

Safety Walks and Safety Observations

Introduction

This document sets out work health and safety (WHS) guidelines for Participating Agencies (the Agency/s) of the Across Government Facilities Management Arrangements (AGFMA) to undertake Safety Walks and Safety Observations (collectively known as 'safety interactions'). According to International studies (e.g. Cambridge University, DEKRA, DuPont, etc.), safety interactions are a best practice approach to WHS with demonstrated benefits for organisations such as reduced accidents in the workplace, improved understanding of WHS in the workplace and improved worker morale.

What are Safety Walks?

Safety Walks are intended to be a leadership function and should be performed by Agency Chief Executives, Executive Directors, Directors and Senior Managers/Project Managers (Safety Leaders). Performing programmed Safety Walks demonstrates a commitment 'from the top' to WHS in the workplace.

Safety Walks are sometimes mistaken as a Workplace Inspection, however these are different activities.

- A **Safety Walk** is usually performed without the use of a checklist in order to provide an opportunity for Safety Leaders to engage 'organically' with workers, observe behaviours and surroundings and provide verbal feedback to the internal stakeholders at that time.
- Comparatively, a **Workplace Inspection** results in a documented record of an inspection against a specific requirement e.g. procedure, legislation, manufacturer specification, asset condition, housekeeping. These are typically undertaken by supervisors, team leaders and WHS personnel.

What are Safety Observations?

Safety Observations are a targeted task designed for verifying compliance with procedures / job instructions and to assess a workers understanding of the procedure's objectives. A Safety Observation involves at least two participants who observe a worker performing a task/activity and engaging them in a conversation to discuss:

- Positive safety practices
- Unsafe work behaviours¹
- Areas and/or strategies for WHS improvements
- Any other safety issues or concerns related to the task/activity

There are 3 key steps of a Safety Observation:

1. *Identify* the documented instruction to be observed.
2. *Observe* and document the work practices.
3. *Review* observed practices against the documentation.

¹ Safety Observations are not a disciplinary process. If an unsafe behaviour is observed, the intent is to have an honest conversation and coach/mentor the worker so the correct behaviours are adopted.

A Safety Observation includes determining if whether a documented procedure/instruction is appropriate for ensuring that risks are identified, it provides for safe and productive work and importantly, that worker/s are aware of and understand the documented instruction.

Safety Observations can be undertaken for tasks which involve the following workers:

- Agency employee
- Trainee
- Volunteer
- Outworker
- Apprentice
- Work experience student
- Contractor or sub-contractor
- Employee of a contractor or sub-contractor
- Employee of a labour hire company assigned to work for the Agency

In conjunction with the above, Agencies should develop or source a Safety Observation tool, be it paper based, editable PDF or an online App.

Where to now?

Participating Agency Chief Executives are encouraged to assign an appropriately experienced and qualified WHS Advisor to develop, implement and maintain safety programs which include Safety Walks and Safety Observations, as described in this Guide Note. The Agency WHS Advisor should actively participate in the two processes and encourage active participation by a representative of the Agency's contracted Facility Management Service Providers (FMSP).

Targets and Performance

Reasonable targets should be established and mandated for the Safety Leaders to achieve. Once targets are established, performance data can be captured, monitored and measured, with overall performance levels reported to WHS Committees and other Agency review forums. Notwithstanding, the emphasis should be on quality, not 'target hitting'; and should demonstrate engagement, collaboration and documented behaviours observed.

A regular analysis of the quality and quantity of safety observations in the field and reviewing records is recommended. Some indicators of quality performance may include, but is not limited to:

- Number of positive observations
- Number of safety observations against target (by type of activity, group and person)
- Number and percentage of safety observations with no other observer
- Percentage of positive WHS behaviours versus "at risk" behaviours observed (percentage Safe)
- Action close out rate for actions raised from safety observation activities
- Percentage of safety observations that do not generate any actions

Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Participating Agency Chief Executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the development and maintenance of procedures for Safety Walks and Safety Observations.• Allocate appropriate resource/s to undertake both processes.• Participate in Safety Walks.• Establish reasonable targets or KPIs.
Participating Agency Managers/Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and participate in the undertaking of Safety Walks and Safety Observations.
Facilities Management Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participate, where relevant, in the processes outlined in this guide note.
Contracted Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cooperate with any Safety Walk or Safety Observation that includes the contracted worker's scope of work.• Implement any safety action recommended by the Agency