

# January 2019 News

2019

- **Miscommunication - It's Easy**
- **Traffic Management**
- **Working in the Heat**

## Welcome to the January Safety Action News

We hope you've all had a great break! We are excited to be back at work and looking forward to getting in touch with our friends and clients.

In this month's edition we explain the dangers of miscommunication in the workplace; how overcomplicated instructions are harmful to your safety program and safety culture, and how you can best correct any such problems. You are invited to attend our Safety Leadership course in March to improve your communication skills.

We also share the latest construction safety campaigns from WorkSafe and tips for working in the heat.

### Stay safe!

Andrea Rowe



Andrea Rowe, General Manager

## Miscommunication – It's Easy!



*By Gary Rowe, CEO Safety Action*

Every organisation communicates messages to staff, and large organisations spend significant time and resources on getting their employees to understand the requirements for workplace safety. However, new research has confirmed (our long held suspicion) that most safety communication is ineffective.

### Complex Safety Systems

One of the biggest problems these days are long and complex safety procedures. When conducting safety audits, we observe that many procedures are 6 to 12 pages long and either lack clear instructions or bury them in amongst an ocean of semi-relevant background material.

A simple test you can apply to any procedure is to ask yourself "does any part of this procedure not give clear instruction?" If so, that section is not a procedure, but background material or training information and should be moved to an appendix or separate training program, or deleted outright (if it serves no purpose).

## Complex Language

Sometimes we cause problems for workers by using formal corporate-level language or citing legal requirements verbatim from legislation and then wonder why workers don't understand or comply.

A recent NZ study by a specialist adult literacy firm, Workbase, has reported some worrying statistics including the following:

- 64% of workers don't understand written safety information such as policies, procedures or hazard alerts;
- Many employees don't understand the purpose of the documents and can't identify the important points;
- Many terms or words common to corporate safety specialists are strange or misunderstood by many workers, including words or phrases like; sustain, visible, appropriate, horseplay, practicable, stationary objects, adversely, compliance and significant hazard;
- Only 20% of workers could accurately complete their employer's hazard report form;
- 14% of supervisors and team leaders were found to have low-level literacy skills;
- Many managers display low or mid-level understanding or interest in the safety process.



The lesson from this study is don't model company policies, procedures or instructions on formal corporate language or official government documents.

Instead, it would be better to:

- Use short sentences with simple words;
- Use the least number of words;
- Write it once and edit five times to simplify;
- Use sentences clear in purpose;
- Use a simple consistent format for each communication, so employees get used to the style.

