

# Health and Safety Essentials

## Lecture 18 – Communication and Consultation in OHS

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Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025



Undergraduate Diploma in  
Occupational Health and Safety

# Recap last week's topic

Kahoot Quiz:

[https://play.kahoot.it/v2/\\*?quizId=e9a06eae-68bc-46b4-9b37-509fb566000e](https://play.kahoot.it/v2/*?quizId=e9a06eae-68bc-46b4-9b37-509fb566000e)



# Learning Objectives

- ✓ Explain **why effective communication matters** in OHS.
- ✓ Identify **legal obligations** under Maltese law for OHS consultation.
- ✓ Recognise **barriers to communication** and strategies to overcome them.
- ✓ Apply **best practices for worker consultation and hazard reporting**.
- ✓ Analyse **case studies of successful and failed safety communication**.



**“The single biggest problem in communication is  
the illusion that it has taken place.” – George  
Bernard Shaw**



# The Role of Communication in OHS

- **Clear and timely communication** ensures workers understand risks and safety protocols.
- **Consultation prevents accidents** by allowing workers to contribute to safety measures.
- **Two-way communication** creates a culture where workers feel safe to report hazards.
- **Poor communication has contributed to major industrial disasters** (e.g., Deepwater Horizon, Piper Alpha).



**slido**

Please download and install the Slido app on all computers you use



**Can you recall an instance where poor communication led to a safety issue?  
Mention the issue and cause in a brief sentence.**

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

# Types of OHS Communication

## **Formal Communication:**

- Written policies, procedures, and OHS manuals.
- Safety meetings and toolbox talks.
- Incident reports and risk assessments.

## **Informal Communication:**


- Supervisor feedback and coaching.
- Peer discussions and knowledge-sharing.
- Anonymous safety concern submissions.

-  **Best Practice: A combination of both formal and informal communication is most effective in workplace safety.**



# The Communication Process in OHS

1. **Message** – Safety information must be clear and well-structured.
2. **Medium** – Use posters, emails, meetings, and digital tools.
3. **Receiver** – Workers must understand and act on safety messages.
4. **Feedback** – Workers should be able to ask questions and provide input.

 **Discussion:** What are the most effective communication channels in your workplace?




# Legal Obligations for Communication & Consultation

## Cap. 646 – Occupational Health and Safety Authority Act






- Employers must inform workers about workplace hazards and preventive measures.
- Workers have the right to be consulted on safety matters.


## S.L. 646.11 – General Provisions for Health and Safety at Work Places Regulations

- **Regulation 7:** Employers must coordinate safety efforts in shared workplaces.
- **Regulation 13:** Workers must be given a voice in OHS decisions.
- **Regulation 12:** Employers must provide workers with clear and accessible safety information.

 **Case Study Discussion:** A company introduces new hazardous chemicals without consulting workers. What are the risks?

# The Consequences of Poor Safety Communication

-  **Common Communication Failures:**
-  Misinterpreted safety instructions.
  -  Workers unaware of hazards.
  -  Delayed response to emergencies.
  -  Increased accident and injury rates.

-  **Case Studies:**
- **Piper Alpha Disaster (1988):** A failure to communicate equipment maintenance led to an explosion that killed 167 people.
  - **Deepwater Horizon (2010):** Workers were not properly informed about well pressure changes, leading to a massive oil spill.

 **Discussion:** What happens when safety information is not communicated effectively?

# STAR Framework – A Method for Structured Communication

- ✓ Situation – **What is happening?** Clearly describe the **context or issue**.
- ✓ Task – **What needs to be done?** Outline the **actions required**.
- ✓ Action – **What steps were taken or should be taken?** Explain how the task was (or will be) executed.
- ✓ Result – **What is the expected or achieved outcome?** Ensure clarity on objectives or lessons learned.

## **How it Improves OHS Communication:**

- ✓ Reduces **misunderstandings** by ensuring all essential details are covered.
- ✓ Helps in **incident reporting** by structuring clear, factual descriptions.
- ✓ Improves **worker safety briefings**, ensuring clarity in roles and responsibilities.

# SLAM Technique – A Tool for Safe Decision-Making

**SLAM** is used in **high-risk jobs** to ensure that tasks are performed **safely and efficiently**:

- ✓ **Stop** – **Pause and think before starting** a task.
- ✓ **Look** – **Assess the environment** for hazards.
- ✓ **Assess** – **Evaluate the risks** and required controls.
- ✓ **Manage** – **Take action** to eliminate or minimise risks before proceeding.

