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RIGHTS AND WELLBEING AT WORK

Safe and Healthy Working Conditions

A GETTING STARTED GUIDE

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CONTENTS

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

This guide is part of our series of Getting Started Guides that supports your company to develop an embedded sustainability strategy. Each guide tackles a specific sustainability sub-issue and explores what your company needs to do to support the resilience of the environmental and social systems around you.

In each guide, we address relevant trends, system thresholds, key concepts, key actors, and key resources. We also offer guidance on how to address the impacts of decisions and activities in your operations and value chains as well as developing credible goals and outlining key corporate actions and internal targets that can help to provide clarity on the work ahead.

We recommend you read the first guide in the series, Getting Started Guides: An Introduction, which explains our overall approach and the value of setting a clear strategy anchored in your company's most material issues. It also explains how you can leverage process-based interim targets to clearly outline and track the specific actions that your company needs to take to achieve its high-level goals.

A complete list of focus areas and sub-issues can be found in our guide Scan: A Comprehensive List of Sustainability Issues for Companies.

This guidebook addresses **Safe and Healthy Working Conditions**, which is part of the broader sustainability issue of Rights and Wellbeing at Work.

To cover the topic of Rights and Wellbeing at Work, we have separated out various key components into specific sub-issues to address them in depth.

The table on the next page provides a brief overview of our guides and the key topics each covers. For specific information and guidance related to any of the key topics, please refer to the appropriate guide.

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GUIDE	KEY TOPICS COVERED
Human Dignity and Integrity (Tackling Modern Slavery): A Getting Started Guide	Freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, or punishment; Freedom from violence or exploitation; Freedom from child labour, forced or compulsory labour, debt bondage, prison labour, or other forms of modern slavery; No human trafficking; No deceptive recruiting practices
Safe and Healthy Working Conditions: A Getting Started Guide (you are here)	Right to safe and healthy conditions of work; Right to refuse unsafe work; Occupational hygiene; Occupational health and safety; Appropriate and safe work from home; Natural lighting and airflow; Climate-related health and safety impacts
Fair Compensation: A Getting Started Guide	Fair compensation; In-work poverty; Family living wage/income; Equal pay for equal work; Eliminating pay disparities; Predictable payment timing; Useable/regionally appropriate currencies; Fair compensation in piecework jobs
Company-Worker Relations: A Getting Started Guide	Respectfully engaging with workers; Freedom of association; Right to collective bargaining; Avoiding protracted negotiations; Psychological safety; Effective social dialogue; Regular, timely, and transparent worker communications; Worker surveys and other input and feedback tools; Works councils; Accessible and transparent worker grievance mechanisms; Whistleblower channels
Respectful, Equitable, and Inclusive Workplace: A Getting Started Guide	Workplace culture; Freedom from bullying, harassment, humiliation, and intimidation; Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI/EDI); or inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA); or justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI); or diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), and other acronyms; Freedom from discrimination; Freedom of opinion and expression; Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; Right to privacy; Respect for group rights (such as the rights of Indigenous Peoples); Cultural leave; Respect for protections for persons with disabilities, children, women and girls, persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, migrant workers, LGTBQIA2S+, older workers, and other groups; Workforce representative of broader society
Workforce Planning and Employee Development: A Getting Started Guide	Workforce planning; Avoiding precarious employment; Responsible retrenchment; Employee lifecycle aligned with sustainability; Feedback and performance management; Career planning; Opportunities for capacity building and personal development; Upskilling and reskilling; Building sustainability-related competencies
Worker Wellbeing: A Getting Started Guide	Good health and wellbeing; Supporting work-life balance; Right to reasonable working hour limitations; Predictable work hours; Right to paid time off; Compassionate leave; Maternity and parental benefits; Elder or child care leave; Access to child care; Health promotion; Access to leisure and exercise; Accessible design; Healthy and culturally appropriate nutrition; Health and injury insurance and other health benefits; Reintegration support; Retirement benefits to support long term financial wellbeing

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1

SETTING THE STAGE – SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING CONDITIONS

Human rights are inherent rights that we all have, simply because we exist as human beings. They cover a broad range of issues, including rights at work. The right to a safe and healthy working environment is a fundamental right for workers. Physical stress, access (or lack thereof) to adequate protections, and workplace stress can have significant impacts on worker health – over 2.9 million workers die as a result of work-related factors and 395 million workers worldwide sustain a non-fatal work injury each year.

Workers can face many different types of hazards at work. Physical hazards can include machinery or material handling and other industry-specific safety hazards, as well as more common hazards such as slips, trips, and falls that can cause physical harm. For many workplaces, there may also be ergonomic hazards from workers standing or sitting for long periods of time, which can risk musculoskeletal disorders or other health issues. Other physical hazards can result from workplace design, such as those relating to airflow and lighting.

