

HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERSHIP IN WASTE MANAGEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

This information document is aimed at health and safety improvements in the waste management industry. It is endorsed by the Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) Forum.

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Introduction and scope

Good health and safety leadership can have a significant effect in improving health and safety performance. This self-assessment tool allows those at or near the top of an organisation to assess their own personal and their organisation's approach to safety leadership, and based on this assessment improve. It is not intended to be a one-stop-shop for all aspects of health and safety – it is aimed specifically at leadership. If you wish information on the wider safety duties and responsibilities of directors and senior managers see the further reading section.

The main audience for this tool is directors, board/council members, senior managers and similar. It is not intended for completion by health and safety professionals, although their advice may be sought by leaders when completing the self-assessment. The tool is not targeted primarily at middle or operational managers although they may also find the tool useful in developing their own local health and safety leadership.

While all possible efforts have been made to ensure this tool fits with as wide an audience as possible, some of the specific questions in the assessment tables may not fit with every situation. The aim of the tool is to encourage leaders to think about safety leadership and to improve it. Those completing the assessment tables should try to consider the intent behind the questions rather than analyse the wording in detail.

Health and safety performance and culture

There are three key components to good health and safety performance:

1. **Physical aspects** – provision of adequate physical controls such as machine guarding, vision aids on vehicles, fire equipment, ventilation systems, traffic barriers etc
2. **Processes and systems** – effective procedures, training, competent advice, incident investigation, near-miss reporting, occupational health and other systems
3. **Culture** – a good health and safety culture where employees behave naturally in a safe and risk aware manner. Without a good culture guards can be defeated, training ignored and procedures not followed

One of the main influences on culture is the leadership shown by those at or near the top of an organisation. Good leadership can have a major positive impact on performance.

What makes an effective health and safety leader?

Effective health and safety leaders tend to demonstrate their leadership in three main ways:

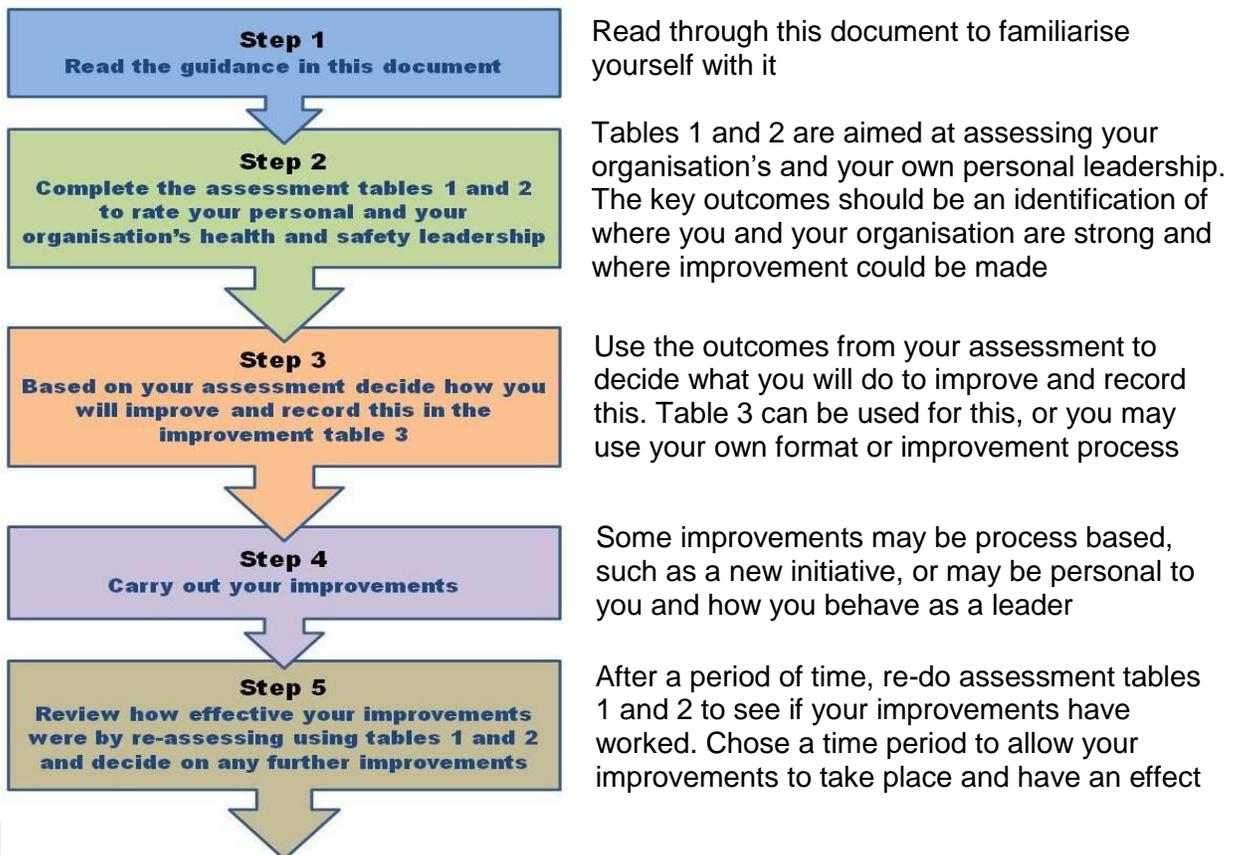
Visible leadership – the audience for health and safety leadership is employees, and to be effective this leadership needs to be visible. To an extent this can be achieved by indirect communication, such as a health and safety slot in an employee newsletter by a senior person. But, there is no substitute for direct, visible and felt leadership at an operational level. For example, if you want to influence employees to wear their personal protective equipment (PPE), there is little point in setting an example by wearing a hard hat in your office where no one can see you.

