

Procedure: Consultation and Communication



1. Purpose

To provide support to ensure effective occupational health and safety communication and consultation process occurs in the workplace.

2. Actions Required

- Ensure all identified OHS issues are appropriately resolved.
- Communicate incident investigation outcomes and corrective actions to all workers
- Include OHS as agenda item at team meetings
- Encourage workers to nominate and participate in the OHS committee processes.

3. Definitions

MY SAFETY – Council’s Safety Management System

DWG-Designated work group

GSCC - Greater Shepparton City Council

GSCC RESPONSIBLE OFFICER - A Greater Shepparton City Council employee who has a managerial or supervisory role of employees, contractors or volunteers.

HSR – Health and Safety Representative

INCIDENT/ACCIDENT - Is an event which is unplanned and may have as a result injury or illness.

NEAR MISS - An incident where no injury or property damage has resulted, but had the potential for injury or damage.

NOTIFIABLE INCIDENT - Incidents that result in a certain level of injury or involve certain plant items that must be reported, by legislation to WorkSafe.

SWMS - Safe Work Method Statements.

TOOL BOX MEETING - A meeting usually called to discuss issues, including safety issues, usually within an operations or construction workgroup

WORKER - a person who carries out work in any capacity for GSCC. This includes employees, volunteers or contractors.

4. Responsibility and Authority

Directors

- Delegate appropriate OHS responsibilities and accountabilities to all levels of management.
- Assist with resolution of OHS issues when required
- Ensure that effective consultation, communication and reporting takes place between all workers.
- Support the OHS Committee process

Managers, Team Leaders and Supervisors

- Initiate actions to improve OHS within the responsible areas
- Assist with resolution of OHS issues were required
- Promote and communicate safety awareness
- Consult with employees regarding proposed changes to the workplace or procedures which may affect health and safety
- Implement proposed changes to health and safety procedures and policies
- Promote and encourage OHS discussions.

Employees

- Follow all instructions issued to protect their health and safety and that of others
- Assist in the issue resolution process were required

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- Report safety hazards to working conditions or methods of work
- Participate in OHS discussions.

5. Procedure

Consultation is a two-way exchange of information. It should be seen as an opportunity to add value to the employer's decision-making processes.

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004)* all employers are required to consult with workers and others on matters that affect or are likely to affect their health and safety.

Effective consultation must ensure:

- Workers input is taken into account about OHS issues in the workplace
- A process to address issues raised
- Means to communicate changes and issues to all workers
- A commitment and ownership of decisions is sought.

When to Consult

While employers, HSRs and employees should aim to reach agreement as a result of consultation, agreement is not a required outcome of the Act. An employer is still ultimately responsible for making decisions about health and safety, and controlling risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

Consultation is required:

- To identify hazards and implement control measures
- To resolve identified OHS issues (see attachment 1)
- When making decisions regarding worker facilities
- When changes are proposed to:
 - the workplace (e.g. new buildings, alterations to existing buildings, renovations, maintenance, repairs and minor modifications)
 - Purchases of plant, equipment or materials
 - Tasks performed that may affect the health and safety of workers.

Who to Consult

Workers

A safe workplace is more easily achieved when employers and employees talk to each other about potential problems, and work together to find solutions. From their knowledge of the workplace and work practices, employees can provide valuable input on work hazards. Consultation between employers and employees on occupational health and safety matters can result in; healthier and safer workplaces, better decisions on health and safety matters, a stronger commitment by everyone to implementing decisions, and greater cooperation and trust between employers and employees.

- Supervisors and Managers to consult with workers on OHS issues. Encourage OHS discussions and ensure OHS as an agenda item for branch and department meetings.
- Users of plant, equipment and materials to be included in the purchase, hazard identification and operational procedures development processes.

Contractors

Consultation must include contractors and any employees of the contractor/s who perform work over which the GSCC responsible person has control.

Health and Safety Representatives (HSR)

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A HSR is a worker within a Designated Work Group (DWG) and represents all workers on health and safety matters.

The role may include:

- Providing OHS assistance to workers in the DWG
- Consulting with management on OHS matters
- Assistance in workplace inspections
- Accompanying a WorkSafe Inspector during an inspection of the workplace
- Attending any interview between an employee and a WorkSafe Inspector or management concerning health and safety matters.

Supervisors and Managers should:

- Provide relevant information to the HSR
- Include the HSR in discussions regarding safety issues
- Give the HSR the opportunity to express the views of the work group and take those views into account.

How to Consult

Consultation with workers must involve:

- Providing information to workers in a timely manner
- Providing information that can be understood
- Giving staff a reasonable opportunity to express views and taking those views into account.