Workers can also be exposed to chemical hazards – from materials as simple as cleaning products to complex industrial chemical production – if chemicals are used, stored, or handled improperly, resulting in injury, illness, and more. Biological hazards in the workplace may include bacteria and viruses, food hygiene, and more, which can cause a range of health impacts. Furthermore, workers may also face psychosocial hazards such as workplace stress or bullying. Our companion guide Worker Wellbeing: A Getting Started Guide provides additional information on related topics of physical health, mental health, work-life balance, emotional wellbeing, and financial wellbeing that can contribute to psychosocial hazards.

The UN Global Compact (UNGC) found that "workers most exposed to work-related injuries are workers in precarious employment (temporary, casual or part-time workers), workers in informal employment, […] and work performed by groups subject to discrimination and marginalisation (such as migrant workers, young workers and racial and ethnic minorities)." This suggests adverse work-related impacts disproportionately affect worker groups that are already more vulnerable and/or are afforded less workplace protections.

Impacts on worker health and safety are also more prevalent in specific industries and jurisdictions. The UNGC states that "manufacturing, construction, transportation and storage are the industries that experience the highest level of work-related accidents". The absence of well-embedded, effective policies and operating procedures, a safety-focused workplace culture, and/or access to safety-related training and appropriate personal protective equipment can often increase the risk of rights violations. Additionally, many health impacts are cumulative, with continued impacts worsening their effects, and some adverse impacts, especially chronic health effects, often do not manifest until after a worker has left the role where the impact occurred.

Companies must anticipate, monitor, and control physical, chemical, biological, and psychosocial workplace hazards to prevent adverse impacts on the physical and mental health of workers. They need to be attentive to these impacts in the physical or virtual workplace, including chronic effects that may manifest after employment has ended. Companies must implement appropriate policies, procedures, training, and make suitable personal protective

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equipment available to enable and empower workers (including contractors) to protect themselves from work-related harm, injury, illness, or other adverse health or mental health impacts. Workers have the right to refuse unsafe working conditions and should be empowered to do so through company policies and occupational health and safety systems. This should be paired with mechanisms for workers and their representatives to raise and discuss issues related to health and safety.

The health and safety of workers is also interlinked with the climate crisis. Currently, 2.4 billion workers are exposed to excessive heat each year, and that number is only expected to rise as the impacts of climate change materialise. The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) report on 'Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate' estimates that "[e]very year, […] 22.85 million occupational injuries, 18,970 deaths and 2.09 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) are attributable to excessive heat alone." Furthermore, short and long-term exposure to declining air quality – from smog, wildfire smoke,

and more – can impact workers' respiratory systems and can cause a range of other diseases and chronic health issues. Workers will also be increasingly exposed to hazardous conditions related to extreme weather events as floods, fires, droughts, windstorms, and other events increase in intensity and frequency due to climate change.

70% of workers face serious health hazards due to climate change

Source: ILO

Companies need to understand, anticipate, and address emerging workplace hazards stemming from the impacts of climate change.

Note: Sustainability issues are generally systemic issues, because they are deeply interconnected and rooted in complex environmental, social, and economic systems. In these guides, a system threshold is defined as the point at which the resilience of an environmental, social, or economic system becomes compromised. This occurs when the total impacts imposed on the system exceed its capacity to assimilate those impacts.

SYSTEM THRESHOLD

Everyone has a right to a safe and healthy workplace. Work-related accidents and diseases can have long-lasting and devastating impacts on workers, their families, and their communities. Companies cannot continue to rely on systems or processes that put the health and safety of workers at risk without adequately managing those risks. They need to take steps to prevent work-related injuries and diseases as well as protect and promote worker health. This includes aspects such as proper occupational hygiene, health, and safety measures, as well as considerations for the impacts of climate change on worker's health and safety.

KEY TOPICS WITHIN SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING CONDITIONS:

- Right to safe and healthy conditions of work
- Right to refuse unsafe work
- Occupational hygiene
- Occupational health and safety
- Appropriate and safe work from home
- Natural lighting and airflow
- Climate-related health and safety impacts

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P R O J E C T

2

KEY CONCEPTS

SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING CONDITIONS

As of June 2022, a "safe and healthy working environment" is included in the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) framework of fundamental principles and rights and work. This defines the key responsibilities of employers, including requirements that they:

- "Ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the workplaces, machinery, equipment and processes under their control are safe and without risk to health;
- Ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the chemical, physical and biological substances and agents under their control are without risk to health when appropriate measures of protection are taken;
- Provide, where necessary at no cost to the worker, adequate protective clothing and protective equipment to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, risk of accidents or adverse effects on health."

Additionally, workers have the right to refuse unsafe work and remove themselves from situations of imminent threat or serious danger, without the risk of negative consequences. The ILO also outlines basic worker rights related to their health and safety, including key responsibilities for adequate training, cooperation between management and workers (and/or their representatives), and more. A comprehensive overview of the right to a safe and healthy working environment and related responsibilities can be found here.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Occupational safety and health, as defined by the ILO, is "the prevention of work-related injuries and diseases as well as the protection and promotion of the health of workers". Occupational hygiene (or industrial hygiene), as defined by the ILO, focuses on "the anticipation, recognition, evaluation and control of hazards arising in or from the workplace, and which could impair the health and well-being of workers, also taking into account the possible impact on the surrounding communities and the general environment." Safety conditions are also a part of ILO's Agenda for Decent Work.

