for directors, managers, health and safety professionals and employee representatives who wanted to improve health and safety in their organisations. The message it conveys is a simple one: organisations need to manage health and safety with the same degree of expertise and to the same standards as other core business activities, if they are effectively to control risks and prevent harm to people.

The Safety Management system that has been accepted by GCMA and BIGGA is based on Successful Health and Safety Management HSG65. The reason why the Safety Management System is based on HSE guidance is because it:

- ✎ describes the principles and management practices which provide the basis of effective health and safety management;
- ✎ sets out the issues which need to be addressed; and
- ✎ can be used for developing improvement programmes, self-audit or self-assessment.

The principles are universal but how far action is needed will depend on the size of the organisation, the hazards presented by its activities and services, and the adequacy of its existing arrangements.

A further reason is the protection it gives to golf clubs. The introduction to the guidance states:

‘This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice’.

There are six key elements of the system. A brief description of each element is as follows:

1 Policy

Effective health and safety policies set a clear direction for the organisation to follow. They contribute to all aspects of business performance as part of a demonstrable commitment to continuous improvement. Responsibilities to people and the environment are met in ways which fulfil the spirit and letter of the law. Stakeholders' expectations in the activity (whether they are shareholders, employees, or their representatives, customers or society at large) are satisfied. There are cost-effective approaches to preserving and developing physical and human resources, which reduce financial losses and liabilities.

2 Organising

An effective management structure and arrangements are in place for delivering the policy. All staff are motivated and empowered to work safely and to protect their long-term health, not simply to avoid accidents.

The arrangements are:

- ✎ underpinned by effective staff involvement and participation; and
- ✎ sustained by effective communications and the promotion of competence which allows all employees and their representatives to make a responsible and informed contribution to the health and safety effort.

3 Planning

There is a planned and systematic approach to implementing the health and safety policy through an effective health and safety management system. The aim is to minimise risks. Risk assessment methods are used to decide on priorities and to set objectives for eliminating hazards and reducing risks.

Wherever possible, risks are eliminated through selection and design of facilities, equipment and processes. If risks cannot be eliminated, they are minimised by the use of physical controls or, as a last resort, through systems of work and personal protective equipment. Performance standards are established and used for measuring achievement. Specific actions to promote a positive health and safety culture are identified.

4 Measuring performance

Performance is measured against agreed standards to reveal when and where improvement is needed. Active self-monitoring reveals how effectively the health and safety management system is functioning. This looks at both hardware (premises, plant and substances) and software (people, procedures and systems) including individual behaviour and performance. If controls fail, reactive monitoring discovers why by investigating accidents, ill health or incidents which could cause harm or loss. The objectives of active and reactive monitoring are:

- ✎ to determine the immediate causes of sub-standard performance; and
- ✎ to identify the underlying causes and the implications for the design and operation of the health and safety management system.

Longer-term objectives are also monitored.

5 Reviewing performance

The organisation learns from all relevant experience and applies the lessons.

6 Auditing

There is a systematic review of performance based on data from monitoring and from independent audits of the whole health and safety management system. These form the basis of self-regulation and of complying with sections 2 to 6 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act) and other relevant statutory provisions. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement involving the constant development of policies, systems and techniques of risk control. Performance is assessed by:

- ⌘ internal reference to key performance indicators; and
- ⌘ external comparison with the performance of business competitors and best practice, irrespective of employment sector.

Performance is also often recorded in annual reports.

POLICY

In more detail the first key element is Policy. The main points of the guidance are as follows:

Effective health and safety policies contribute to business performance by:

- ⌘ supporting human resource development; minimising the financial losses which arise from avoidable unplanned events;
- ⌘ recognising that accidents, ill health and incidents result from failings in management control and are not necessarily the fault of individual employees;
- ⌘ recognising that the development of a culture supportive of health and safety is necessary to achieve adequate control over risks;
- ⌘ ensuring a systematic approach to the identification of risks and the allocation of resources to control them;
- ⌘ supporting quality initiatives aimed at continuous improvement.

This guidance identifies the main characteristics of successful policies for health and safety. A common characteristic is that they accurately reflect the values and beliefs of those who devise and implement them. Effective policies are not simply examples of management paying lip service to improved health and safety performance but a genuine commitment to action. In this guidance, 'policy' means the general intentions, approach and objectives - the vision - of an organisation and the criteria and principles upon which it bases its action. These form the basis for managing health and safety which shape the written statement of policy required by section 2 of the HSW Act.

The importance of people to an organisation

Work can make a positive or negative contribution to individual health. Both physical and mental health may be affected if people are exposed to harm (eg through the use of chemicals, by a risk of falling, by carrying out repetitive tasks). But if the workplace is safe and if people are interested and involved in their work, job satisfaction can increase and improvements in health and well-being can result.

