

ohsrm Program

Summary for University Staff

Introduction

New Occupational Health and Safety legislation commenced on 1 September 2001. The main emphasis of the new legislation is to ensure that organisations adopt a systematic approach to managing occupational health and safety. In conjunction with this, greater emphasis has been placed on consultation by managers with their workers about hazards that exist in their work environment. All workplace hazards must be identified, then assessed and if necessary, controlled, with workers being consulted effectively at all stages during this process.

Requirement to focus on Health & Safety

In addition to the new legislative requirements, the University has a social responsibility to ensure the safety and well being of its staff, students, contractors and of members of the general public. Accidents can have a variety of adverse effects on the University. These can easily be avoided by investing a little time in pre-planning activities and operations.

The consequences of accidents include:

- **Pain and suffering** for the injured person, possibly restricting their social and domestic activities, as well as work;
- **Financial cost** – medical expenses, rehabilitation costs, costs to replace damaged equipment, increases in insurance premiums, fines for non-compliance[#], law suits and legal costs etc;
- **Disruption to operations** – temporary replacement of injured personnel, loss of expertise, time to investigate incidents and clean up or repair damage, time to train and supervise replacement personnel;
- **Psychological impact** – lower morale and productivity of victims and colleagues;
- **Negative publicity** – poor safety standards can have an adverse effect on the University's reputation which in turn could lead to lower student enrollments and act as an impediment to securing research grants or attracting the highest quality staff.

In order to meet the legislative requirements and further enhance the University's commitment to the health, safety and well being of staff, students, contractors and members of the general public, an occupational health and safety risk management Program - **ohsrm** - has been established.

ohsrm Program for Legal Compliance

Occupational health and safety remains the responsibility of every staff member of the University. However, as managers and supervisors have more control over work methods and environments, they also have a greater responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of their subordinates. Thus managers and supervisors are required to take "ownership" of the **ohsrm** Program in their areas of authority. This includes identifying hazards that exist in their work environments, assessing these hazards and implementing control measures to either prevent the hazards that could result in an accident, or mitigating their effects should an incident occur.

The OHS legislation places greater emphasis on effective and meaningful "workgroup consultation". In order to meet this requirement, the **ohsrm** Program provides guidance on incorporating the topic of OHS risk management into regular staff or department meetings. In addition, tools have been developed to assist managers and supervisors in assessing and controlling the risks from those hazards that require the most immediate attention. Standard forms have been developed to ensure appropriate records are kept on workplace consultations and on the **ohsrm** process.

Responsibility for Implementing the **ohsrm** Program

The **ohsrm** Program clarifies and builds on the existing OHS responsibilities of each staff member.

Staff and students

All staff and students are required to cooperate with and participate in the **ohsrm** Program. This includes raising concerns about workplace hazards with the relevant supervisor/manager, contributing to the consultation involved in managing particular OHS risks, and performing work in the agreed safe manner.

Managers, supervisors & team leaders

Given that there are many different management arrangements throughout the University, each Faculty and Administrative Department has its own workgroup structure for implementing the **ohsrm** Program. Ultimately, a workgroup is defined as a group of staff under the direct supervision of a supervisor or manager. It is the responsibility of this supervisor or manager to consult with his or her workgroup members in order to identify hazards in the work environment or hazardous aspects of work activities. The risk from each hazard is then assessed and, if needed, controlled by either reducing the likelihood of occurrence or reducing the effects should an exposure/accident occur. The **ohsrm** process is described in the **ohsrm** Guidelines and standard templates are available to record findings and actions.

Workgroup leaders can effectively fulfil their responsibilities for managing OHS risks by:

- Following the **ohsrm** Steps.
- Communicating and consulting with their staff and students about workplace hazards and OHS risk management.
- Ensuring that effective risk control measures are established within agreed time frames.
- Including **ohsrm** as a standing item of regular management meetings, or if there are not regular management meetings, having regular meetings to deal specifically with **ohsrm**.
- Inducting and supervising staff and students in accordance with their experience and competence, and with consideration for the hazardous nature of the work with which they are involved.

Senior managers

Department Heads and more senior Managers are required to ensure that the Department, Faculty or Division etc., under their direction is complying with the OHS legislation and effectively managing OHS risks. For smaller Departments this would mean that the Department management meetings may deal with all departmental OHS risk management issues, as per the **ohsrm** Meeting Guide. However, for larger groups, the Head, Dean, or Director etc., may require a summary report from each of their subordinate managers at their regular senior managers meetings. These subordinate managers would be responsible for implementing the **ohsrm** Program in their area(s) of authority, using the **ohsrm** Guidelines, templates and Meeting Guide to assist them.

Examples of implementation

Below are some examples to clarify **who** has responsibility for implementing the **ohsrm** Program.

1. Research project team: academic supervisor, 2 support staff, 4 post-graduate students

The academic supervisor is responsible for ensuring OHS risks are satisfactorily managed within/by the team. The support staff and students as a minimum are required to cooperate with the **ohsrm** Program, but will probably be allocated duties by the supervisor that assist in managing the risks faced by the team.

2. ARC funded, short-term project

The project leader is responsible for ensuring OHS risks are satisfactorily managed within/by the project team. The Head of Department where the project is based will impose the **ohsrm** Program requirements on the project and receive reports of compliance from the project leader. The Head will take action against non-compliance where necessary.

3. Administrative department, 12 staff doing similar office work

The Head of Department deals with all departmental **ohsrm** issues during regular meetings within the Department. The Head then gives regular summary reports on progress to the Director of the Administrative Division.

Step by Step Guide to Implementing the **ohsrm** Program.

- A briefing about the **ohsrm** Program has been provided for PVC's, Deans, DVC's and Administrative Division Heads.
- Department Heads define workgroups within Academic Colleges and Administrative Divisions.
- Department Heads identify the supervisor or manager of each workgroup as the person responsible for implementing the **ohsrm** Program within the relevant workgroup, including record keeping.
- Managers include the **ohsrm** Program as a standing agenda item on routine staff meetings, using the **ohsrm** Meeting Guide for direction.
- Staff commence identifying and managing workplace hazards using the **ohsrm** Guidelines and templates, following the **ohsrm** steps.
- Managers and supervisors prepare an **ohsrm** "Action Plan" using the template provided to set goals for continual improvement. Action Plans should be retained with other **ohsrm** Program documentation for local reference and auditing purposes.
- Managers report/monitor progress via summaries presented at senior management meetings.

Penalties for non-compliance

The following penalties may apply to those convicted of breaching the NSW OHS legislation.

Corporations:	\$ 550,000 maximum for first offence \$ 825,000 maximum for subsequent offences \$ 1,500 for non-compliance with prohibition or improvement notice \$ 600 maximum on-the-spot fine Notice of conviction to be posted in the press.
Managers & supervisors:	\$ 55,000 maximum for first offence \$ 82,500 +2 year gaol sentence maximum for subsequent offences.
Employees:	\$ 3,300.

The **ohsrm** Guidelines and other related documents are available on-line from:
http://www.usyd.edu.au/risk/ohs_manual/ohsrm.shtml

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