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Companies are also increasingly understanding the role of psychological health and safety in building safe and healthy working conditions for all. Psychological health, as defined by Guarding Minds at Work, "comprises our ability to think, feel, and behave in a manner that enables us to perform effectively in our work environments, our personal lives, and in society at large." Psychological safety "deals with the risk of injury to psychological well-being. Improving psychological safety in a work setting involves taking precautions to avert injury or danger to employee psychological health that is within the influence and responsibility of an employer." The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety defines psychosocial risk (PSR) factors as including:

- Balance
- Civility and Respect
- Clear Leadership and Expectations
- Engagement
- Growth and Development
- Involvement and Influence
- Organisational Culture
- Protection of Physical Safety
- Psychological Competencies and Demands
- Psychological Protection
- Psychological and Social Support
- Recognition and Reward
- Workload Management

Explore Mental Health - Psychosocial Risk Factors in the Workplace for additional information on each factor, why it is important, and what happens when it is lacking.
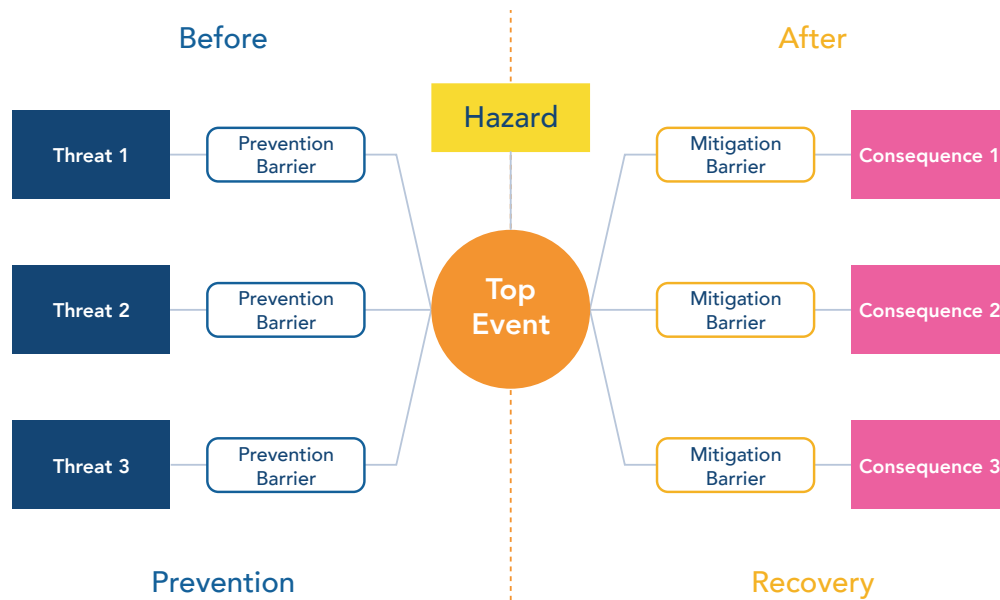
HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT

A proactive, ongoing process to identify workplace hazards and assess the risks and potential impacts to workers is a crucial element of an effective health and safety program.

Hazard identification is the process of recognising potential sources of harm (hazards) in a specific environment, whereas understanding the impact involves assessing the potential consequences of those hazards. The determination of risk is often based on a combination of the likelihood (or probability) of the harm being realised and the severity of the consequences.

RISK = LIKELIHOOD X SEVERITY		LIKELIHOOD				
		RARE/ EXTREMELY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	POSSIBLE	LIKELY	ALMOST CERTAIN
SEVERITY	CATASTROPHIC					
	MAJOR					
	MODERATE					
	MINOR					
	NEGLIGIBLE/INSIGNIFICANT					

There are several tools and frameworks that can be leveraged to identify hazards, develop risk scenarios, and assess the risks and impacts on workers that may arise from these hazards. For instance, ISO 45001 is the international standard for occupational health and safety (OH&S) management systems. It provides a framework for organisations to proactively improve their OH&S performance, prevent work-related injuries and ill health, and create safer and healthier workplaces.

