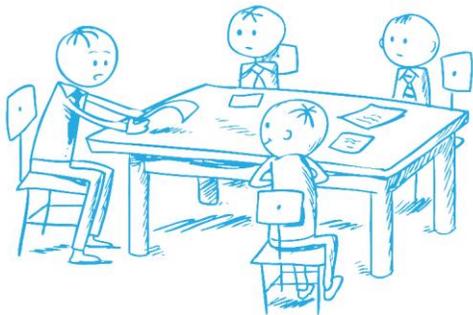


**How do I carry out...?**

**REGULAR H&S MEETINGS  
WITH MY STAFF**



## Introduction

This Guide has been created in response to our Clients asking: 'what sort of things should we be discussing in our regular H&S meetings?'

Too often H&S meetings can degenerate into discussions about 'day-to-day' minutiae:

*Example: "I've run out of dust masks, can you order me some more?"*

...rather than being focused on tackling the bigger questions about how to improve the whole system for the benefit of the majority of people:

*Example: "Let's look at the system we employ to manage the use of dust masks – have we done a risk assessment? Who has been supervising their use? Why don't we order automatically so that they don't run out? etc."*

Management of H&S requires effort over a long period of time – this should help.

## General

Regular H&S meetings are a good way to keep the subject 'on the boil' and involve everyone in living up to the organization's goal (as stated in the H&S Policy Statement) of seeking continual improvement and aiming for high standards.

The suggestions in this document relate to an organization that conducts quarterly H&S staff consultation meetings and covers all of the general obligations that should be set out in any well-written H&S Policy.

The meetings can go a long way to complying with the legal requirement to consult with employees on H&S, but they are also invaluable for providing ideas on what to work on, and giving feedback on initiatives. For example, the meetings can be used to agree and set overall H&S goals and objectives, to discussing what resources are required to complete work activities safely, and to disseminate information thereby keeping everyone in-the-loop.

It's very important that there is Senior Management representation and involvement in these meetings. This is to provide authority, to set out a clear vision and action plans, set deadlines, lead by example, crack heads together(!), and provide incentives (rewards, recognition, celebration of achievements etc.) It also provides an opportunity for showing visible leadership and energy in managing H&S.

## Good practice

- Ask for volunteers, or if necessary nominate someone to research solutions to issues raised during previous meetings
- Where the previous meeting has indicated actions are to be taken, review the effectiveness of these actions at the next meeting (e.g. the carrying out of risk assessments, or the implementation of new/changed controls).
- Don't be soft on excuses for inaction – if H&S is to improve then it needs to be given an appropriate amount of time alongside other priorities. Constant inactivity turns the meetings into 'talking shops' and reflects badly on the organization and its' management.
- Hold staff accountable for the actions they have committed to and show genuine interest in their ideas for change.
- Remind staff of their legal obligation to notify any H&S concerns to their managers – this is in law as well as in H&S Policy, and that this is their chance to improve things
- Spread good practice that has developed within your organization - set up internal presentations, organise formal or informal shadowing opportunities.

- Forward meeting notes and any associated documents to anyone who missed the meeting as well as to your nominated H&S Competent Persons (if not present) in order for them to review progress and to provide additional ideas where they can.
- Try and publicize the action points and all associated documents within the organization (e.g. via a shared folder/notice board etc.) This can be good practice to ensure everyone can keep informed, also because what gets made public and explicit often gets actioned - and this can also be used to recognize achievement.

## How to use this Guide

The first page is entitled:

### **'All meetings'**

These subjects can be raised at any of your H&S meetings as they're very broad subjects, but whether or not they generate discussion depends heavily on what has happened in the interim between meetings. If they don't apply, just quickly move on.

We've then divided some discussion points into four quarterly meetings i.e.

#### **Q1 – Policies & Procedures**

#### **Q2 – Risk Assessment Systems**

#### **Q3 – Support we need to put in place**

#### **Q4 – Standards and checking**

1. As a manager, have a look through the discussion points before each meeting and decide which are most appropriate to raise with the group.
2. Don't try and plough through them all, and don't just read them out 'verbatim' - instead just use them as prompts and raise them in your own way using your normal style.
3. Mark them as raised using the tick-boxes and get someone to write brief minutes covering discussion topics and what further action was agreed.
4. Wait until the next quarterly meeting to go over any items not covered in that session.