Involved leadership – most organisations have reactive processes, such as monthly health and safety performance reporting to board or similar level. These are valuable, but are reactive and non-involved. Better is for health and safety leaders to be involved directly in processes. For example, leaders who take a personal role in incident investigations, employee and management safety meetings and similar can send a powerful message to employees that the organisation values health and safety.

Engaged leadership – if the target for health and safety leadership is employees, then leaders need to engage directly with employees to be effective. Direct contact between leaders and management is valuable, but direct engagement with operational employees can be more beneficial in influencing culture.

Assessing health and safety leadership to improve

A first step to improving health and safety leadership is to understand your current position. The two self-assessment tables attempt to assess your organisation's approach to safety leadership and your own personal leadership. This is not intended to be an in-depth analysis and there is no 'one size fits all' approach to health and safety leadership. The aim is to encourage those completing the self-assessments to think about their own personal and their organisation's approach to health and safety leadership. In outline the process is:



If your organisation has formal management systems you may want to use these, such as the 'plan, do, check, act' model. If not, use table 3 or whatever format suits you. The key is to assess your and your organisation's health and safety leadership, identify any weaknesses and where you could improve.

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Table 1: Self assessment – your organisation and safety leadership

The first table below aims to assess your organisation's health and safety leadership. No scores are allocated and not all questions may be applicable to your specific situation, such as if your organisation only has one or two sites: The aim is for you to think about your organisation's approach to health and safety leadership and where it could improve. Record your thoughts and findings in table 3 or via your own improvement programme format.