Another often used risk assessment framework is a 'bowtie analysis'. Bowtie Analysis is a graphical risk evaluation tool that focuses on a specific potential hazard event (often called the top event) and helps to visually map the sources of risk (threats), potential outcomes (consequences), and the potential development and effectiveness of controls (protective barriers and mitigation barriers) against harm. A bowtie analysis can also help to identify key risk indicators (KRIs) to track the performance of your risk controls.
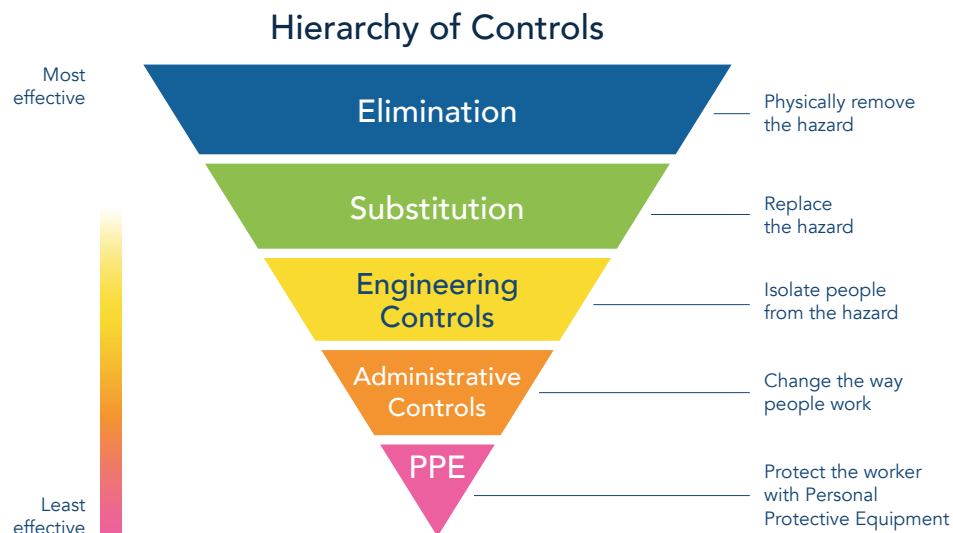
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Before		After

Hazard

Threat 1 — Prevention Barrier

Threat 2 — Prevention Barrier

Top Event

Threat 3 — Prevention Barrier

Mitigation Barrier — Consequence 1

Mitigation Barrier — Consequence 2

Mitigation Barrier — Consequence 3

Prevention

Recovery

Adapted from the Rail Safety and Standards Board

HAZARD PREVENTION AND CONTROLS

Once work hazards have been identified and assessed they need to be prevented or controlled as close to the source (the location of the hazard) as reasonably practical. This involves designing and implementing workplace programs and procedures that control or prevent chemical, physical, biological, psychosocial or other risks to workers. It also involves educating managers, supervisors, and workers about maintaining workplace safety; demonstrating the proper use of safety equipment and other controls and ensuring their proper use by

workers; and investigating incidents to determine the cause and possible prevention in the future.

Depicted below, the hierarchy of controls is a method of identifying and ranking safeguards to protect workers from hazards, lower worker exposures, and reduce their risk of illness or injury. The controls are ranked by effectiveness and include elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment. Often, a combination of control methods will be required to best protect workers.

Hierarchy of Controls

Most effective

Elimination — Physically remove the hazard

Substitution — Replace the hazard

Engineering Controls — Isolate people from the hazard

Administrative Controls — Change the way people work

PPE — Protect the worker with Personal Protective Equipment

Least effective

Adapted from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

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Hazard control options and implementation should begin with the **elimination** of the hazard entirely, where feasible, for hazard prevention to be most effective. For example, this can include changing processes to eliminate the use of certain hazardous materials or tools and ensure no exposure can occur. If elimination is not possible, employers should **substitute** the process or material for a safer alternative to reduce exposure and consider potential new risks that may emerge from the substitution. Although they are the most effective, elimination and substitution often rely on design and can be difficult to implement into pre-existing systems and processes. They are crucial components of the 'Prevention By Design' approach which "encompasses all of the efforts to anticipate and design out hazards to workers in facilities, work methods and operations, processes, equipment, tools, products, new technologies, and the organisation of work."

For systems and processes already in place, **engineering controls** can be used to modify equipment or the workplace to reduce or prevent hazard exposure. These can include controls such as improved ventilation systems, noise enclosures, protective barriers, and more. These controls should be implemented alongside **administrative controls** that create and implement practices that support reduced exposures such as proper training, inspections, and other procedures.

When exposure to hazards remain after implementing these other controls, employers are required to provide appropriate **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** to reduce the risk to workers. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as defined by the ILO, is "equipment that will protect the user against the risk of accidents or of adverse effects on health. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear, safety harnesses and respiratory protective equipment (RPE)." It can also include heat and UV protection items or other identified PPE as climate-related health hazards worsen. To ensure that people can work safely and responsibly, workers need to be properly trained in the effective use of personal protective equipment.

Often, properly addressing risks and protecting the health and safety of workers will call for a combination of controls. To understand where to place controls, it is helpful to undertake an analysis to identify **critical control points.** The concept of critical control points was developed in the field of food safety. Critical control points are the second and third principles of a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system – the procedures and management required to ensure food safety. Critical control points are "a step at which the application of a control measure is essential to prevent or eliminate any biological, chemical or physical hazard". The approach has been extended to other industries and workplaces to identify and prioritise other risks and apply controls. Engaging in a process to identify critical control points, and their associated critical limit, (such as the bowtie analysis described above) can be a helpful way to ensure that the right controls are in place to protect the health and safety of workers.

INCIDENT REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION

A health and safety incident investigation system is a structured approach to identifying the causes of workplace incidents, near misses, and injuries to prevent future occurrences. It involves a series of steps, including immediate actions to secure the scene and address any injuries, followed by a thorough investigation to determine the root cause, and finally, implementing corrective actions to prevent recurrence.

