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# GOOD HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE

A LINE MANAGER'S GUIDE



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INTERNATIONAL  
WORKPLACE

# INTRODUCTION

Organisations have always measured performance. It is essential that an organisation knows its financial position, for instance, for investment, financing and tax purposes. Employees' performance is evaluated and appraised. Sports clubs examine the performance of athletes looking for improvement. A board of directors' performance is accountable to trustees or investors. Politicians' performance is evaluated at the ballot box.

Health and safety performance reporting is well established as an indicator of an organisation's social

responsibility. If a company cannot look after its own employees these days that would represent an indictment against its trustworthiness in general.

This guide explores the three essential principles for good health and safety performance, upon which management systems should be implemented, and upon which reports should be based.



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# THE THREE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF GOOD HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE



## 1. Strong and active leadership from the top

- Visible, active commitment from the Board.
- Establishing effective 'downward' communication systems and management structures.
- Integration of good health and safety management with business decisions.



## 2. Worker involvement

- Engaging the workforce in the promotion and achievement of safe and healthy conditions.
- Effective 'upward' communication.
- Providing high quality training.



## 3. Assessment and review

- Identifying and managing health and safety risks.
- Accessing (and following) competent advice.
- Monitoring, reporting and reviewing performance.

To ensure that an organisation can demonstrate that health and safety is being effectively managed, there must be a range of measures and systems for monitoring health and safety standards within the workplace.

# PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The purpose of monitoring is to assess working conditions and practices in an attempt to identify where improvements can be made. In other areas of our work, our performance is measured (hours worked, production volumes, efficiency levels or a range of financial measures: sales, profit, etc.). These are measured against previously agreed criteria, known as performance indicators, which provide us with information about:

- What is going on within the business / workplace?
- What has happened so far – how well are we doing?
- What potential problems or issues do we need to respond to?

Performance indicators can measure many different things – financial performance, year on year, and against competitors; market forces; environmental conditions such as local and national legislation; staff turnover; employee engagement – the list goes on.

Performance indicators must be measurable and manageable, and can measure both what has already happened, and what will happen in the future.

## EXAMPLES OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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**Management commitment** – attendance at safety meetings, taking part in workplace inspections, leading by example.

**Number of training days** – the average number of safety training, refresher or skills development days per employee.

**Worker involvement** – how many employee consultation exercises have taken place, how many staff are involved in workplace inspections or are safety representatives?

**Audit and inspection reports** – time taken to implement recommendations after inspections, the number of inspections completed against set targets.

**Risk assessments** – the number of risk assessments that have been carried out, the frequency with which they are reviewed, when generic risk assessment templates are used are they made site or task specific?

**Occupational health** – how many new occupational health cases have there been? How many people are making use of occupational health services provided in the workplace?

**Use of PPE** – how well is PPE used in the workplace?

# HOW DO YOU MEASURE HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE?

Good performance indicators are:

- > Objective, easy to measure and collect.
- > Relevant to the organisation.
- > Able to provide reliable indicators as to the level of performance.
- > Cost effective in terms of how much effort is needed to collect the information.
- > Owned and understood by everyone in the company.

There are two types of indicators – ‘reactive’ and ‘proactive’.

**‘Reactive’** indicators give information about aspects of our situation that may impact future performance. Reactive indicators are primarily concerned with investigating accidents, incidents and cases of ill health, i.e. after the event.

**‘Proactive’** indicators give information on the outcomes of our past actions. Proactive indicators are all those methods that are used to assess working conditions, general compliance with the law and local policies. Proactive monitoring techniques, such as regular workplace inspections and hazard reporting schemes, can provide a useful insight into general working conditions.

Both types of indicators are important.



# PROACTIVE VERSUS REACTIVE MEASUREMENT

## Proactive

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Proactive measurement and monitoring is the process of checking day-to-day safety performance against standards and targets. It involves keeping an eye on day-to-day operations and dealing with problems as they arise. This way, dangers and safety issues are identified well before they become incidents or accidents and therefore are managed before they have the chance to injure or harm anyone.