## **How it Enhances OHS Communication:**

- ✓ Encourages **workers to think before acting**, reducing impulsive errors.
- ✓ Strengthens **risk awareness**, improving proactive safety culture.
- ✓ Enhances **dynamic risk assessments**, helping workers identify hazards in real-time.

## **Example (SLAM in Action):**

**S – Stop:** Before lifting a heavy object, the worker pauses to assess.

**L – Look:** Observes the workspace—checking for trip hazards, unstable surfaces, and PPE availability.

**A – Assess:** Determines if assistance or lifting equipment is needed.

**M – Manage:** Uses proper lifting techniques or seeks help before proceeding.

# Breakout Room Activity: Applying STAR & SLAM for Effective Safety Communication

## Scenario 1: Using STAR for Incident Reporting

### Situation:

A worker slips on an **oil spill near a machine**, resulting in a minor injury. The spill was reported **verbally**, but no written report was made.

### Task:

Use the **STAR Framework** to structure a **clear and concise incident report**.

### Guiding Questions:

- How would you describe the **situation** accurately?
- What steps should the worker have **taken immediately**?
- What actions should be implemented to **prevent recurrence**?

# Breakout Room

## Scenario 2: Using SLAM for Hazard Recognition

### Situation:

A worker is about to operate a **forklift in a congested warehouse** where pedestrians and other machinery are moving.

### Task:

Use the **SLAM Technique** to assess the risks before proceeding.

### Guiding Questions:

- What **hazards** should the worker look for before starting the task?
- How can the worker **manage** the risks **before operating the forklift**?
- What actions can improve **safe movement and communication** in shared spaces?

# Breakout Room

## Scenario 3: STAR & SLAM Combined – Emergency Response

### Situation:

A **chemical leak** is detected in a storage area. A worker is uncertain about the next steps but sees **colleagues continuing work nearby**.

### Task:

- Use **SLAM** to assess the immediate risks before taking action.
- Use **STAR** to report the incident clearly to supervisors.

### Guiding Questions:

- What **hazards** need to be assessed first before intervening?
- How can the worker **effectively communicate the emergency** using STAR?
- What **preventive measures** should be put in place for future incidents?

# Group Presentations & Discussion

After the breakout session, **each group presents their solutions.**

- Discuss **key takeaways** from applying **STAR** and **SLAM**.
- Identify **communication gaps** and **improvement opportunities**.

## **Final Reflection:**

- How did structured communication improve decision-making?
- How can STAR and SLAM be used **daily in the workplace?**





# Break



# Electing Workers' Health and Safety Representatives (WHSRs)

## Why Are WHSRs Important?

- They represent workers' voices on health and safety matters.
- Act as liaisons between employees and management.
- Required under Maltese OHS law (Cap. 646, Article 12 & S.L. 646.11, Regulation 13).

## Election Process:

 **Step 1:** Employer announces the need for a WHSR.

 **Step 2:** Workers nominate candidates from their workforce.

 **Step 3:** A vote is held to elect the representative.

 **Step 4:** Employer recognises the elected WHSR and ensures they receive training.

 **Discussion:** How can employers ensure fair and transparent elections for WHSRs?

# Responsibilities of Workers' Health and Safety Representatives (WHSRs)

## What WHSRs Do:

-  Represent workers in safety consultations with employers.
-  Participate in workplace inspections and accident investigations.
-  Raise concerns about unsafe work conditions.
-  Ensure workers are informed about OHS risks and legal rights.
-  Assist in developing safety policies and training initiatives.

## Legal Backing (S.L. 646.11, Regulation 13)

- WHSRs must be consulted on health and safety decisions.
- They have the right to access safety information.

 **Discussion:** What are the biggest challenges WHSRs face in their role?

# Protection of WHSRs Under Maltese Law

## Legal Protections (Cap. 646, Article 12 & S.L. 646.11, Regulation 13)

- ✓ WHSRs must not face discrimination, demotion, or retaliation for performing their duties.
- ✓ Employers must provide paid time off for WHSRs to attend training and safety meetings.
- ✓ WHSRs cannot be penalised for raising safety concerns.

## Challenges Faced by WHSRs

- ✗ Lack of support from employers.
- ✗ Difficulty convincing workers to report hazards.
- ✗ Risk of being ignored by management.





 **Discussion:** How can employers encourage a supportive environment for WHSRs?

# Why Should Workers Volunteer to Be WHSRs?

## Why Workers Hesitate:

-  Not paid extra for the role.
-  Fear of conflict with management.
-  Concerns about extra workload.

## Why Workers Should Step Up:

-  Improves workplace safety for everyone.
-  Gives workers a voice in decision-making.
-  Enhances leadership and professional skills.
-  Protected role under the law (Cap. 646, Article 12).

