



Alive 90.5 FM – Your Sound, Your community

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Policy 8 – Safe Workplace

Making a Workplace Safe

Making a workplace safe means that everyone working in the workplace has to be aware, involved and work together to make it safe. Simply having a station OH&S policy is by itself no good, nor is it enough to have the best of intentions.

Everyone in the workplace has to be involved, at a very practical level.

Of course, to develop this awareness and involvement in health and safety, it means the management demonstrating a visible and strong commitment to safe work practices. This in effect means creating a culture in the workplace, where health and safety is preeminent.

It means people feeling comfortable about pointing out where things may not be safe, and having a management that is responsive and willing to do something about it. It means people observing safety signs where they are displayed, participating in training for equipment that may be dangerous to use and wearing protective gear where and when this is required. The culture to develop is one that accepts that everyone is individually and collectively responsible for their own and each other's health and safety.

Some things that can be done to make a workplace safe include:

1. conducting regular maintenance on equipment
2. test and tag electrical equipment
3. keeping a clean environment (particularly studios, toilets, and kitchens)
4. ensuring equipment is properly working.
5. keeping firefighting equipment in correct places
6. conducting regular fire drills
7. checking fire alarms regularly
8. displaying appropriate signs where there are dangers.
9. conducting regular training on proper equipment use
10. storing chemical substances and hazardous materials safely
11. addressing the issue of the use of drugs and alcohol
12. providing ergonomic chairs and desks in studios and offices
13. providing good lighting
14. installing proper heating and air-conditioning
15. conducting first aid training and providing first aid kits
16. ensuring a smoke-free environment
17. providing appropriate sound isolation (where there is noise)
18. monitoring staff work habits (long hours, no breaks)
19. instituting stress management work routines
20. RF hazard testing

21. ensuring emotional safety
22. RSI prevention

However, all this can only happen within a framework that includes:

1. policy
2. communication
3. delegation
4. induction and training
5. risk assessment
6. record keeping

There is a lot of advice available on health and safety, particularly on a number of web sites. These are worth visiting regularly to keep up with the latest information.

These organisations include:

1. Australian Safety and Compensation Council www.ascc.gov.au
2. Workcover NSW www.workcover.nsw.gov.au
3. ACTU www.actu.asn.au/
4. ACCI www.acci.asn.au/OHSBluePrintMain.htm

WH&S Compliance

The way you manage workplace occupational health and safety in the station is prescribed by law, regulations, and codes of practice.

Legislation in Australia was framed using the UK Robens model as a basis, and this was introduced in various States and Territories across the 1970s and 1980s.

The approach recommended by the Robens Report was to provide broad, overarching general duties in the legislation with more detailed provisions in regulations (punishable by law), and codes of practice (these practices guide organisations).

The current WH&S system is outcomes based, and follows a self-regulated and consultative approach: **‘There should be a statutory duty on every employer to consult with ... employees or their representatives at the workplace on measures for promoting safety and health at work, and to provide for the participation of employees in the development of such measures’ (Robens Report, para 70)**

In this model, having workers involved in their own safety is at the basis of the system. There are 10 Acts covering OH&S in Australia. The Commonwealth does not have jurisdiction over the States with regard to OH&S, so each State and Territory has developed its own Act. The Commonwealth has its own Act to cover Commonwealth employees, so depending on which State or Territory you are located, this Act legislates your responsibilities.

The principles embedded in the legislation are similar across Australia and these are to:

1. promote and secure workers’ safety and health
2. protect workers from hazards
3. ensure safe hygienic working conditions
4. reduce, eliminate, and control hazards.
5. encourage cooperation and consultation between employers and employees
6. promote education and awareness of occupational safety and health
7. provide for formulation of policies

Some industries, particularly the dangerous ones such as manufacturing, mining, etc., have developed Codes Of Practice with regard to their OH&S obligations.

Community broadcasting does not have a Code that covers WH&S.

Without a Code, it is important to understand the compliance obligations with respect to the State and Territory legislation and regulations that apply to your station.

WH&S Policies

It is important that the station demonstrates its commitment to workplace health and safety by developing a policy document that clearly states this commitment. This document should be discussed and devised collaboratively with staff and volunteer representatives and taken to the Board or Committee of Management for approval.

A station WH&S policy signals to the whole organisation that the management is serious about occupation health and safety and creating a safe place to work.

What should a policy include?

1. The objectives and intentions of management regarding workplace safety. This statement should reflect the employer (station) obligations to their employees (staff, volunteers) outlined in the relevant state/territory law.
2. General guidelines regarding creating a safe workplace.
3. Support for delegation e.g., OHS representatives or committee.
4. General outlines of responsibility at all levels – Board, management, staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors should be included.
5. Specific policy statements should be made about such things as harassment, bullying, violence, stress management, smoking, alcohol and drug use, fire procedures, manual handling, and maintenance.