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WORKER HEALTH AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Workers are increasingly exposed to the dangerous impacts of climate change at work, yet most occupational health and safety measures have not adequately addressed these emerging risks. The ILO report on 'Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate' highlights direct climate-related health risks and impacts, including:

- Excessive heat, resulting in heat stress and exhaustion, cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, and more.
- UV radiation, resulting in sunburns, acute eye damage, skin cancer, and more.
- Extreme weather events, resulting in a range of impacts based on the nature of the weather event.
- Workplace air pollution, resulting in lung cancer, respiratory diseases, and more.
- Vector borne diseases, such as increased exposure to malaria, dengue, and others.
- Exposure to agrochemicals, resulting in poisoning, cancer, endocrine disruption, and many more chronic health issues.

Workers may also face additional impacts, such as stress and anxiety, resulting in threats to their emotional and mental wellbeing.

While climate-related health and safety risks will impact many industries, workers conducting outdoor work or those working in facilities without appropriate cooling are at particular risk. This can include sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, construction, emergency response, manufacturing, and more.

Considerations for climate-related workplace health and safety impacts are increasingly being embedded into Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation and standards. The ILO notes that "[m]any countries have implemented new laws to specifically address excessive heat in the working environment. These primarily include maximum temperature limits and guidelines for adaptive measures at the workplace level. For other climate change impacts, protections for workers are mainly integrated into existing OSH or environmental regulations." In response to rising risks due to climate change, ISO 45001 – an international standard for occupational health and safety (OH&S) management systems – has also introduced an amendment to better address climate action changes in health and safety systems.

Going forward, companies will need to take climate-related health and safety risks and impacts into account when designing workplace health and safety policies and programs. This means understanding how climate change is impacting the organisation's workforce, the different ways these health risks can manifest, and integrating considerations for climate-related health impacts into workplace hazard identification, risk assessment, and more.

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3

KEY PLAYERS

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) aims to promote social justice and internationally recognised human and labour rights. Their international labour standards (conventions and recommendations) and the other instruments on occupational safety and health (codes of practice and guidelines) aim at ensuring and promoting a safe and healthy working environment.

The ILO's Vision Zero Fund aims for a world with zero workplace deaths, accidents and diseases. It partners with governments, employers, and workers to provide data-driven guidance and support a global alliance of experts in worker safety and health.

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) is the chartered body for health and safety professionals. It has more than 50,000 members in over 130 countries and supports members to make the world of work safer and healthier.

In many jurisdictions, Occupational Health and Safety is well-legislated and government bodies provide robust information on fundamental company expectations.

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4 COMMITTING TO TAKE ACTION – MID- AND LONG-TERM GOALS

Committing to take action on **Safe and Healthy Working Conditions** can include addressing many of the key topics listed above. The mid- and long-term commitments that your organisation elects to make should be based on your identified priorities, areas of greatest impact, and your capacity to undertake the work required. It is important to note that this section does not provide all possible mid- and long-term goals related to this issue, but rather a sample of the goals that were most frequently adopted by companies in our research.

For Safe and Healthy Working Conditions, leading and lagging indicators are collectively used to frame and guide performance on workplace health and safety programs.

Leading indicators related to safe and healthy working conditions, as defined by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, are "proactive, preventative, and predictive measures taken to identify and eliminate hazards in the workplace. Leading indicators look forward to future health and safety performance with the goal of continually improving." These indicators are based on impact. Examples of leading indicators for safety and health include engagement in training programs, frequency of safety audits, and more.

Lagging indicators related to safe and healthy working conditions, as defined by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, are "a record of what has happened. They look back and measure a company's health and safety performance by tracking incident statistics such as: Injury frequency and severity; Lost time injuries; Incidents (including property damage, environmental spill); Near-misses and close calls; [and] workers' compensation costs." These indicators are retroactively compiling effectiveness.

Based within the context of leading and lagging indicators, common mid- and long-term goals and/or commitments on **Safe and Healthy Working Conditions** include variations of the following:

Long-term goal: Eliminate fatalities, serious injuries, and occupational disease.

- Zero fatalities every year
- Reduce rate of accidents or injuries per [X] hours worked by [X%] (often quantified as a Lost Time Incident Rate)
- Eliminate occupational disease by monitoring and implementing controls for [X]
- Reduce the rate of new occupational illnesses and chronic illnesses each year
- 100% of workers engaged in workplace health and safety training programs by 20[XX]
- 100% of managers trained in occupational health and safety by 20[XX]
- Foster work environments that are free from psychological harm by strengthening our psychosocial risk management and building psychological safety
- 100% of strategic suppliers are building healthy and safe workplaces by 20[XX]

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5

HOW TO GET THERE – PROCESS-BASED INTERIM TARGETS

Note: The following proposed timelines are only for guidance and are based on the pace outlined by other companies. The timeframe for actions and work for each step needs to be embedded in your organisational context, which may require different time allocations.