# All Meetings

## Accident & Incident Reports & Investigations

Encourage reporting of accidents and incidents by showing a genuine interest in solving any difficulties with the work that are thrown up by such reports. Operate a 'blame-free' reporting system, but clamp-down on 'Exceptional' non-conformances with policy/procedures (e.g. recklessness)

**No reports?** If reports aren't coming through (and you know that things are happening that should be reported), use these meetings to try and establish agreed criteria for reporting.

Review previous jobs/activities and determine whether the incident/accident system is being used to its fullest extent.

**Quality?** Have a look through at the quality of accident reports: is there enough information being recorded to enable managers to decide on RIDDOR reporting? Has there been sufficient enquiry into finding the root cause of the incident?

**Investigations?** Investigate accidents based on what could have happened as well as what did happen. Look behind 'obvious, visible' causes of accidents (faults in premises, procedures, plant/equipment/substance, or the errors/non-compliances of personnel).

One useful technique is to try asking '5 Why's' to get to the root cause

Determine whether lessons have been learnt and suitable adaptations made following previous incidents/accidents

## New developments

Discuss any upcoming significant changes within the business and how these can be risk assessed where necessary and so that decisions are taken in the light of risk awareness

Keep an eye on the availability of newer, safer methods e.g. updated machinery & equipment from manufacturers and suppliers. Consult with staff over any suggestions for updated methods of working, and any plans your organization has of introducing such.

Collect suggestions from all staff for improving systems - including removing any needless paperwork that may have built up.

Check whether the organization has the relevant competencies (Skill, Training, Attitude, Knowledge & Experience) to be able to change to newer methods of working

## Keeping up to date

Identify and organise useful Company information resources e.g. guides/procedures

Have a look through any H&S Newsletters you receive or the Health & Safety Executive website for prompts relating to your activities – discuss anything relevant

Check up on recent sources of H&S information from within your industry e.g. from Trade Bodies.

Identify relevant industry standards and good practice - discuss the potential for adopting them

## Q1 – Policies & Procedures

### Structure

Examine the structure of your H&S System: have you got the right mix between 'Policies' and other documents such as written safety 'Procedures (RAMS, Permits to Work etc.)' and 'Guidance'

### Management Information

Ask Managers/Supervisors to prepare brief reports as to whether your key H&S performance targets are being met - and if not provide suggestions to improve compliance or to improve the targets

Specify what data/reports need to be collected & reported to the various levels of Management.

### Competence

Check through the system for assessing any contractors you use; discuss whether any particular high risks should be transferred to companies who are specialists in these area (Risk Transfer Strategies)

Where risks are high, decide on whether a system is needed to nominate additional 'Competent/Authorized Persons' from within the organization as necessary

### Supervision

Suggest that a Manager takes responsibility to set up informal methods of monitoring progress (e.g. 'spot checks', supervisor reports etc.) to see if new risks arise and if existing risks have changed - then report back on these at the next meeting

### Emergencies

Discuss any foreseeable emergencies in work activities and whether the organization could respond adequately if these events came up - assign someone to take responsibility for 'stress-testing' e.g. fire alarm test evacuation; machinery jamming/breakdown etc. and report back to next meeting

### Communications

Work on communication systems often the weakest link in any H&S Management System (e.g. multiple versions of revised documents; misunderstanding over roles within the organization following revised staff resources etc.).

Assign someone to thoroughly examine any systems which appear to cause confusion and report back on improvements to next meeting e.g. improved forms, checklists, signs, email, etc.

Clarify any task-specific H&S responsibilities you want your staff members to undertake

### Resources

Discuss the provision of any physical resources e.g. new equipment which have been identified in the past as hindering progress. Following this, plan the budgetary resources as necessary

Request that someone checks that any specific safety equipment is available, adequate (in consultation with those who use it), properly maintained and used as specified

Work through the process of including H&S criteria in current and future selection, maintenance and disposal of equipment/substances - assign someone to take responsibility for checking out the market for particular equipment types and providing a report at the next meeting

## Q2 – Risk Assessment Systems

### Overview

Discuss the balance between established 'Generic' Risk Assessments and 'Dynamic' risk assessment: is there sufficient feedback from on-site activities where the activities have not gone in accordance with the RAMS ('Risk Assessments/Method Statements')

Put together 'desktop' Risk Assessments based on knowledge and experience of those present - use the whiteboard or flipchart to brainstorm possible hazards and their likelihood

Where questions arise re: compliance with applicable Regulations and Codes of Practice, arrange to consult with relevant 'Competent Person' and record results then discuss implementing recommendations as necessary

Enquire into whether documents reflect practices - both for your staff and any contractors you use

### Consult with staff

Consult with staff about existing risk control measures (i.e. as specified in RAMS) - whether these are working effectively, are needed (can they be cut out?), should be improved etc.