Organisations that successfully manage health and safety recognise the relationship between the control of risks, general health and the very core of the business itself. Their health and safety policies align with other human resource management policies designed to secure commitment and involvement and to promote the well-being of employees. In the workplace, this may lead to initiatives such as job restructuring - to reduce monotony and increase flexibility - or to health promotion campaigns. In some cases, organisations educate their employees about dangers outside the workplace (eg in the home) as part of an off-the-job accident prevention policy. The important contribution which employees and their representatives can make to improve health and safety is recognised and encouraged.

So the best health and safety policies do not separate health and safety and human resource management, because they acknowledge that people are the key resource. Organisations that want to behave ethically and responsibly:

- ⌘ recognise the benefits of a fit, enthusiastic, competent and committed workforce;
- ⌘ realise that progressive human resource management policies can be undermined by weak health and safety policies; and
- ⌘ show that they are concerned not simply with preventing accidents and ill health (as required by health and safety legislations) but also with positive health promotion.

The ultimate goal is an organisation aiming to improve its health and safety performance, so that accidents and ill health are eliminated and work forms part of a satisfying life to the benefit of both the individual and the organisation. This integrated approach extends to people outside the organisation in policies for the control of off-site risks and environmental pollution.

Avoiding loss - the total loss approach

Injuries and ill health cost money but are only one component of financial loss. Accidental damage to property, plant, products or the environment - as well as production losses or liabilities - also impose costs. The total loss approach is based on research into the causes of accidents. There are many more incidents or 'near-misses' than those which cause injury or property damage. Effective prevention and loss control has to focus on the causes of incidents because outcomes may be random and uncontrollable. For instance, if a person slips on a patch of spilt oil they may be unhurt, damage clothing or equipment, break an arm or fracture their skull and die. Examining the causes of all such outcomes can provide valuable insights into inadequacies in risk control and point toward action which can prevent future injuries or losses.

The total loss approach emphasises that organisations need to learn from both accidents and incidents to achieve effective control. They should also look beyond their own organisation to draw lessons from elsewhere. Investment in loss reduction contributes directly to profits and may prove to be particularly cost effective at times of high competition - it may yield a better return than a similar investment to improve sales and market share. Results from HSE studies of the costs of accidental loss confirm their commercial significance.

Reducing the financial costs of accidents and ill health is important in business terms, but there are other business imperatives for managing health and safety effectively. Employees benefit from working in an organisation committed to high standards of health and safety, but organisations should also recognise that there are other 'stakeholders' with a legitimate interest in how they manage health and safety. These can include customers, suppliers, insurance companies, the neighbouring community, the public and regulators. Organisations that are successful at managing health and safety recognise the business case for health and safety and meet the different, and sometimes competing demands and expectations of their stakeholders in a balanced way.

Prime responsibility for accident and ill health prevention rests with management

Accidents, ill health and incidents are seldom random events. They generally arise from failures of control and involve multiple contributory elements. The immediate cause may be a human or technical failure, but they usually arise from organisational failings which are the responsibility of management. Successful policies aim to exploit the strengths of employees. They aim to minimise the contribution of human limitations and fallibilities by examining how the organisation is structured and how jobs and systems are designed.

Organisations need to understand how human factors affect health and safety performance. These are explained in more detail in the HSE publication HSG48 Human factors in industrial safety which also contains guidance on how to develop suitable control strategies in a systematic way.

Part 2 will look in more detail at the Importance of Organisational factors.

**SUCCESSFUL HEALTH & SAFETY MANAGEMENT HSG65
(PART TWO)**

Secretary At Work: July 2008 (reviewed May 2012)

Part 2 of Policy, the first key element of the Safety Management System, identifies the importance of organizational factors that should influence the formation and development of a club's health and safety policy.

The content of this article has again been derived from the HSE publication 'Successful Health and Safety Management' HSG65.

The importance of organisational factors

Organisations that are good at managing health and safety create an effective framework to maximise the contribution of individuals and groups. Health and safety objectives are regarded in the same way as other business objectives. They become part of the culture and this is recognised explicitly by making health and safety a line management responsibility. The approach has to start at the top. Visible and active support, strong leadership and commitment of senior managers and directors are fundamental to the success of health and safety management. Senior managers communicate the beliefs which underlie the policy through their individual behaviour and management practice. Health and safety is a boardroom issue and a board member takes direct responsibility for the co-ordination of effort. The whole organisation shares the management perception and beliefs about the importance of health and safety and the need to achieve the policy objectives.