 **Activity:** What incentives or motivations could encourage workers to become WHSRs?

# Employers with Shared Health and Safety Duties

## When Do Employers Share OHS Duties?

- ✓ **Same worksite** – Construction projects, logistics hubs, factories.
- ✓ **Same workers** – Labour hire agencies, contractors, subcontractors.
- ✓ **Supply chain** – Businesses involved in the **same production process**.

## Legal Requirement (S.L. 646.11, Regulation 7)

- ✓ Employers must **cooperate and exchange safety information**.
- ✓ **Duties cannot be transferred** – every employer remains responsible.
- ✓ Safety coordination must be **documented and agreed upon**.

 **Discussion:** How should employers **define responsibilities in multi-employer environments?**

# Coordinating OHS Responsibilities in Multi-Employer Workplaces

- 📌 **Best Practices for Employers with Shared Duties:**
  - ✓ Clear roles and responsibilities for each duty holder.
  - ✓ Regular safety meetings between all companies on-site.
  - ✓ Joint risk assessments to align safety controls.
  - ✓ Defined procedures for reporting incidents across multiple employers.

- 📌 **Failure to Coordinate Leads To:**
  - ✗ Inconsistent safety practices.
  - ✗ Higher accident risks due to lack of accountability.
  - ✗ Legal liability issues for non-compliance.

💡 **Activity:** Brainstorm a **contractor management strategy** for a shared worksite.



# How Many WHSRs Should a Workplace Have?

- 📌 **Legal Context (S.L. 646.11, Regulation 13)**
  - The law mandates that WHSRs must be present in workplaces, but it does not specify a number.
  - Employers must ensure adequate representation, depending on workplace needs.
- 📌 **Best Practices for Determining WHSR Numbers:**
  - ✓ **Workplace Size:** Large facilities need multiple WHSRs to cover all areas.
  - ✓ **Work Complexity:** High-risk industries (e.g., construction, manufacturing, logistics) require more representatives.
  - ✓ **Shift Patterns:** Workplaces with multiple shifts should have at least one WHSR per shift.
  - ✓ **Number of Departments:** Different work areas may require separate WHSRs.
- 💡 **Discussion:** How many WHSRs would you recommend for a 500-worker factory?



# Worker Consultation Methods

## Direct Consultation:

- ✓ Open discussions between workers and supervisors.
- ✓ Safety meetings and toolbox talks.
- ✓ Feedback sessions on workplace risks.

## Representative Consultation:

- ✓ Workers' Health and Safety Representatives (WHSRs).
- ✓ Health and Safety Committees.
- ✓ Joint safety decision-making forums.

# The Kirkpatrick Model – Evaluating Communication

- 📌 **Level 1: Reaction** – Did workers find the training useful and relevant?
- 📌 **Level 2: Learning** – Have workers acquired the necessary skills and knowledge?
- 📌 **Level 3: Behaviour** – Are workers applying safety practices on the job?
- 📌 **Level 4: Results** – Has the training reduced accidents and improved safety performance?

# Overcoming Barriers to Effective Communication

 **Barrier:** Language differences.

 **Solution:** Use translated materials, pictograms, and multilingual trainers.

 **Barrier:** Lack of worker engagement.

 **Solution:** Encourage interactive discussions and two-way communication.

 **Barrier:** Overcomplicated safety messages.

 **Solution:** Use simple, straightforward language and visual aids.

 **Group Activity:** Identify the biggest communication barriers in your workplace and suggest solutions.

# Keeping Records of Consultation & Communication

## Why Keep Consultation Records?

- ✓ Demonstrates compliance with OHS laws.
- ✓ Helps prevent disputes over safety responsibilities.
- ✓ Assists in continuous safety improvements.

## What Should Be Recorded?

- ✓ The topic discussed and the safety issue addressed.
- ✓ Who was consulted (including WHSRs).
- ✓ Decisions made and assigned responsibilities.
- ✓ Follow-up actions and deadlines.

 **Best Practice: Well-documented consultation improves safety accountability.**

# Psychological Safety in OHS Communication & Worker Consultation

## What is Psychological Safety?

- Workers feel safe to report hazards without fear of punishment.
- Encourages transparent and honest communication about risks.

## How to Build Psychological Safety in OHS:

- ✓ Foster a blame-free culture.
- ✓ Encourage anonymous reporting options.
- ✓ Train managers to handle safety concerns positively.

 **Discussion:** Have you ever felt unsafe or hesitant about reporting a safety issue?



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