## Unsure Persons Don't Complain

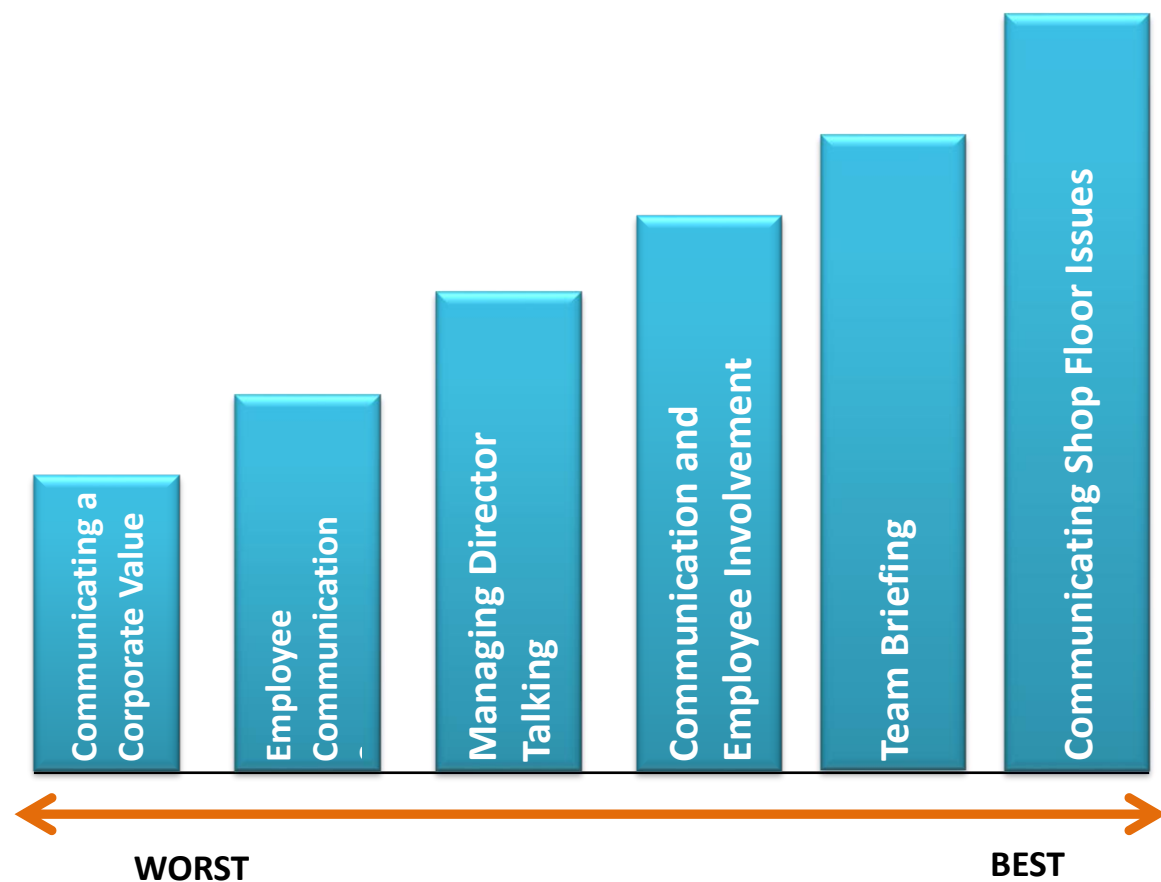
The NZ study also noted that those workers who had low literacy skills usually lacked the confidence, or the language skills to ask for further explanation about things they don't understand, or to challenge anything they do not agree with.

## Effective Types of Employee Communication

Earlier research work conducted by Dr Larkin (*Communicating with Employees – What Works, What Doesn't, IPMA, 1989*) found that most organisations continue to communicate on the things they are interested in, such as share price, business growth, LTI rates, but not on what employees want to hear about i.e. job security, local workplace changes, the safety of their work area and their pay and conditions.

Dr Larkin lists the least effective communication types, through to the most effective per below:

### Communicating with Employees



### In Conclusion

Your communication should be tailored to the interests of your employees to ensure engagement and support. The writing style should be one that is easily understood, gets to the point and does not create confusion.

Questions should be encouraged, and potentially worked into your safety communication program.

***Clarity of expression and ease of understanding are key.***

***Improve your safety communication skills - Effective Safety Communication is included in our 2 Day Safety Leadership Course. See details next page.***

## Safety Leadership Workshop

Learn all about effective communication, the safety legislation, what to do and not to do when there's a safety incident and skills to effectively conduct risk assessments, review work procedures and conduct incident investigations.

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> & Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019  
 Early Bird price \$950+GST (ends 11<sup>th</sup> February)  
 Normal RSVP \$1500+GST  
 8.00am – 4.00pm each day  
 Safety Action, Clayton

[Click here to register.](#)



**BOOK NOW**

## Upcoming Webinars

TUE 22 JAN / 11.00 AM [Safety Leadership Series – Part 1: Reward & Recognition](#)

THU 24 JAN / 10.30 AM [Chemicals - Part 1: Definitions Basics](#)

TUE 5 FEB / 12.30 PM [Machinery Safety - Part 1: Principles](#)

THU 14 FEB / 10.00 AM [PPE Fit Testing – Hearing Protectors](#)

## Mental Health Toolkit Available

The WorkSafe Queensland 'Mentally Healthy Workplaces Toolkit' now available [see link](#). The toolkit helps employers and managers improve psychosocial health in the workplace.

Employers must become proactive in ensuring they are maintaining a mentally healthy workplace. Recent studies on the [State of Workplace Mental Health in Australia](#) show that 9 in 10 Australian employees believe mentally healthy workplaces are important while only 5 in 10 believe their workplace is mentally healthy.