PROCESS THAT SHOULD ALREADY BE IN PLACE: UNDERSTAND YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

Most jurisdictions have occupational health and safety regulations that outline the legal responsibility of employers to ensure that the working environment provides workers with a safe and healthy place to work. From a compliance perspective, your company should already understand and be aligned with regulatory requirements for safe and healthy working conditions and any additional requirements for your industry in the jurisdictions where you operate.

YEAR 1: IDENTIFY AND ASSESS HAZARDS

Assess your company's workplaces to identify existing and potential physical, chemical, biological and/or psychosocial hazards for workers. Identify trends in your company's health and safety data where possible to understand root causes for hazards and areas of concern. Identify and understand the role of additional hazards and risks posed by aspects outside of traditional health and safety approaches, such as the role of climate change and mental health. Set up processes, such as a bowtie analysis or critical controls points, and audits, to periodically inspect and assess the effective functioning of key safety measures to ensure all hazards are captured and that controls are effective in mitigating risks.

Also take the time to build out your organisational understanding of climate-related health and safety risks and how they may impact workers. Identify specific climate-related hazards of concern and assess the likelihood of those hazards to cause harm to workers. For instance, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety recommends that companies "add climate-related hazard identification and risk assessment to routine workplace assessment and inspection procedures to make sure the situations are monitored regularly."

Identifying hazards is also a daily or task-specific activity that each worker should undertake, unless in low-risk roles. In certain industries, this is framed as Take 5 Safety, where workers are encouraged to undertake a 5-step procedure to prevent accidents. The steps include Stop and Think; Look and Identify; Assess the Risk; Control Hazards; and Monitor Hazards.

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Examples of process-based targets for Year 1:

- By [20XX], we will complete the initial process to identify and assess key hazards and risks related to occupational health and safety.
- By 20[XX], we will set up iterative processes to continuously identify and assess hazards and risks on a [weekly, monthly, annual] basis.
- By 20[XX], we will have all sites identify at least one critical health hazard and set targets to demonstrate a year-on-year reduction of exposure to that hazard.
- By 20[XX], we will analyse the risk climate change poses to the health and safety of workers.
- By 20[XX], we will add climate-related hazard identification and risk assessment to routine workplace assessment and inspection procedures.
- We will complete at least [X] critical control [or critical risk management] verifications across all sites.
- By 20[XX], we will set up a process to complete periodic [weekly, monthly, annual] assessments and spot checks for critical control verifications.
- By 20[XX], we will set up a process to complete critical control verifications prior to starting all high-risk work.

YEAR 2: DEVELOP A HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM WITH CRITICAL CONTROLS

Develop and implement a robust health and safety management system (HSMS), including appropriate policies, procedures, and recordkeeping. These should be supported by relevant systems to capture and monitor performance data on health and safety. The complexity and scope of your HSMS may vary, depending on your workplace context and the hazards present in the nature of the work performed. The system should include a clear commitment by senior leadership to health and safety, processes for identifying hazards and managing risk, safe work procedures, workplace inspections, and health and safety training as relevant.

This is not a comprehensive list – the requirement for health and safety management systems will vary by jurisdiction and should be embedded in your industry context. Many companies choose to align their management system with ISO45001, the international standard for Occupational Health and Safety management.

Based on your identified hazards and health and safety management system, define clear leading and lagging indicators to measure progress. As a part of your health and safety management system, create hazard control plans that clearly outline controls used for various identified hazards and how those controls will be monitored for effectiveness. Aligned with the hazard control plans, also create emergency response plans that outline procedures, including during climate-related emergency events.

YEAR 2: DEVELOP AN INCIDENT RESPONSE, INVESTIGATION, AND REPORTING SYSTEM

Develop an incident response or emergency response plan that outlines how to prepare for and respond to an incident. Establish a response team with various qualifications and roles, as well as backup responders in case of absences. Specify responsibilities, such as which roles and individuals are notified and respond to which incidents, what processes they must follow, how effects are contained, and what incidents can be treated onsite.

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Also create an incident investigation plan that provides guidance on investigating and reporting incidents or near misses that happen in the workplace. This should outline what data is required, scene management processes, and how to determine root causes. Ensure that this aligns with national and regional reporting requirements. There must also be processes in place to analyse the data from incident reporting and response systems to develop plans for corrective actions that help to prevent future incidents.

CASE STUDY: Using data to improve health and safety at Rio Tinto

Leveraging existing health and safety data, Rio Tinto tracks patterns to identify key indicators of incidents. This includes analysing traditional health and safety metrics, as well as other factors such as weather and accommodation. The company has also piloted the use of wearable technology to gather data on aspects such as employee fatigue to better understand and assess hazards. Identifying these patterns provides an avenue for the company to proactively use additional controls to prevent incidents.

