

UNION FACT SHEET 5 - SA

Occupational Health & Safety



Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare (OHSW) Committees

Occupational Health Safety & Welfare Act, 1986

OHSW committees provide a way for management and workers to meet regularly and discuss workplace health and safety issues. It is important that all workers in the workplace know about the occupational health and safety committee and that the committee reports on and promotes the work they do. It is also important that members and the workforce understand the role of the committee. The OHSW committee encourages workers and management to work together to develop and monitor health and safety programs and resolve any health, safety and welfare issues.

The committee's role is to:

- help develop and distribute policies, practices and procedures that promote health and safety
- act as a problem-solving group and help with the identification, assessment and control of hazards
- help resolve health and safety issues
- assist with the planning of action, including the setting of priorities for controlling hazards
- review the management of injured workers and their rehabilitation programs
- assist in the employment of workers with disabilities.

An employer **must** establish one or more OHSW committees within two months of receiving a request from a health and safety representative, employees or a majority of the employees at any workplace:

- If requested by a union member, the union shall be consulted in relation to the composition of the committee.
- At least half of the members of the committee must be employees.
- It is not the committee's role to fix OHSW problems for a particular work group.
- If individual work group issues are raised at meetings, the committee has the right and authority to refer the issue back to the relevant manager.

Employees can select their committee members by:

- Holding an election for committee members.
- Choosing Occupational health and safety representatives (HSR) as committee members.
- Combining HSRs and employees where there are not enough HSRs to fill all the employee vacancies on the committee or where there are other employees with a strong interest in health and safety.

The employer is required by law to provide committee details to SafeWork SA within 14 days of establishment of the committee

If at any time agreement cannot be reached on any matter relating to the establishment or composition of a health and safety committee, an interested party may contact the Workplace Liaison Officers for advice and assistance. For further assistance and information call SafeWork South Australia 1300 365 255.

Contact us on 1800 060 556 Free call

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