Question and guidance	Your answer	Thoughts/ideas for improvement
Who takes the overall leadership of your organisation? Guidance: Who sets the culture, most influences its values and sets the responsibilities for your organisation? Think – if a member of the public asked you, who are your organisation's leaders? What would your reply be?		
Who takes the safety leadership of your organisation? Guidance: Use the same question as above, but focus specifically on health and safety. Who sets the safety culture, safety values and vision for your organisation? Do leaders – who really are your safety leader?		
Who would your employees say are your safety leaders? Guidance: Ask your employees, if their replies are different from yours think about why? Is it that they do not know who your organisation's leaders are, or do they think your overall vision and safety values are different – and if so why?		
Are your answers to the above three questions different?	Yes No	
Does your safety policy, or similar, include leadership?	Yes No	
Do you have any formal safety leadership schemes?	Yes No	
Are you a leader for your organisation?	Yes No	
Are you a safety leader for your organisation?	Yes No	

Note: record your thoughts, findings and ideas for improvements in table 3 (or in your own improvement format)

For a full-size version of table 1 for you to complete see appendices.

Table 2: Self assessment – your personal safety leadership

If you are a health and safety leader, how do you demonstrate this? Leadership is often defined by a person's behaviour rather than what they say. It may be trite to state that leaders 'walk the walk as well as talk the talk', but this does not make this any less true or relevant.

Table 2 below is not comprehensive. However, it does cover common areas where effective health and safety leaders typically demonstrate their leadership by behaviour. Look at the behaviours listed in table 2 and decide on your answer. If your answer falls into the green column score yourself 3, in the amber column 2 and if in the red column 1. Then add your scores up for each column and in total. The maximum you could score is 30. But, try not to become too focussed on your total score – the aim here is improvement. Try re-doing the assessment after six months and compare the scores to see if you have improved.

As for table 1, the size and type of your organisation may have an effect. For example, if you only have one operation and you are based there you may naturally visit it more often. Try to think about the general thrust of the questions rather than the detail.

Are you	Behaviour (for guidance see table 4 on effective behaviours)	Always 3 points	Sometimes 2 points	Never 1 point	Thoughts/ideas for improvement
A visible leader?	When do you see with your own eyes of your site specifically to ensure health and safety? That could be for meetings or other business – visibly dedicated to health and safety.	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	When you are on site to ensure health and safety do you tell everyone you meet that you are there specifically for health and safety? That you have not just happened to be in a quiet area.	Always	Sometimes	Never	
An involved leader?	When on site do you always wear all correct safety equipment and personal protective, such as hard hat, high visibility jacket, safety boots etc. etc. etc.	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	When on site do you routinely check conditions and site equipment personally? Note – this means prodding employees direct rather than being good practice and complying to the manager?	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	Do you attend health and safety meetings personally? These may be formal safety committees or site safety meetings – do you have the presence both employees and managers?	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	When on site do you engage directly with employees on health and safety? Do you talk direct to employees about their health and safety? Or talking to the manager does not count.	Always	Sometimes	Never	
An engaged leader?	If you have often or more often safety representatives, when on site do you take the time to spend directly and personally on health and safety with them?	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	Have you ever been approached by an employee directly about a health and safety concern? This could have been during a site visit, in a meeting, by telephone or e-mail.	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	Have you ever been approached by an employee directly about a health and safety concern? For example, taking direct action yourself when you become aware of a safety issue?	Always	Sometimes	Never	
Totals for each column (add up your scores for each column)					
Your overall total (add up your totals for each column to give an overall score)					

Note: record your thoughts, findings and ideas for improvements in table 3 (or in your own improvement format)

For a full-size version of table 2 for you to complete see appendices.

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There are no right or wrong answers to the assessments – health and safety leadership structures and styles may differ between organisations and individuals. However, the issues covered are those which are typically shared by organisations which have improved health and safety performance through effective leadership.

Tip – if you feel confident you could ask a few of your employees to also complete table 2 for you. You may find it interesting to see whether your perception and theirs differs.

How do you intend to improve your and your organisation's safety leadership?

If you want to improve your and your organisation's health and safety leadership, planning is essential. Directors and other senior persons are busy people with many distractions. Plan what you are going to do, do it and set a date to complete this assessment again to check on progress. How long you set before you review is down to you, but six months may be reasonable. The example effective leadership behaviours in table 4 may assist you to improve your own personal health and safety leadership.

