



Training for Health and Safety Representatives

This guidance has been issued by the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (the Commission) to employers, relating to their responsibilities in regard to the attendance of health and safety representatives at a health and safety representative training course accredited by the Commission.

Introduction

Health and safety representatives (HSRs) are required by section 27(1) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* (the Act) to undertake a course of training which is accredited by the Commission for that purpose. Employers are required by section 27(2) of the Act to allow the HSR to take time off work to attend this training without loss of remuneration or other entitlements.

Payment of training costs

As HSR training is mandatory, the Commission's view is that these costs are to be met by the employer. This also recognises the valuable role that HSRs play in the management of health and safety in an organisation. These costs include transport and accommodation costs, depending on the availability of courses close to the HSR's usual place of work/residence. HSRs should not be expected to meet the costs of attending an accredited HSR training course. Details of the arrangements in place could be included in an organisation's health and safety management arrangements (HSMAs).

Timeframes for training HSRs

HSRs should be trained as soon as practicable after their election/selection so that they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to effectively perform their role. Factors that should be taken into account when considering how soon after being elected/selected HSRs attend training include:

- availability of the accredited courses
- relevance of the course to the designated work group and the organisation hazard profile
- operational requirements and the availability of replacement staff
- previous feedback received from attendees of the course
- whether there are any travel requirements for HSRs to attend the course.

Employers should aim for the time period between the employer becoming aware of the election/selection of the HSR, and the attendance of the HSR at accredited training, to be a maximum of three months. Specific arrangements may be included in the organisation's HSMAs.

Choice/preference of courses by the HSR

HSRs may have a preference as to which accredited HSR training course they attend. This may be based on individual learning styles, location of the course or previous experience with the training provider.

Employers should discuss the choice of course with the relevant HSRs. Factors that should be considered when choosing an appropriate course include:

- availability of the accredited courses
- relevance of the course to the designated work group and the organisation hazard profile
- previous feedback received from attendees of the course
- learning style of the HSR
- ability and willingness of the HSR to travel (which may be influenced by factors such as family/carer responsibilities).

Further guidance may be included in an organisation's HSMAs.

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Participation in HSR training courses

Employers should ensure that HSRs are able to meet the commitments of the HSR training course (both classroom based courses and courses with workplace based activities). All HSR training activities should occur during the employee's work time, and HSRs should not be expected to complete HSR training activities during their own time. Where HSRs are attending training that involves workplace based activities employers must ensure that HSRs are provided with the time and resources on the job to complete the required work, whether it be pre-course questionnaires or mid or post-course project work.

Training of Deputy Health and Safety Representatives

The Act (section 33) provides for the election/selection of a deputy health and safety representative (DHSR) who can exercise the powers of the HSR when the HSR is unable, due to absence or any other reason, to exercise their powers.

While there is no legislative requirement for employers to allow DHSRs to attend training without loss of remuneration or entitlements, the Commission recommends that employers support DHSRs undertaking accredited training so as to enable them to effectively undertake the role of the HSR when required.

Organisations may specify an entitlement for the DHSR to attend HSR training in their HSMA.

Dispute resolution

Employers should ensure that their organisation's HSMA provides mechanisms for dispute resolution. Disputes arising from either the timeframes for training HSRs, or the choice of course should be resolved in a timely manner using the HSMA dispute resolution procedures developed by the employer in consultation with employees.

Refresher training

Employers should consider additional training for HSRs who perform the HSR role for more than one term. This additional training may take the form of refresher training, attendance at information seminars, or other developmental opportunities that enable the HSR to update their skills and knowledge. More information on further/refresher training arrangements could be included in an organisation's HSMA.

Further guidance on HSR and consultative arrangements are available at www.comcare.gov.au or:

- Health and Safety Representatives Handbook (OHS 4)
- OHS Workplace Consultative Arrangements (OHS 67)
- Safety at Work – your responsibilities as an employer (OHS 60)
- Comcare OHS Frequently Asked Questions: www.comcare.gov.au/safety/faqs
- Comcare HSR training page: www.comcare.gov.au/safety/health_and_safety_representatives.

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