



# Managing workplace health and safety in a small business: D Williams Builders

## Small business making a difference

D Williams Builders is a small building contractor that has provided commercial building and maintenance services in Tasmania since 1855.

D Williams Builders currently employs five staff, although the company also uses subcontractors when required. The company has been recognised for its commitment to workplace health and safety (WHS), including its use of a WHS management system tailored to small business.

## Support of senior management

David Williams is the Director of Business at D Williams Builders. David has taken a number of steps to show senior management commitment and support of WHS, including:

- the provision of specific WHS related responsibilities for each employee with overall responsibility for maintaining a safe and healthy working environment remaining with the Director
- identifying potential hazards in the workplace at the introduction of any new systems of work
- conducting regular site inspections
- providing safety audit reports to subcontractors as a helpful tool
- adopting an WHS management system.

## How the WHS management system was established

WHS is an important consideration in the planning and management of D Williams Builders. During the mid 1990s, D Williams Builders instigated the development of a WHS management system to improve the overall health and safety practices of the organisation.

The company received safety and risk management documentation from a number of oil companies and noticed their thorough policies which included checklists, guidelines and safety audit information. After considering this documentation and with the knowledge that building and maintenance services are equally high risk, D Williams Builders drafted their first WHS management system.

## About the WHS management system

The WHS management system established by D Williams Builders consists of an overarching policy that details the objectives, expectations and safety requirements of the company. This policy is accompanied by fact sheets, guidelines, templates and checklists specific to particular tasks. The overarching policy combined with the attachments form the WHS management system.



Third year apprentice William King, completing a job safety analysis form

## The WHS management system includes:

- Safe work procedure fact sheets
- excavation/trenching
- sun protection
- General guidelines
- motor vehicle and trailer safety
- personal protective equipment
- Templates
- return to work plan
- risk assessment and control form
- job safety analysis form
- Auditing checklists
- safety action audit schedule
- health safety and environment performance report

Employees and subcontractors are provided with a folder containing these documents and are encouraged to keep it with them for easy reference on the job.

## Safety day

Every year D Williams Builders hires a conference room where management, employees and subcontractors meet to review the WHS management system. This provides an opportunity for everyone to become involved in the system, apply

relevant knowledge and discuss work-related experiences to improve the documentation.

## Results

Through establishing this WHS management system, D Williams Builders has:

- reduced the rate of incidents and injuries
- reduced the number of workers' compensation claims
- reduced workers' compensation premiums
- received a number of local and national WHS awards.

D Williams Builders plans to continue to implement safety and wellbeing in all areas of their business. The WHS management system will be reviewed as required or at least at yearly intervals during Safety Day. A greater effort will also be made to assist subcontractors reach the standards set by D Williams Builders.



David Williams and David Charlton of D Williams Builders receiving the 2005 Safe Work Australia Award for Best Workplace Health & Safety Practices in Small Business.

## About these case studies

The Australian Government is committed to improving the WHS standards for all workers on building and construction projects.

These case studies have been developed to share practical ideas that can be adopted by industry to assist in their own management of WHS issues.

The Federal Safety Commissioner consults widely with industry, WHS authorities and other relevant agencies to promote a cooperative approach to improving WHS performance.

**The vision of the Federal Safety Commissioner is a building and construction industry where no one is harmed.**

## For further information:

- Visit the FSC website at [www.fsc.gov.au](http://www.fsc.gov.au)
- Contact the FSC Assist Line on **1800 652 500**
- Contact the OFSC via email at [ofsc@jobs.gov.au](mailto:ofsc@jobs.gov.au)

The Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner has prepared this case study to promote workplace health and safety (WHS) in the industry. When developing OHS initiatives, businesses and individuals should consider the circumstances and requirements particular to them and seek professional advice where required.

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