### Improvements

Review samples of your Risk Assessments/Method Statements ('RAMS') and determine whether the preventive and protective measures specified in order to control risks are in line with recommended HSE principles (for Clients of 'Just Health and Safety' - refer to our guide on risk assessment)

Review samples of your 'RAMS' and try to improve the style/language used in order to communicate the message more effectively

Formulate the above into easily read and accessible checklists and safe working procedures – make sure staff have been consulted and involved

### Information

Check 'at the coal face' the actual awareness of foreseeable hazards that have been included in risk assessments and the control measures agreed on. If the system gets unwieldy, discuss ways to streamline information transfer

Arrange for proposed modifications to be tested prior to implementing e.g. by carrying out new methods on a sample size or during a Pilot project.

## Q3 – Support

### Training & Development

Examine whether general H&S Training has been sufficient (e.g. ask whether there is any particular confusion about legal duties/rights & responsibilities etc.) - from the top down

Decide on and implement a scheme for specific H&S Training e.g. skill-specific training such as required for specific task or using particular machinery

Raise it with staff as to whether any particular team or team member requires help with developing competence e.g. help with **S**kills, **T**ask training, **A**ttitudes, **K**nowledge or **E**xperience ('STAKE').

Try to base investment on training and development on the basis of business needs first.

Pose questions such as: What is lacking at the current time & how is this in evidence? What new competencies could be achieved through training/development & how will this be evidenced and advantageous to the organization after completion?

### H&S Information needed/given

Make sure everyone is aware of the basic information (and any changes) i.e.

Fire procedures and the identity of any staff nominated; Any risks identified by risk assessments and the preventive and protective measures needed to minimize the risks; Any risks which have been notified to us by another employer whose operations may affect the health and safety of our staff.

Review samples of the above and try to improve the style/language used in order to communicate the message more effectively

Set and then review progress on a project to improve communications e.g. instructions, RAMS etc.

### Encouragement

Brainstorm how company success - which includes competent management of H&S - can be celebrated (without being complacent) in terms that reflect the value that maintaining high standards of H&S has to the whole organization

Use the opportunity for staff meetings to give feedback - include positive encouragement on things you want to see more of, as well as corrective actions

### Working Practices

Ask staff what they find to be 'too slow, monotonous, inconvenient, or uncomfortable' - then re-examine the work to eliminate any tempting risky 'shortcuts' - assign someone to take responsibility for streamlining arrangements found to be redundant or over-burdensome

Probe into how well work teams are functioning together - reconfigure teams as necessary so as to maximize positive influences & peer-learning

## Q4 – Standards and checking

### Standards

Discuss and then set minimum standards (i.e. key H&S performance targets) for staff, and where appropriate for contractors. Start with the highest risks.

Follow-up on the above to make sure these are clearly understood and accepted as being reasonable

Examine what factors could be included to ensure H&S is sufficiently covered when recruiting new staff (e.g. look through job descriptions)

Test the procedure you have in place to induct new workers in sound H&S practices is actually working and ask for suggestions to improve

### Checking

Look for some simple ways you can set up formal internal regular monitoring of the above standards e.g. 'once per month manager X will check paperwork Y to check it meets standard Z'

If necessary, and especially where there is evidence of the need for new ideas, arrange for an independent audit of performance – discuss how this might be set up

### Review

Assess whether your organization's risk profile has reduced through the tackling of your topmost risks, and if not – what more could or should be done?

Check the quality and relevancy of information being received by Senior Management e.g. lack of incident reporting; reports with incomprehensible wording, meeting minutes with 'revolving door' actions etc.

Check that H&S Policy and 'General Risk Assessment' are reviewed and amended as necessitated by altered procedures from within the organization or changes to industry standards, good practice, or (more rarely) changes in legislation.

To make it easier, break up the policies/procedures into logical 'chunks' and ask selected members of staff to review their relevance and report back to the wider group at the next meeting.