The beginning of the year is a good time for employers and managers to plan programmes and activities to improve the mental health in their workplaces using this toolkit and input from safety experts.



Process for a mentally healthy workplace  
 Ref: WorkSafe QLD

## Traffic Management & Hire Yards

In January 2019 WorkSafe Victoria will be focusing on construction site traffic management as part of the Safe Worker and Traffic (SWAT) Focus Campaign. There will also be focus on Hire Yards this year.

WorkSafe will be focusing on the risks to Traffic Controllers from construction activities, vehicles and heat, heat related illnesses, ultraviolet radiation and fatigue. Inspectors will be checking to ensure employers (principal contractors, and traffic management contractors) are managing these risks.

Below is information about the campaigns. Please share this information with your contacts in the construction industry.



### Traffic campaign

#### WorkSafe will be checking:

The safety of Traffic Controllers. Including:

- protecting Traffic Controllers, mobile plant and equipment from impact by errant vehicles.
- management of risk associated with UV, fatigue, breaks, access to amenities etc.
- the safe setup of construction loading zones, particularly where there is ongoing need to utilise the road for deliveries/set up of plant.

#### Guidance

[VicRoads road work schedule](#)

[Construction safety focus: Construction site traffic management safety](#)

[Information About, Construction Site Loading Zones](#)

[Your health and safety guide, fatigue prevention in the workplace](#)

[A guide for employers skin cancer and outdoor work](#)

### Hire Yard campaign

#### WorkSafe will be checking:

- hirers are providing plant with safe use instructions/ manuals
- inspection and maintenance between each hiring or leasing is being performed
- details of inspection or maintenance is recorded and retained

#### Guidance

[Construction Safety Focus - Hire Yards](#)



## Working in the Heat

As high temperatures and heat waves continue across most parts of Australia, businesses are reminded to protect their workers from health and safety risk associated with working in hot conditions.

Working in heat can lead to illnesses and conditions such as fainting, heat cramps and heat stroke. Other effects include dehydration and reduced concentration which could increase the risk of incidents at work.

To reduce the risk of heat illness: encourage workers to plan their work and address concerns related to working in the heat; ensure workers have suitable protection against the heat e.g. shelters, sunhats, protective clothing etc, provide adequate supervision and finally provide training on identifying and managing heat related symptoms (for example urine colour in dehydration- see chart below).



### Identifying Dehydration – Urine Colour Chart

This urine colour chart will give you an idea of whether a person is drinking enough or is dehydrated (lost too much water from the body).



Ref. Health NSW

To learn more about the issues associated with working in hot weather and how to best manage them, call us for a copy of our detailed Fact Sheets on *Working in the Heat* and *When is heat a Safety issue?*

Call 03 8544 4300 or email [enquiries@safetyaction.com.au](mailto:enquiries@safetyaction.com.au)

[www.safetyaction.com.au](http://www.safetyaction.com.au)

## Chemical Waste Inspections - Victoria

Worksafe with the support of EPA, fire agencies and local council will be removing stored chemicals from several sites in Victoria. This is as a result of inspections finding unsafe storage of chemicals and flammable liquid waste material. [See link](#)

Unsafe storage of chemical can result in adverse health effects on workers, members of the public as well as the environment. This can also result in litigation, high cost of clean-up in the case of the environmental pollution, loss of property (for example in the case of flammable liquids resulting in fire outbreak) and ultimately affect your organisation's brand in the long run.

Employers and managers must ensure safe transportation and storage of chemicals.

For information and support on effective management and storage chemicals in the workplace or review of your current chemical management system contact Safety Action on 03 8544 4300 or email [enquiries@safetyaction.com.au](mailto:enquiries@safetyaction.com.au)



Register for Chemical Webinar. [Book now.](#)

### Safety Networking- Southern Safety Group



The first meeting for 2019 is on 25<sup>th</sup> February is at Safety Action premises in Clayton with Gary Rowe presenting on making workplaces Safer.

25<sup>th</sup> March is at Surdex Steel, Dandenong with an Officer talking about Essential Services in workplaces.

To attend, contact Gary Thexton

Email: [gary.thexton@bigpond.com](mailto:gary.thexton@bigpond.com)