Examples of statements of health and safety philosophy are as follows:

'A good safety record goes hand in hand with high productivity and quality standards'

'We believe that an excellent company is by definition a safe company. Since we are committed to excellence, it follows that minimising risk to people, plant and products is inseparable from all other company objectives'

'Prevention is not only better, but cheaper than cure. There is no necessary conflict between humanitarianism and commercial considerations. Profits and safety are not in competition. On the contrary, safety is good business'

'Health and safety is a management responsibility of equal importance to production and quality'

'Experience shows that a successful safety organisation also produces the right quality goods at minimum costs'

'Competence in managing health and safety is an essential part of professional management'

'In the field of health and safety [we] seek to achieve the highest standards. We do not pursue this aim simply to achieve compliance with current legislation, but because it is in our best interests. The effective management of health and safety, leading to fewer accidents involving injury and time taken off work, is an investment which helps us to achieve our purposes'

'People are our most important asset'

'Total safety is the ongoing integration of safety into all activities with the objective of attaining industry leadership in safety performance. We believe nothing is more important than safety ... not production, not sales, not profits'

'Effective control of health and safety is achieved through co-operative effort at all levels in the organisation'

'The company believes that excellence in the management of health and safety is an essential element within its overall business plan'

'All accidents and ill health are preventable'

'The identification, assessment and control of health and safety and other risks is a managerial responsibility and of equal importance to production and quality'

'The preservation of human and physical resources is an important means of minimising costs'

A systematic approach

The key to effective policy implementation is good business planning. The logic and rigour of business planning are applied to the control of risks, and resources are allocated according to risk priorities.

Successful organisations can demonstrate effective control in terms of improved performance. Health and safety thinking is reflected in business activity. The practical implications of health and safety policies are thought through to avoid conflict between the demands of policy and other operational requirements. Disasters-such as the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise, the train crash at Clapham Junction and the fire and explosion on Piper Alpha - provide vivid examples of the effect of giving insufficient attention or weight to health and safety. In these cases, management decisions led to:

- ⌘ unrealistic timescales for implementing plans, which put pressure on people to cut corners and reduce supervision;
- ⌘ work scheduling and rosters which failed to take account of the problems of fatigue;
- ⌘ organisational restructuring which placed people in positions for which they had insufficient experience;
- ⌘ jobs and control systems which failed to recognise or allow for the fact that people would be likely to make mistakes and might have difficulties communicating with each other.

The systematic approach also emphasises a commitment to continuous improvement. Learning from experience is essential. In many serious accidents, previous incidents foreshadowed the potential for serious injury.

Quality, environment and health and safety management

The principles and approach to managing health and safety described in this guidance are the same as those advocated for managing quality or the environment. A well-developed approach to quality is increasingly seen as an essential activity for the successful organisation rather than an optional extra. Organisations often fail to manage health and safety effectively because they see it as something distinct from other management tasks. They conclude that it is too difficult. They do not bring the same rigour to it as they do for quality or the environment.

The traditional approach to ensuring quality emphasised quality control at the end of the manufacturing process: products were inspected and sorted for defects before they reached the customer. This was costly and inefficient. The modern approach is process-based quality assurance - managing quality in not inspecting defects out.

A similar case can be made for health and safety. Many organisations traditionally only react to accidents and ill health ('defects') once they have occurred. There is little emphasis on prevention. If the desired 'output' of the health and safety effort is to be achieved - to control risks - then the process to deliver it has to be properly assured through designing and implementing an effective health and safety management system. In other words it is proactive not reactive.

This approach is applied in this guidance. It is also the basis for the ISO 14001 Environmental Management standards, BS 8800 Guide to occupational health and safety management systems and the voluntary eco-management auditing schemes. A word of caution is necessary though. Adopting ISO 9000 Quality Systems standards will not automatically lead to appropriate attention to health and safety in the workplace. The standards focus on quality of the goods or services that the organisation produces or delivers - not on health and safety in the production or delivery process.

Total quality management (TQM) promotes continuous improvement in all aspects of an organisation's activities. It emphasises identifying the key processes, setting performance standards, measuring achievement against these standards and then taking corrective action and identifying opportunities for improvement - all in a continuous cycle. This is often depicted as 'Plan-Do-Check-Act' and can equally be applied to health and safety.

Other areas where there is crossover between TQM methods and health and safety include:

- the tools and techniques of TQM (eg process flowcharts, Pareto analysis, cause-and-effect diagrams) which can be applied to health and safety;
- the development of a supportive organisational culture. The TQM philosophy stresses the importance of actively involving all employees in the quality process. It also recognises the crucial importance of visible leadership and the need for consistent emphasis on quality improvement throughout the organization

The business excellence model produced by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) is one benchmark which organisations can use to assess their progress towards business excellence. Health and safety is recognised in this model but many organisations have yet to realise that they can use it to inform and improve their approach to the management of health and safety. HSE funded a research study which examined health and safety activities in several organisations that were at various stages in implementation of TQM. One of the key findings was that visible leadership and emphasis on continual improvement with respect to health and safety lagged behind that for quality of a product or service. One reason for this finding was that senior people lacked appreciation of the business case for health and safety.

Successful organisations can establish and maintain a culture which supports health and safety. Practical ways in which they can design, build, operate and maintain the appropriate systems is contained in the guidance of the key elements of the Safety Management System. The next key element is organizing which will be the subject of the next article.

The content of this article has been derived from ‘Successful Health and Safety Management’ HSG65.

Brian Butler can be contacted on the GCMA Helpline: 01432 761663.

[This document is prepared for guidance and is accurate at the date of publication only. We will not accept any liability (in negligence or otherwise) arising from any member or third party acting, or refraining from acting, on the information contained in this document.]