Volunteers

GSCC RO's must ensure that volunteers are provided with the same level of communication and consultation on OHS information as GSCC employees. Safety issues raised must be effectively managed and where necessary issues can be brought to the OHS Committee.

Workgroup Meetings

Scheduled meetings with agendas should include OHS as an agenda item to allow open and free communication of OHS matters.

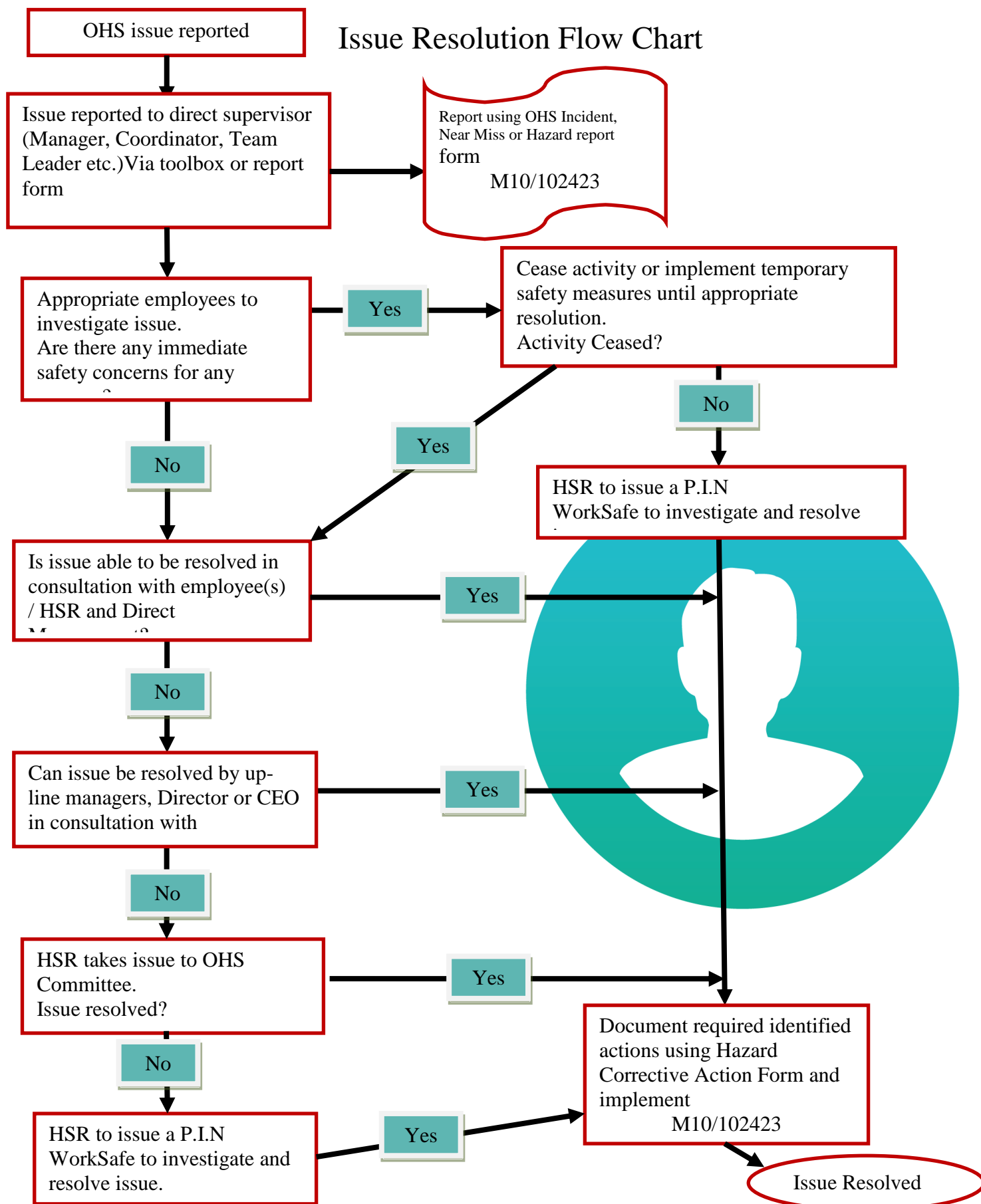
- Tool box meetings should be held at regular intervals to ensure workers have an opportunity to discuss OHS issues.
- A written record or minutes of the meetings should be kept as evidence of consultation and communication.

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Attachment 1

Issue Resolution Flow Chart



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6. Attachments

1. Issue Resolution Chart.

7. References

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Victoria)

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