



Worker Representation

**UNDER THE HEALTH AND
SAFETY AT WORK ACT 2015**



WORKSAFE
NEW ZEALAND | MAHI HAUMARU
AOTEAROA

**WORKER PARTICIPATION IS
ESSENTIAL FOR HEALTH AND
SAFETY AT WORK.**

**WORKER REPRESENTATIVES
ARE ONE WAY FOR WORKERS
TO PARTICIPATE IN IMPROVING
WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY.**

**REPRESENTATION CAN PROVIDE
A VOICE FOR WORKERS WHO
MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE
SPEAK UP.**



Businesses must engage with their workers and have effective worker participation practices. Worker representation is a form of participation.

Businesses should check with their workers about the most effective way for them to participate.

WHAT IS WORKER REPRESENTATION?

Worker representation is about having one or more people representing workers on health and safety matters. Well-established ways to do this include Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), Health and Safety Committees (HSCs) and unions.

Workers can also be represented by:

- > community or church leaders
- > lawyers, occupational physicians or nurses
- > respected members of ethnic communities
- > any other person workers authorise to represent them.

Worker representation has a number of health and safety benefits, including:

- > giving workers a clear, well-known way to raise issues and suggest improvements
- > providing a link between workers and management
- > helping where it's not practical for the business to engage one-on-one with its entire workforce
- > providing a voice for workers who might not otherwise speak up.

SUPPORT

HSRs, HSCs, workers and businesses can ring the WorkSafe Contact Centre on 0800 030 040 for information and advice. You can also use this number – in confidence or anonymously – if you are concerned about an unsafe or unhealthy work situation that could lead to death or serious harm.

WHAT IS A HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE (HSR)?

An HSR is a person chosen by other workers to speak or act on their behalf about health and safety matters.

HSRs can benefit a business by:

- > working with the business to help to identify and manage risks
- > providing a different perspective as they are involved in day-to-day work activities
- > sharing knowledge about health and safety laws and everyone's rights and responsibilities.

On behalf of workers, HSRs generally:

- > represent workers on health and safety matters
- > investigate worker health and safety complaints
- > monitor health and safety measures
- > make health and safety recommendations.

WorkSafe's pamphlet *Health and Safety Representatives* describes an HSR's functions and powers in more detail.

An HSR represents their work group. By default, a work group includes all the workers of a business. However, the business could also group workers by task, risk, location, or shift (after taking workers' views into account).

Any worker can ask for an HSR and any business can choose to have an HSR.

There are some businesses that **must** arrange an election for an HSR if asked. These are businesses with 20 or more workers, or those in a high-risk sector or industry specified in regulations.

WorkSafe's pamphlet *Health and Safety Representatives* describes the process for electing HSRs and what the business must do for them.

WHAT IS A HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (HSC)?

HSCs bring together HSRs, workers and representatives of the business to improve health and safety at work.

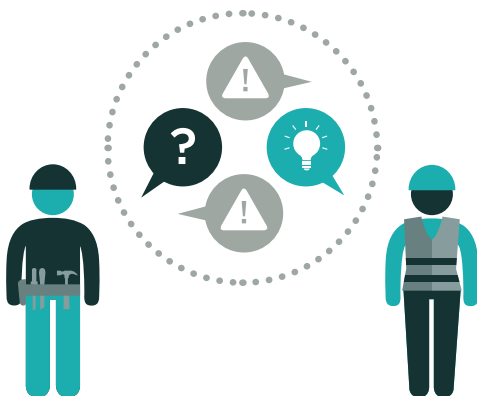
The main functions of an HSC are to:

- > make it easy for the business and workers to cooperate on ways to ensure workers' health and safety
- > assist in developing standards, rules, and policies or procedures for work health and safety
- > make recommendations relating to work health and safety
- > carry out other tasks agreed between the business and the HSC.

Five or more workers or an HSR can request that the business establishes an HSC.

The business can choose to set up an HSC even if an HSR or workers have not asked for one.

WorkSafe's pamphlet *Health and Safety Committees* describes the process for establishing HSCs and what the business must do for them.



WHERE CAN YOU FIND MORE INFORMATION?

For more information about worker engagement, participation and representation see the following WorkSafe resources:

- > Good Practice Guidelines *Worker Engagement, Participation and Representation*
- > Interpretive Guidelines *Worker representation through Health and Safety Representatives and Health and Safety Committees*
- > *Health and Safety Committees* pamphlet
- > *Health and Safety Representatives* pamphlet.

These resources and other information can be found on the WorkSafe website www.worksafe.govt.nz