Examples of process-based targets for Year 2:

- By [20XX], we will develop a robust health and safety management system, aligned with ISO 45001.
- By 20[XX], we will establish written health and safety policies and procedures.
- By 20[XX], we will develop clear leading and lagging indicators and goals for health and safety.
- By 20[XX], we will create hazard control plans that clearly outline controls used for identified hazards and how those controls will be monitored.
- By 20[XX], we will develop emergency response policies and procedures aligned with the industry's best practices and specific requirements.
- By 20[XX], we will expand our Workplace Health and Safety program to address risks associated with exposures to [relevant substances such as hazardous dust and fumes and/or climate-related health hazards].
- By 20[XX], we will provide accident insurance to all workers.
- By 20[XX], we will develop an incident or emergency response plan.
- By 20[XX], we will develop an incident reporting and response system.

YEAR 3: FOSTER A CULTURE OF SAFETY

Begin by understanding the current culture around health and safety in your organisation – what are the prevailing attitudes that are embedded in your organisation's vision and culture and how do workers perceive the effectiveness of current health and safety systems? Build internal capabilities around key topics through training and encourage leadership to be visible champions for health and safety to support its prioritisation within the organisation. Regularly communicate priorities and processes to ingrain them within your company culture, whether that be through specific programs dedicated to raising awareness, training workshops, or additional mechanisms. Build a process for employees to share identified risks and/or concerns throughout their workday. Safety culture is typically a part of a broader workplace culture on health and wellness – and for many companies, these processes will be interlinked. Explore Worker Wellbeing: A Getting Started Guide for guidance on fostering worker wellbeing.

Explore the current role leadership plays in reinforcing the culture of safety your organisation is aiming to foster. For certain companies, it may make sense to consider linking variable compensation, such as bonuses, to health and safety metrics to help build leadership engagement and influence.

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CASE STUDY: Teck's culture of safety.

Teck's 'Courageous Safety Leadership Program' explores values, beliefs, and attitudes towards health, safety, and wellness in the organisation. It aims to build a personal safety leadership culture, encouraging and empowering employees to play an active role in their own health and safety at work through training and reflection. Workers are also asked to set personal commitments to work in a safe and healthy manner to further foster a culture of safety.

YEAR 3: SUPPORT SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING CONDITIONS FOR CONTRACTORS

Outline how contractors will interact with your health and safety management system. If contractors are working on site and following differing health and safety standards than your workforce, it can put them and your workers at risk. Clearly define appropriate policies and procedures for the health and safety of contractors on your site and ensure this is aligned with legislation in the jurisdictions where you operate as well as integrated into your internal health and safety management system. Create processes to communicate the relevant procedures to ensure contractors adhere to your standards on site. For some companies that rely extensively on contractors, it may be necessary to undertake this process (and develop associated process-based targets) much earlier alongside the development of your own health and safety management system.

Examples of process-based targets for Year 3:

- By 20[XX], we will develop a structured plan to build a culture of safety.
- By 20[XX], we will train [X] employees to build/enhance internal capabilities around health and safety.
- By 20[XX], we will establish minimum training requirements for all individuals with identified roles and responsibilities in health, safety, and/or emergency response procedures [beyond any job-specific training on hazardous work that is already a part of worker onboarding].
- By 20[XX], we will enhance employees' ability to identify and be aware of health and safety risks throughout the workplace through training. We will ensure employees have an effective channel to communicate any identified risks.
- By 20[XX], we will establish a communication plan for health and safety.
- By 20[XX], we will create a health and safety committee to empower management and employee representatives to jointly coordinate the specific measures and initiatives.
- By 20[XX], we will tie executives' short-term (bonuses) and long-term variable compensation to performance against a set of health and safety goals.
- By 20[XX], we will refine our subcontractor management safety prequalification process.
- By 20[XX], we will screen contractors for health and safety performance and their ability to adhere to company standards.
- By 20[XX], we will help subcontractors design and, where appropriate, implement safety improvement programs.
- By 20[XX], we will strengthen our Occupational Health and Safety Management approach for contractors and align it with our operations.

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YEAR 4: SUPPORT SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING CONDITIONS IN YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

Extend your learnings to improve health and safety in your supply chain. Begin by mapping your supply chains and assess what industries or jurisdictions may be a source of health and safety risk. Assess existing supplier and contractor data to determine whether existing or new suppliers may fall short of your company's standard. Engage with key supply chain partners to gain an understanding of their existing occupational health and safety (OSH) challenges. Consider how you will integrate OSH compliance and injury protection into your procurement practices. Share knowledge, resources, good practices, and learnings from your own journey to build supplier capacity and support progress.

CASE STUDY: IKEA's approach to fostering health and safety in their supply chain

IKEA clearly defines requirements for health and safety across their value chain under their IWAY program and mandatory compliance is a core part of contracts with suppliers and service providers. IWAY requirements can be read in full here and include providing accident insurance, assessing and acting on occupational health and safety risks, implementing safe working routines, personal protective equipment for workers, reporting on accidents, near misses, and safety hazards, and more.