Regular monitoring should help you identify the strengths and weaknesses of your safety management system. It is important that, whatever system you choose to use, you choose safety indicators that are relevant to your own company.

Examples of proactive indicators include:

- The number of risk assessments completed as a proportion of the total number required.
- Time taken to implement recommendations after health and safety inspections.
- How well PPE is being used.
- How often safety briefings are held.
- How many people have been trained in health and safety.

## Reactive

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This is concerned with the reporting and investigation of incidents, accidents and ill health, and includes recording, investigating and examining information.

Much of reactive monitoring is about keeping and analysing records, which can include:

- Accident report forms.
- Investigation reports.
- Sickness absence data.
- Complaints.
- Defect reports.
- Near miss reports.

This information can be useful for comparing one year's performance against the previous year, or looking to see if a particular trend is occurring – for example, has there been an increase / decrease in lost time accidents?

However, as its name suggests, this method is 'reactive' and does have certain constraints in terms of judging health and safety performance.

# BENEFITS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Health and safety performance measurement should seek to answer questions such as:

- Where are you now, relative to your overall health and safety aims and objectives?
- Where are you now in terms of controlling hazards and risks?
- How does your organisation compare with others?
- Are you getting better or worse over time? What trends are there?
- Is your management of health and safety effective (doing the right things)?
- Is your management of health and safety reliable (doing things right consistently)?
- Is your management of health and safety proportionate to the level of hazards and risks (are we doing enough)?
- Is an effective health and safety management system in place across all parts of the organisation?
- Is your culture supportive of health and safety?

These questions should be asked not only at the highest level but also at the various management levels and across the organisation. The aim should be to provide a complete picture of the organisation's health and safety performance. To do this effectively, your organisation needs to adopt a good mix of reactive and proactive measures – there's no 'one size fits all' so what's good for one organisation may be different for another.

Organisations review their health and safety performance because it is the only way to track improvement and set objectives and targets for the future. Carrying out reviews will confirm the validity of your health and safety policy, and ensure the system you have in place for managing health and safety is effective.

The reviewing process will not only show where you can learn and make changes but can also give the opportunity to continually improve and show health and safety successes within the organisation.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- > Health and safety performance reporting is well established as an indicator of an organisation's social responsibility.
- > There are three essential principles for good health and safety performance: strong and active leadership from the top, worker involvement and assessment and review.
- > To ensure that an organisation can demonstrate that health and safety is being effectively managed, there must be a range of measures and systems for monitoring health and safety standards within the workplace.
- > Performance indicators must be measurable and manageable, and can measure both what has already happened, and what will happen in the future.
- > There are two types of indicators – 'reactive' and 'proactive'. 'Reactive' indicators give information about aspects of our situation that may impact future performance. 'Proactive' indicators give information on the outcomes of our past actions.
- > Organisations review their health and safety performance because it is the only way to track improvement and set objectives and targets for the future.
- > The reviewing process will not only show where you can learn and make changes but can also give the opportunity to continually improve and show health and safety successes within the organisation.



# FURTHER READING

[HSE: Measuring health and safety performance](#)

[HSE: Review health and safety](#)

[RoSPA: Managing health and safety performance](#)

# IOSH MANAGING SAFELY

from International  
Workplace

Study online or by virtual  
classroom.

All of the content in this guide is taken from International Workplace's IOSH Managing Safely course.

The course covers:

- Basic principles of health and safety – moral, financial and legal
- Concept of safety management – using the Plan/Do/Check/Act model
- Importance of health and safety strategy, plans and objectives
- Management of occupational risk – risk profiling
- The legal framework – criminal and civil, corporate manslaughter, corporate and personal liabilities
- Enforcement arrangements
- Safety leadership – key actions a senior manager can take
- Reviewing your health and safety performance and risk management arrangements