

## Acting on worker engagement



Seven steps > Step 2 > Further tools >

Taking the time to talk to your workers can help you establish good practice as well as find out why incidents happen. These talks provide the opportunity to learn about the real causes of health and safety issues – which can not only improve safety on site but also help your business.

This practice is known as ‘acting on worker engagement’ (sometimes referred to as AWE), which can be helpful in the following circumstances:

- following an incident on site;
- following an observation of unsafe behaviour;
- following observation of excellent behaviour or good practice; and
- making sure your workers understand their role in health and safety.

### The three stages of AWE

#### **Step 1: The conversation**

Use question prompts to start the conversation, along the lines of:

- Can you talk me through what happened?
- Have you done this before?
- Was this covered in your training?
- What do you feel can go wrong with the job?
- How do the weather conditions affect you?
- Are there any written procedures to guide you?
- How good is your equipment? Do you feel it's right for your job?
- Do your colleagues always do the job in the same way?

#### **Step 2: Making a record**

When discussing an incident, write down:

- Who was involved, where it took place and what happened.
- The immediate issues involved.
- The underlying reasons behind the incident.
- What lessons can be learned:
  - for the individual;
  - for the site; and
  - for the business.
- The actions taken. (At the time or going forward?)

#### **Step 3: Taking action and learning**

After talking to your workers and making a record, you can take action by:

- Making instant improvements, eg:
  - adopting safer procedures; and
  - installing additional safety measures (eg new signs or barriers).
- Transferring the knowledge both around the site and (if applicable) further afield.
- Rewarding the participants, where a job has been done well.



### **AWE skills**

The following will help during each of the above stages:

- Find a suitable location, which is private and quiet.
- Act promptly, while memories are still fresh.
- Work backwards, from immediate causes to underlying causes.
- Ask good questions, but remember to mostly listen.
- Don't attach blame; focus on looking for evidence of what happened.
- Ask open questions, eg 'What were your reasons for doing that?'
- Give praise for good performance.

AWE can bring many benefits to the workplace (in addition to improved business performance):

- It reinforces a 'don't walk by' message. What does this mean?
- It recognises and helps encourage good practice.
- It can bring an immediate stop to poor practice, so that bad habits don't develop further.
- It provides opportunities to learn and improve.

**The Leadership and Worker Involvement toolkit is aimed particularly at small and medium sized businesses and is designed to help improve your health and safety and bring additional benefits to your business performance and productivity.**