

Work Well Awards 2023

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Example entry

Category four – Most significant improvement to work health and safety performance

1: What was the work health and safety performance issue?

Southern Cross Contractors (SCC), were working for electricity meter providers over the years providing electrical skilled workers to attend properties and exchange electricity meters. The company back in 2019 was quite small and was rapidly expanding, with additional work volumes and workers being recruited to install these meters across QLD and NSW. Towards the end of 2019, SCC started to have a spate of incidents, two of which were serious High Potential Near Misses (HIPO's) that had the potential to cause harm to the electrician and the customer, due to lack of electrical testing, training, supervision and comprehension. SCC were asked at the time to produce evidence of training, Management Systems and onboarding records, which at the time were limited. The impact was able to be measured in the amount of work volume being provided, which was slowly diminishing, to the point where some technicians were laid off. Feedback from clients were that SCC were a risk to them and it appeared the company grew too quickly without the required governance checks in place.

SCC determined it needed to invest in developing its safety, quality, compliance and governance framework in order to primarily eliminate the risk of significant injuries to others and to restore faith from its clients. The first step was to engage a skilled and well regarded in the industry General Manager to the business, who had extensive experience in metering and governance frameworks, followed by a skilled Health and Safety Manager who had worked in the same type of industry and had national knowledge of electrical metering, governance and safety management systems if it wanted to remain in business and work towards its goal of becoming a large partner with metering providers.

2: How did your organisation improve its health and safety performance?

The HSEQ Manager initially spent time out in the field with workers, asking questions, observing and seeking feedback, followed by a full HSEQ systems review during the first month of engagement. This review found a Management System that was almost non-existent. A Safety policy and Safe Work Method Statement were the only two documents that resembled a small part of a Management System.



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A meeting was held with the senior management team, to summarise the findings of the audit and what actions needed to take place to enable a simple, robust system that the field workers and office staff could use and understand. Over the next 4 months, the HSEQ Manager went about developing a brand new HSEQ system in consultation with the Managing Director, General Manager, Field Supervisors and Meter Technicians in the field, which lead to the creation of some the below:

- Safety, Quality, Environment Policies
- New HSE Manual (covering ISO 45001 and ISO 14001)
- New Quality Manual (covering ISO 9001)
- Legal Risk Registers
- HSEQ FY21 & FY22 Strategy
- Document Control on all company documents (ensuring each document has a number, revision number, issue date etc).
- HSE Risk Register (covering the companies key risks and controls)
- Risk Management Standards (covering critical control management)
- New Safe Work Method Statement templates and SWMS for electrical metering works, with input from key stakeholders
- Emergency response processes (evacuation maps, plans, drills etc)
- Incident alert and Hazard alert templates
- Incident reporting process and reporting templates
- Safety Walks and Spot check program introduced for the Senior Management Team to document their site visits and discussions around safe practices in the field
- Development of a new induction program for all workers, including HSE awareness, Electrical Safety, Risk Management,
- Dog Awareness, Asbestos Awareness and Dealing with difficult customers, which were identified as the main areas risk for the business.
- Return to work processes for employees
- Toolbox meeting and other meeting templates, to document actions, discussions and key information
- Human Resource processes (HR Manual, Onboarding procedures, Policies etc).

In conjunction with the new management system development, SCC embarked on swapping its IT systems away from Google products, over to Microsoft. This was a barrier of change, as most current employees were used to using Google products and MacBook computers, there was some resistance to change, however the added cost of Microsoft products and the benefit to the business was soon understood and the company embraced and took a risk on the migration. The use of Microsoft SharePoint as its document management systems and incident reporting database was one of the biggest changes as well as the integration of

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data lists into PowerBI and Microsoft flows was used to automate some of the processes. This enabled quick and easy access to documents, data and reporting metrics and assisted in being proactive to trends and rectifying them early, rather than waiting for something to happen.

Southern Cross Contractors then embarked on obtaining its ISO certifications (45001, 9001, 14001), which was commended by the auditors and identified no system gaps.

3: Explain how the changes have improved your performance. How have you ensured this improvement will be sustained?

The changes to SCC restored faith, trust and confidence in its clients, that SCC had invested the time and effort to strengthen its safety culture, management systems and recruit the right people to help it succeed. Clients have also increased the work volume for SCC, which is delivering safe, reliable and consistent results. Including a TRIFR rate of zero, which has been maintained over the past 12 months.

SCC are regularly monitoring and improving the system, by reviewing the 70+ hazard reports from the field technicians each month for trends and proactive measures (e.g. unrestrained dogs, slippery driveways, overgrown plants blocking safe access, bees/wasps, overgrown grass in regional areas where snakes may be present). The monitoring of the Critical Control/Fatal Risk Standards processes to ensure the control is always used to eliminate the hazard.

SCC also audit in excess of 2% of its work volume for the month (averaging on 350-400 audits per month by the field supervisors in QLD and NSW), these audits are documented and any non-conformances are fed back to the technician in a timely manner, with coaching and mentoring the key focus.

The Implementation of meter technician onboarding training, consisting of 1 day classroom training, covering off electrical installations, testing and validation of results. Technicians are then competency assessed by a field supervisor on their next 5 installations, with coaching and mentoring provided to enable the ability to ask questions and feel comfortable in a range of scenarios.

Monthly toolbox talks are undertaken to enable 2 way communication between technicians and the office and to live up to its name of being a "toolbox talk and not a toolbox tell".

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Management Systems Reviews and Policy reviews are undertaken each year by the Senior Management Team and improvement initiatives are documented in the Corrective Action Register to enable improvements and tweaks to the system.

Technicians have commented on how simple and user friendly the SCC management system is to use and comply with, it also enables for better data capture and accurate reporting.

SCC employees have also embraced the new management system and know where to turn to if they need a procedure, template, information or to store evidence/documents and have been receptive to the change as it has been for the benefit of the company.

SCC is now in a strong position and is increasing its work volume month on month and in some cases, are leading the change of its competitors.



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