Tip – having done the hard work why not publicise it? Feedback to employees the improvements you have made and ask for their views on anything further you and your organisation could do.

Table 3: Suggested simple improvement programme

How do I intend to improve my own health and safety leadership?	
How do I intend to improve the health and safety leadership of my organisation?	
When will you do the assessment again to check progress?	

Example effective personal health and safety leadership behaviours

Individual leadership is a personal issue and there are no strict rules as to what are the most effective styles and behaviours. However, the key issues of visibility, involvement and engagement are common. The example shown in table 4 are intended to give you an idea of what has worked for other leaders and what good health and safety leadership looks like – they are the types of behaviours which typify good safety leadership.

Table 4: Guidance on personal safety leadership behaviours

Three aspects of effective health and safety leadership			
	I am a visible leader	I am an involved leader	I am an engaged leader
Example behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safety is the first item on all of my meeting agendas ■ I visit my site/s regularly and specifically to promote and assess health and safety performance and standards – and I take the time to do this ■ I always wear correct personal protective equipment when on site and I challenge those who do not ■ I always sign in and out of sites ■ I always follow all safety rules all of the time and challenge those who do not ■ I always make sure everyone I meet when on site knows that I am there to promote and assess safety standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I never pass by poor practice, unsafe acts or conditions without commenting directly and personally ■ I always praise good safety practice direct and personally ■ I take part personally in health and safety meetings between employees and management ■ I take part personally in serious incident investigations ■ Safety performance is a key part of how I assess the performance of my direct reports ■ I set targets for safety performance which I expect to be achieved across all of my organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When on site I talk direct to employees on health and safety and listen to their concerns ■ I take time to understand employee concerns, even if these may be uncomfortable or outside of my expertise ■ I always take the time to talk with the site safety representative when on site ■ If an employee raises a health and safety concern with me I always ensure appropriate action is taken ■ If an employee raises a safety concern with me I always take the time to feedback to them, even if it is only to say that I do not agree with the concern

Disclaimer and WISH

This information document has been prepared by health and safety practitioners to assist health and safety improvements in the waste management industry. It is endorsed by the WISH (Waste Industry Safety and Health) Forum. This information document is not formal guidance and represents good practice, which typically goes beyond the strict requirements of health and safety law.

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The information document is not a substitute for duty holder judgment and/or professional safety advisor's judgment, Notwithstanding the good practice contained within this document, duty holders are responsible for ascertaining the sufficiency and adequacy of their internal and independent procedures for verifying and evaluating their organisation's compliance with safety law.

The Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) Forum exists to communicate and consult with key stakeholders, including local and national government bodies, equipment manufacturers, trade associations, professional associations and trade unions. The aim of WISH is to identify, devise and promote activities that can improve industry health and safety performance. www.hse.gov.uk/waste/wish.htm

Useful links and further reading

For examples of where leadership has improved health and safety performance in waste management see the case studies at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/waste/delivering-the-solution-together-case-studies.htm> and <http://www.hse.gov.uk/waste/services/case-studies/index.htm>.

For more general information on health and safety leadership go to <http://www.hse.gov.uk/leadership/index.htm>.

For general health and safety leadership case studies go to <http://www.hse.gov.uk/leadership/casestudies.htm>.

For information on worker Involvement go to <http://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/>.

For information on the wider duties and responsibilities of directors and senior managers go to: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/leadership/about.htm>

Appendices table 1: Self assessment – your organisation and health and safety leadership

If possible try printing the below A3 to allow easier completion. Remember to think about the meaning of the questions rather than dwell on detail.

