



Coaching colleagues cuts injury rates and boosts productivity

When leading supply chain solutions company, CHEP New Zealand, logged 35 manual handling injuries in one year, they realised they needed to start doing things differently.

Their innovative actions have resulted in a significant reduction in injuries, increased reporting, raised worker morale and boosted productivity.

CHEP New Zealand has almost 350 employees, most of whom are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of CHEP pallets and reusable plastic crates. It manages around 65 million pallet and crate movements annually.

The business operates 24 hours a day, six days a week, with a three-shift system across the sites. CHEP's yards are among the busiest in the country with pallets constantly being loaded and unloaded. The Wiri site services more than 100 trucks a day.

"Our biggest hazards are trucks, forklifts and manual lifting," said Ed Fili, Service Centre Manager at Wiri, one of the nine CHEP service centres across New Zealand. "People

lift the pallets onto a table for repair. We were getting lifting, twisting and bending injuries caused by people not following standard procedures.

"The number of manual handling injuries has reduced year-on-year, and morale is much higher."

"As well as the impact on individuals, productivity was affected - we weren't meeting our targets and objectives. People would do the right

thing when supervisors were around, but would revert back to riskier handling afterwards."

After logging the 35 manual handling injuries in 2009, CHEP got together as a company, across all of its sites, to put a Manual Handling Programme in place to minimise injuries.

Training programmes were designed and implemented by Richard Dunn, CHEP's Safety, Health and Environment Manager.



“A lot of the training was around how to approach people and talk with them in ways which wouldn’t offend,” said Richard.

“The emphasis wasn’t on ‘you’re doing that wrong’ but on ‘we all need to be doing things the safest way’. At first, people were shy about pointing out correct behaviours to colleagues. As they got more confident and trusted each other, we saw a significant culture change. People really look out for one another and speak up when they see unsafe behaviour. Doing things the safe way has become the norm.

“To enhance the programme, we asked for volunteers from the workforce to be Safety Behaviour Improvement observers (SBIs) and quite a few people put their hand up.”

Richard said that results include better near miss reporting and better communication from workers to supervisors. SBIs are involved in the regular site leadership meetings and add huge value.

“When an SBI observer approaches someone about an observed non-standard practice, they will demonstrate the best practice approach to that task, and ask them to run through the correct way too.”

“When the SBI steering group meets, they discuss the various conversations with team members, practices that have been identified for improvement, and incorporate the standard procedures into the staff toolbox to demonstrate best practice across the business”.

Richard said this SBI role complements the other worker participation practices at CHEP, such as elected Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs).

“HSRs are involved in a range of activities including conducting audits of pedestrian guarding, area surveys, safety fixes, and operational procedures. They ensure workers’ perspectives and knowledge are part of the mix. HSRs are essential because some workers won’t raise problems directly with supervisors. It’s a great way for people to raise issues with the business.

“That’s been the biggest change. People don’t see it as compliance now, but as looking out for one another. There’s a recognition that every single person in this business has personal responsibility for health and safety,” added Richard.

Ed said that since introducing the programme, the number of manual handling injuries has reduced year-on-year, achieving zero last year.

“And we continue to meet all our targets now. CHEP conducts a staff survey every year to track progress. Morale is much higher. People are happier. They feel the company genuinely cares about their safety and they are much more engaged in all areas of the business.”

WORKER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

The best outcomes are achieved when a business and its workers work together on health and safety. Worker Engagement and Participation is about having planned ways for:

- > workers to give input on issues which will (or are likely to) affect their health or safety. This includes asking for and taking into account their views and
- > workers to improve work health and safety on an ongoing basis (eg by raising concerns or suggesting improvements).

This will help you and your business to make better decisions – and keep your people and productivity thriving.

KEY POINTS

Empowering workers to speak up means:

- > people look out for each other
- > fewer injuries
- > higher morale
- > improved reporting
- > boosted productivity.

For more examples and information visit worksafe.govt.nz