Examples of process-based targets for Year 4:

- By 20[XX], we will map our suppliers to gain a better understanding of current occupational health and safety issues in our supply chain.
- By 20[XX], we will review and update, as necessary, our Responsible Sourcing Requirements on OHS.
- By 20[XX], we will co-develop strategies to support safe and healthy working conditions within our supply chain.
- By 20[XX], we will have [X]% of suppliers with health and safety maturity. (Levels of maturity defined by organisation or external party).
- By 20[XX], we will engage and support prioritised direct suppliers in taking actions to address OHS risks and impacts in their own operations and supply chains.
- By 20[XX], we will collaborate with suppliers to develop common approaches and tools for health and safety.

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RESOURCES

GUIDANCE

UNDERSTANDING SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

If you are searching for news, research, or other information on labour-specific topics (e.g. wages, fair recruitment, decent work, etc.), Occupational Safety and Health in Sectors and Industries is a good place to start. The International Labour Organisation is a one-stop shop for work-safety related resources. Their platform includes international labour standards, codes of practices, training materials, good practices, reports, and papers and policy briefs, and also provides sector-specific content.

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL

How to carry out a risk assessment by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work outlines a quick overview of a step-by-step approach to risk assessment and offers additional links to better understand risk assessment processes in the European context.

Hazard and Risk – Hazard Identification by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety explains the common types of hazards and the various processes to identify them in an easy-to-understand way.

Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs: Hazard Identification and Assessment by the United States of America's Occupational Safety and Health Administration provides a step-by-step guide for hazard identification and assessment, split into clear action items for employers to follow.

TAKING ACTION IN YOUR ORGANISATION

ISO 45001 specifies requirements for an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system and provides guidance for its implementation. These guidelines are applicable to any organisation that wants to establish and maintain effective OH&S measures to eliminate hazards and minimise risks and system deficiencies.

The Guide to Writing an OHS Policy Statement from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety will help you to create an effective health and safety policy statement. It explains the types of issues that your policy should cover, key considerations, and includes an example of a policy checklist for reviewing new and existing OHS policies. Although this resource was created for the Canadian context, the content is appropriate for any geographic or industrial context.

Emergency Response by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety offers factsheets, databases, and additional resources to develop an incident or emergency response plan.

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Take 5 Safety: A Guide by SafetyCulture explains the Take 5 approach and its 5 steps to quick safety checks prior to starting work that can support accident prevention and worker safety on site.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate from the ILO can help you understand the effects of climate change on worker health and safety. It presents evidence on the health consequences of seven key climate impacts, including excessive heat, UV exposure, air pollution, and vector-borne disease. For each impact, it explains the risk to worker health and safety and provides examples of how the risk can be mitigated.

Climate Change: Workplace Impacts Handbook by the Canadian Centre for occupational Health and Safety offers an overview of the impacts of climate change on workers and provides guidance on addressing climate-related hazards and risks. It also provides examples of climate-related hazards and associated sample control measures to help your organisation quickly understand the different paths towards addressing climate-related hazards.

UNDERSTANDING AND TAKING ACTION ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Psychological Safety in Practice: A Guidebook for Managers from the CEO Health + Safety Leadership Network provides practical tips, tools, and insights on four areas of psychological safety. This includes the process of developing a work environment where people feel respected and heard; creating a sense of purpose and belonging by building connections and managing emotions; supporting mental health and resilience; and adopting a personal growth mindset that destigmatises failure. The guide also features a set of real-life scenarios that offer practical advice from experts.

Guarding Minds at Work, developed by research-practitioners from the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University, is a comprehensive resource to help you assess and address psychological health and safety in your workplace.

TAKING ACTION IN SUPPLY CHAINS

Nine Business Practices for Improving Safety and Health Through Supply Chains from the United Nations Global Compact and the ILO identifies nine practices that your business can implement to advance decent work and improve occupational health and safety (OH&S). This document may be of particular use for managers, safety supervisors, HR personnel, and change agents who are overseeing or supporting OH&S activities in countries with insufficient employment injury protection measures.

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This Occupational Safety and Health in Global Value Chains Starter kit from the ILO can help you advance the health and safety of workers in your value chain. It features a user guide that explains the overall structure and methodology, as well as a detailed four-step process (value chain selection, value chain mapping, value chain analysis, and intervention design). Each step includes learning objectives, defined outputs, methods, and a list of supportive tools. The kit also provides training materials and exercises for each of the four steps, and a case study demonstrating the roll-out for this process. This guidance will be most useful to supply chain management and sustainability teams, especially those working on the ground with suppliers.

TOOLS

This Health and Climate Change Data Explorer from the Lancet Countdown can help you understand the impacts of climate change on human health and the economy through data visualisation. It assesses a wide range of topics, including climate health hazards, adaptation measures, the health co-benefits of mitigation, the financial cost of climate change, and trends in the discourse around climate and health. This is a good resource for sustainability and enterprise risk managements teams that need to communicate climate impacts to business leaders, peers, and suppliers.

Online Interactive Risk Assessment by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work is a generic (non-industry specific) tool to help any business build a robust preventive action plan to maintain a safe and healthy working environment for its employees. It provides comprehensive guidance on identifying risks and selecting controls for hazards across many different workplaces and situations.

Explore more curated resources on Safe and Healthy Working Conditions here.

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