Question and guidance	Your answer	Thoughts/ideas for improvement	
Who is/are the overall leader/s of your organisation?			
<i>Guidance: Who sets the culture, most influences its values and sets the vision/strategy for your organisation? Think – if a member of the public asked you ‘who are your organisation’s leaders’ what would your reply be?</i>			
Who is/are the safety leader/s of your organisation?			
<i>Guidance: Use the same questions as above, but focus specifically on health and safety. Who sets the safety culture, safety values and vision for your organisation? Be honest – who really are your safety leaders?</i>			
Who would your employees say are your safety leaders?			
<i>Guidance: Ask your employees. If their replies are different from yours think about why? Is it that they do not know who your organisation’s leaders are, or do they believe that your overall leaders and safety leaders are different – and if so why?</i>			
Are your answers to the above three questions different?	Yes		No
<i>Guidance: If you have identified different person/s – why? The leaders of an organisation are leaders for all aspects of its values and culture. For example, a safety advisor may provide advice and support, but only those at or near the top of an organisation can provide overall leadership.</i>			
Does your safety policy, or similar, include leadership?	Yes		No
<i>Guidance: Leadership is an essential component of culture. As for any other key component writing it down and communicating this is critical.</i>			
Do you have any formal safety leadership schemes?	Yes		No
<i>Guidance: For example, targets for directors/senior persons to visit sites and/or engage with employees on safety, schemes such as ‘back-to-the-floor’ days for directors etc, health and safety KPIs linked to senior person remuneration or training courses for senior persons aimed at safety leadership.</i>			
Are you a leader for your organisation?	Yes		No
<i>Guidance: If you are a board/council member, a director or senior manager you are a (health and safety) leader for your organisation, whether you like it or not.</i>			
Are you a safety leader for your organisation?	Yes		No
<i>Guidance: If you are a leader for your organisation, why are you not also a safety leader? For example, a finance director may believe they are not a health and safety leader, but the day they walk onto a site without wearing the correct personal protective equipment, or ignore an obvious example of poor practice they are showing their (negative) leadership very clearly to everyone on site. Leaders are also health and safety leaders.</i>			
Now record your thoughts, findings and ideas for improvements in table 3 (or in your own improvement format)			

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Appendices table 2: Self assessment – your personal health and safety leadership

If possible try printing the below A3 to allow easier completion. Remember to think about the meaning of the questions rather than dwell on detail.

Are you	Behaviour (for guidance see table 4 on effective behaviours)	Answers here = 3 points	Answers here = 2 points	Answers here = 1 point	Thoughts/ideas for improvement
A visible leader?	When did you last walk your site/one of your sites specifically to assess health and safety? Not visits to sites for meetings or other business - visits dedicated to health and safety	Within last month	Within last 3 months	Within last year or never	
	When you are on site to assess health and safety do you tell everyone you meet that you are there specifically for health and safety? That you have not just popped-in for a quick visit	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	When on site do you always wear all correct safety equipment and personal protection, such as hard hat, high visibility jacket, safety boots etc? Even if you are only on site for a short time.	Always	Sometimes	Never	
An involved leader?	When on site do you challenge unsafe behaviours/conditions personally? This means taking direct action and not noting an unsafe behaviour/condition and talking to the manager	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	When on site do you praise good practice and safe behaviours personally? Note – this means praising employees direct rather than noting good practice and commenting to the manager	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	Do you attend health and safety meetings personally? These may be formal safety committees or site safety meetings – the key is they involve both employees and management	Always	Sometimes	Never	
An engaged leader?	When on site do you engage directly with employees on health and safety? Do you talk direct to employees about their health and safety? Note – talking to the manager does not count	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	If you have union or non-union safety representatives, when on site do you take the time to speak directly and personally on health and safety with them?	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	When was the last time an employee approached you direct about a health and safety concern? This could have been during a site visit, in a meeting, by telephone or e-mail	Within last month	Within last 3 months	Within last year or never	
	When was the last time you became personally involved in a health and safety issue? For example, taking direct action yourself when you became aware of a safety issue?	Within last month	Within last 3 months	Within last year or never	
Totals for each column (add-up your scores for each column)					
Your overall total (add-up your totals for each column to give an overall score)					
Now record your thoughts, findings and ideas for improvements in table 3 (or in your own improvement format)					