

Fact Sheet No 7

Workplace Health and Safety Obligations

This Fact Sheet outlines individuals' obligations under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. The legislative provisions place a heavy burden on the University and the obligations of employees at all levels are indeed onerous. The Vice-Chancellor recognises the difficulty of meeting these accountabilities with equal priority so has established USQSafe to develop systems and processes to educate and assist employees and others to meet their workplace health and safety obligations.

Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor has an obligation under University policy and the Workplace Health and Safety Act (1995) to ensure the health and safety of each employee of the University and to ensure that the health and safety of others is not affected by the University's activities.

To meet this obligation, it is the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor to:

- establish a system for the management of health and safety;
- ensure consultative arrangements are in place so that cooperation and commitment to health and safety outcomes are achieved; and
- ensure that employees can meet their obligations through provision of sufficient resources and guidelines.

The Vice-Chancellor delegates responsibilities for the management of workplace health and safety but retains ultimate accountability.

Senior Executives

Senior executives include Deputy Vice-Chancellors, General Manager, Pro Vice-Chancellors Group Managers, Deans, and Directors.

Senior executives must ensure that the functional areas of the University under their control comply with the Workplace Health and Safety Act (1995), all applicable standards and University policies.

In carrying out these obligations, senior executives are expected to:

- ensure that the written USQ health and safety policy is available to all employees and clearly displayed in each department;
- issue instructions for the health and safety of employees and others in their area of responsibility;
- ensure that safe work procedures specific to each department are documented and that safety equipment is in place in their work areas;
- establish processes for regular risk assessments and self-audits within work areas;
- monitor all aspects of health and safety processes;
- ensure employees are adequately supervised and trained in safe work practices;
- integrate health and safety responsibilities into position descriptions for supervisors and individual employees;
- ensure each building has a Building Warden and a full emergency squad;
- establish consultative mechanisms between employees, managers, Workplace Health and Safety Representatives and USQSafe;
- ensure all work related incidents are followed up and appropriate steps are taken to prevent a recurrence;
- ensure health and safety issues are resolved;
- include workplace health and safety as a standing agenda item at faculty/department meetings at least quarterly and issues be referred where appropriate to the Executive Workplace Health and Safety Committee;
- budget for health and safety resources, such as training, safety equipment, furniture and modifications.

Heads of Department, Managers and Supervisors

Heads, Managers and Supervisors* have an obligation to ensure the workplace health and safety of all employees and others under their control by preventing or minimising their exposure to risk.

To meet this obligation, managers and supervisors are expected to:

- be the first point of contact for employees with workplace health and safety concerns;
- be familiar with legal requirements and standards and ensure employees are operating within these requirements;
- include health and safety information in all employee induction training;
- ensure all employees are aware of evacuation procedures and emergency procedures;
- undertake risk assessments and self-audits within work areas;
- maintain an inventory of any hazardous materials and ensure materials safety data sheets are available;
- carry out equipment safety checks;
- ensure safety equipment such as machine guards are supplied and used;
- enforce the requirement for individuals to wear any personal protective equipment;
- ensure all contractors are aware of and are operating according to University standards and procedures;
- record all work related injuries, illnesses, hazards and other incidents;
- investigate the circumstances surrounding all incidents and take corrective action;
- seek assistance in the resolution of health and safety issues from USQSafe or elected Workplace Health and Safety Representatives.

* “Supervisors” refers to anyone responsible for leading the activities of others. That is: academic staff in charge of classes, employees leading work teams, or leaders of groups using or visiting University facilities.

Individual Employees

All employees have an obligation to comply with the University's workplace health and safety policies, procedures and instructions to ensure a safe workplace. This means that employees are required to:

- comply with workplace health and safety instructions;
- take corrective action to eliminate hazards at work, or report those hazards which cannot be immediately corrected;
- seek appropriate first aid or treatment for injuries and illnesses and report on the appropriate form;
- use any personal protective equipment provided by the University;
- be familiar with emergency and evacuation procedures;
- not wilfully or recklessly interfere with or misuse any health and safety equipment;
- not wilfully place at risk the health and safety of anyone at the University; and
- not wilfully injure themselves.

Students, Visitors and Others

Students, visitors and others have the following obligations at the University:

- to comply with instructions given for health and safety at the University;
- to use any personal protective equipment provided by the University;
- not to wilfully or recklessly interfere with or misuse any health and safety equipment;
- not to wilfully place at risk the health and safety of anyone at the University; and
- not to wilfully injure themselves.

Student Association

The Student Association and their employees using areas under the control of the University must comply with the requirements of the Workplace Health and Safety Act (1995) and all applicable standards.

Tenants of University Buildings

Tenants, other organisations, and their employees using areas under the control of the University must comply with the requirements of the Workplace Health and Safety Act (1995) and all applicable standards.

Reference

USQSafe, (1997) *Workplace Health and Safety: Consultative Arrangements*.



USQSafe Contact: Safety Coordinator, ext 2520.

Disclaimer

These guidelines are for use within the University of Southern Queensland. This information is believed to be reliable and current. The University makes no guarantee and assumes no responsibility as to the absolute correctness of these procedures in all circumstances or for their suitability outside USQ.