

Zero harm at work

Case study

Mirvac Construction (Queensland) Pty Ltd

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

At Mirvac workplaces, special attention is paid to the needs of any young worker new to the industry. This includes a trainee or apprentice as we recognise they may lack experience or familiarity with workplace procedures or practices and are therefore at an increased risk of being injured. In fact, Mirvac and industry data have identified that young workers (under 25 years old) are more likely to be injured at work than any other age group.

As a result of these statistics, the site Health Safety Environment (HSE) team, along with the state HSE Manager, decided to develop a new system to better manage young workers who come to the site, to help manage risks to this age group. This involved developing a young worker policy which specifically addressed the behavioural issues of young workers and the impact on these workers experiencing higher injury rates.

The initiative not only targets young workers entering the workplace for the first time, but also reminds experienced workers on construction sites to look out for high risk young workers.

INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

A policy and commitment declaration was drafted in consultation with key stakeholders to ensure the main risks to young workers were managed, and that a dedicated person was committed to supervising their work. This included employers of apprentices, apprentice training groups, safety officers and site managers. Implementation was through site safety meetings, toolbox meetings and pre-start meetings.

The policy and commitment were implemented initially through the induction process, focusing specifically on:

- what was expected of young workers before they started work on site
- identification high risk activities which required close supervision
- why they are at risk.



Onsite education and awareness materials were also developed to remind more experienced workers to think about the risks to young workers. These included posters and stickers for hard hats.

Workshops were also initiated with tradesman to demonstrate to young workers safe work practices in relation to the use of tools such as nail guns or other gear.

ROLE OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The Mirvac young worker training initiatives undertaken by Mirvac Construction (Queensland) from 2004/05 onwards were enhanced, formalised and launched nationally across Mirvac construction division by the Managing Director on 31 August 2006 as the Mirvac Young Worker 'Look Out' Safety Program. The success of the Program at a State level prompted extensive consultation with senior management across all of Mirvac's construction activities to ensure its implementation nationally. Since that time, the instances of young worker injuries on Mirvac construction sites in Queensland has reduced from 43 minor instances and one lost time injury in 2005/06 to seven minor instances and no lost time in 2006/07 – a reduction of 84 per cent for minor instances and 10 per cent in lost time injuries.

Senior management was consulted with the draft of the new policy with their full support. It was important to involve senior management to ensure 100 per cent compliance across the project. The HSE Manager consulted and received support from the construction directors. Having observed the benefits of this new policy, senior management were also key in supporting this policy to reduce the risks to young workers adopted nationally on all Mirvac sites.

OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

- A dramatic decrease in incident rates for this age group. Overview of results are outlined below in 'Results'.
- Demonstrated commitment in reducing injuries of young people who were identified in a high risk injury category by employers of young people. Specifically targeting young workers new to the industry was an opportunity to instill good attitudes and behaviours around safety from the start of a young worker's career.
- As a result of the success of this program, this is now a national policy and has been implemented in all Mirvac construction workplaces.

RESULTS

A review of injury occurrences across Mirvac Constructions (Queensland) revealed young workers aged between 15-24 years as the most likely group to sustain injury. The 15-24 year age group ranked highest in the instance of injury of any age group, comprising 38 per cent of the total register of injury numbers at Mirvac's Queensland construction workplaces, and third in Mirvac's national injury data screening. In addition to the previous analysis of Mirvac's register of injuries, claims data was also evaluated across Mirvac Constructions (Queensland) and identified two claims for young workers in 2006.

The overall analysis suggests that whilst young workers are the most prominent age group in respect of first aid injuries recorded on the register of injuries, the severity of these injuries were relatively minor as demonstrated by one only young worker injury claim which recorded time off work of 38 hours.



To further investigate the injury occurrences, the nature of injury for young workers was evaluated. Figure 2 taken from register of injury data indicated the majority of the injuries were open wounds, i.e. cuts (35 per cent), minor strains and sprains (20 per cent), unspecified (18 per cent), superficial (9 per cent) and eye (9 per cent).

To further investigate the risks and factors causing minor young worker injuries, consultation with the workforce was undertaken on Mirvac construction sites in Queensland. Young workers themselves were consulted with the investigation revealing that the cause of many minor injuries was to some extent related to the supervision of key tasks, but moreso related to inexperience in the use of tools and equipment or how to undertake work in a safe manner.

HOW COULD THIS INNOVATION/ACTION HELP INDUSTRY?

It shows that by having a simple policy that targets a high risk age group, injuries can be reduced to ensure that risks are minimised for young workers who are the future of our industry.

LESSONS LEARNT

Ensure an extensive consultation process with all relevant parties is carried out. You need everyone's support on all sites to ensure it is fully adopted to gain all benefits from this policy.

CASE STUDY CONTACT

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