

## The Scooter Group – a case study on restructuring safety

### Company profile

The Scooter Group are a Brisbane-based commercial plastering and carpentry company employing approximately 200-300 staff.

### Background

The Scooter Group decided a stronger focus on safety was needed after they were often asked by principal contractors to increase the safety aspects of their tenders. The company noticed that simply offering competitive prices was no longer enough to win contracts.

The company recognised that a robust safety culture and safe work procedures were key to gaining new business contracts. They set about raising the profile and value of safety within the company to a 'best practice level' through innovations in safety management.

Like many other construction based companies, Scooter found that injuries to new or young workers were high, so they implemented measures to minimise these incidents.

*"Safety within our company is about protecting people, the people that work for us and around us. The most important assets of any company are its employees. Their safety and well-being needs to be placed at the highest of importance. It is only when the employees feel safe, that they can give you 100% productivity."*

Scott Dwan, Scooter Group Director

### Innovations in safety management

Scooter radically changed their safety practices starting with their management team. The company has a full-time safety management team headed up by a Workplace Health and Safety Officer and Workplace Health and Safety coordinator. The safety management team has input into purchasing decisions, project staffing and company direction.

Scooter's organisational chart has the safety management team reporting directly to the director. Each Scooter project involves safety staff to ensure that what is being proposed at a management level is being implemented on the ground. This has resulted in a number of safety initiatives being implemented: the 'green hats' program, induction and training, and safety stations.

#### *Green hats program*

Scooter implemented a safety program to support their new and younger workers and change the workplace culture. These workers are allocated a mentor and provided a green hard hat with an orange sticker to make them easily identifiable to other staff. Specialised training is given to all staff to help them supervise, mentor and support the 'green hats'.

New and young workers are now actively supported through advice, assistance and regular supervision, which play an essential part of their safety. Since the implementation of the 'green hats' program, injuries to both young and mentoring staff has fallen.



Green hat



Green hat Mitchell and his mentor Greg

### Induction and training

Workers are inducted when they first start working for Scooter. The company has revamped its staff induction to include safety videos and quizzes to test whether workers are really retaining safety information and can apply it in their work situations.

In addition to the induction, supervisors and foremen complete a safety awareness course. All staff, from head office management to onsite workers are periodically re-trained in aspects of safety.

Safety representatives and foremen use worker safety documentation and work procedures (such as skill sets and training) when assigning site teams.

### Safety stations

Safety information is now more easily accessible onsite. Safety stations are positioned on all construction projects and contain materials and information such as safety plans, work method statements, material safety data sheets, induction information, personal protective equipment, signage, and fire extinguishers. A sign is placed above the stations informing staff onsite about the contact details of the safety

representative, first aid officer and workplace health and safety management if they have safety concerns or need to report an incident.

### Outcomes achieved from the changes

- Injuries to workers have fallen with the management team's initiative to make sure workers wear safety glasses all the time while on site. Prior to the introduction of this safety policy, every second to third injury was to the eyes (mainly from dust/debris) requiring medical care and time off. Since the introduction of this policy, no staff have needed to take time off for eye injuries.
- Scooter is increasing its market share due to an improved safety culture in the organisation and by demonstrating robust safety systems to principal contractors—an increasingly important aspect for contractor selection.



Onsite safety station

### Lessons learnt

- *Demonstrating effective safety systems* is increasing in significance when tendering for contracts.
- Invest in the appropriate level of *safety resourcing* for your business.
- *Good access to safety information* to all workers is essential.
- *Don't take shortcuts*—generic work method statements produced by an offsite company may not be sufficient. Relevant work method statements are crucial. Local input into these processes ensures relevancy (with access to WHS expertise if necessary).

- *Assign mentors to young or new workers based on experience and individual personalities* - otherwise generational or personality clashes may make the program ineffective.
- *Nothing should be treated as a closed document* - learn from your mistakes to improve processes and procedures in the future.
- *Change takes time* - processes need to continually reiterate the importance of safety - don't expect changes to occur overnight.

#### **Further information**

For more information visit the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au) or call the WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915.