

# Safety champions

By Neville Rockhouse

If you run a business where there are many people of different ethnicity, how do you communicate with them, how do you train them and how do you protect them?

The New Zealand Occupational Health & Safety in Employment legislation places a legal duty on us to ensure the safety and well-being of employees at work and others in, or in the vicinity of, a workplace. This is performance-based law that essentially compels us to ensure that all are protected while at work. We are required to supply information to all of these folk that is reasonably likely to be understood. So what do you do?

Simple – you can adopt the “systems, conditions, behaviours” model to assist you get the safety message across to your team. At a practical level, this will lead you down the pathway to demonstrating a better safety culture within your business. To change the culture in an organisation, especially one that has been in business for many years, you cannot do it overnight, but with the fullness of time it can be achieved.

The above model is proven to be most effective when employees of all nationalities are able to participate and have active input to the development of a “safe system of work”.

Within all multi-cultural groups, we tend to find sub-groups who usually have a propensity to stick close to those with the same (or similar) cultural backgrounds. Look for the “safety champions” in these sub-groups to help you get your message across. We all know them – more often than not, these folk will not be the team leader, nor the supervisor or manager, but they will be natural communicators. They really care about other people: they remind you it is morning teatime; they take a new team member under their wing; they even remember your birthday; and they just love to chat about family and friends.

If you can tap into this resource in your workplace, then you are on your way towards the successful communication of your safety message in a manner that is “reasonably likely to be understood”.

Let’s throw a spanner into the works by making the sub-groups non or poor English speaking. How do you communicate to these folk the benefits of engineering controls, such as guarding or barriers?

Consider an integrated approach. Develop safety and warning signage with pictures and arrows on the machine indicating possible consequences of exposure to significant hazards – a simple picture in bold yellow of a hand missing a

couple of fingers speaks a thousand words.

During induction training (in which you might need an interpreter), produce expanded SOPs (safe operational procedures) that have been lengthened with photographs that demonstrate the right way to operate the machinery.

An added benefit of this is that completing the

JSA (job safety analysis) or the operational aspect of the SOP also provides you with a great training template. Breaking tasks down into basic steps will assist you in demonstrating the higher levels of competency for safer machinery operation.

The development of effective lines of communication, based on the promotion of a safety-based culture, is achievable by using ethnic relationships to foster a better understanding of safe work practices.



*Neville Rockhouse is an occupational health and safety practitioner who also serves as the national operations manager for the New Zealand Institute of Safety Management. In addition to a host of undergraduate qualifications, he has two post-graduate degrees, including a Masters in Occupational Health and Safety (one of only three people in New Zealand to hold such a degree). He works as a senior consultant and training manager for Occupational Safety Management (NZ) Ltd, a company he owned for nine years.*

### Got something to say?

### Want to vent your spleen?

The Back Page is available to industry leaders for opinions and commentary. Send your submission (650 words plus a photo) to the editor for consideration.

## advertisers

## index

<b>Associated Process Controls</b>	33	<b>EBOS</b>	15	<b>NZ Institute of Management</b>	20
<b>ACC</b>	21	<b>Electropar</b>	IBC	<b>Omron Electronics</b>	OBC
<b>Advanced Diagnostic NZ</b>	3	<b>ESR</b>	29	<b>Pilz</b>	25
<b>Advanced Flooring</b>	27	<b>ES Barriers</b>	7	<b>Power Forklifts</b>	29
<b>All About People</b>	14	<b>Fallright International</b>	22	<b>Rotech Equipment</b>	15
<b>Barrier-Tec</b>	13	<b>Glomesh NZ</b>	16	<b>Schneider Electric</b>	17
<b>Bintec Distributors</b>	IFC	<b>Hamilton Perry Industries</b>	9	<b>Scion Analytical</b>	34
<b>Centralised Pumping</b>	18	<b>Instant Access</b>	26	<b>Site Safe</b>	4
<b>Chase Auto</b>	33	<b>J S Langen</b>	30	<b>Tasman Safety</b>	31
<b>Competenz</b>	12	<b>Jackson Electrical</b>	23	<b>Tungsten and Tool</b>	7
<b>Compliance Solutions</b>	19	<b>Nilfisk-Advance</b>	13	<b>Vanguard Safety</b>	29
<b>Deneefe Signing Systems</b>	13	<b>NZ Chemical Industry Council</b>	11	<b>Yakka</b>	28