

### Safety Committees and Consultation

Consultation with safety representatives and the workforce is central to most workplace health and safety improvements and will be the key to the successful introduction of measures to reduce the incidence of work-related injuries and ill-health.

Employees have knowledge, expertise and ideas which give them a unique opportunity to contribute to promoting a safe and healthy workplace. Effective consultation promotes a pro-active safety culture, providing the opportunity for employees to contribute knowledge and expertise to the identification of hazards and the preparation of risk assessments.

Consultation involves employers actively seeking and then taking account of the views of employees, or their representatives, before making a decision. In the context of health and safety, it is the process by which employers and safety representatives can jointly examine and discuss safety issues in order to find acceptable solutions to problems through an open exchange of views and information.

Effective consultation therefore relies on:

- the sharing of relevant information about health and safety measures with employees;
- employees being given the opportunity to express their views and to contribute in a timely fashion to the resolution of health and safety issues;
- the views of employees being valued and taken into account.



Such consultation can result in:

- improved management decisions through gathering a wider source of ideas about health and safety;
- greater employee commitment to health and safety through a better understanding of health and safety decisions and employee ownership of the outcome of the consultation;
- greater openness, respect and trust between management and employees through developing an understanding of each other's point of view;
- higher employee morale and job satisfaction through the employer demonstrating that employee views are valued and taken into account;
- reduced injury and disease with consequent savings to the employer, employees and the general community.

The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations, 1977 detail the appointment, functions and rights of trade union safety representatives, including their right to consult with the employer on matters relating to the health and safety of the employees they represent such as the introduction of any measure that will affect the health and safety of employees represented by the safety representative or the health and safety training or information employees may receive.

Where employees are not represented by trade union safety representatives then there are duties placed upon employers, such as the Council to consult them under the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996. This may be done directly or through elected representatives. All representatives must be provided with paid time off to carry out their duties and to undertake appropriate training; they must also be given adequate facilities on site.

### **Health, Safety and Welfare Forum**

The Health, Safety and Welfare Forum functions as the constituted Health and Safety committee for the Council. An equal number of management and trade union representatives meet together in order to examine issues and monitor improvements being made to the health and safety management systems used by the Council.

### **Consultation Corner**

This is the title of a web page located within the health and safety pages of CONNECT. Here a number of draft documents and other proposals are published in order to make them available to wide range of employees and to get some direct feedback from employees.



### **Health and Safety Notice Boards**

Each workbase has a health and safety notice board. These notice boards contain a range of health and safety related content and are used to advise employees that do not have email or CONNECT access about the health and safety issues that may affect them.

### **Employee Forum**

North Lanarkshire Council has a small group of employees who volunteer to participate in a working group lasting 12 months. The group aims to bring forward health and safety concerns with the aim of allowing them to be investigated and actions taken to eliminate or minimise concerns.

### **All User E-mails**

On occasion use is made of an “all users e-mail” this is an e-mail that will be sent to every employee with a council e-mail address. The e-mail will advise employees of a health and safety matter and may seek feedback on the content. A copy of this e-mail is normally placed on health and safety notice boards.

### **Other Resources**

AS17 – Safety Committees and Safety Consultation.

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