

# Improving Work-Related Health

Work-related health is the effect of work on a person's physical and mental health. This includes the effect of a person's health on the health and safety of themselves or others at work.

Too many people in New Zealand die or suffer from work-related ill health and disease. This means there is a need for WorkSafe to renew its focus on health and health-related safety risks.

Work-related ill health is largely preventable with attention from businesses and organisations.

## Why the focus on work-related health?<sup>1</sup>

The estimate for work-related health deaths per year is

> 750-900



5,000-6,000

There are an estimated 5,000-6,000 hospitalisations each year due to work-related ill health.

10x

A worker is at least 10 times more likely to die from a work-related disease than from a workplace accident.

\$2 billion

The social cost to New Zealand is at least \$2 billion each year.

## Burden of harm from work-related injury/ill health<sup>2</sup>

WorkSafe estimates of the burden of work-related harm in New Zealand show 88% of health loss in a year is attributable to work-related ill health, with 11% relating to acute injuries. The majority of this ill health (74% of the total burden) comes from work-related cancers, respiratory disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, and mental ill health.

## What challenges do we face?



### Knowledge

We need more detailed knowledge about the level and distribution of exposures in New Zealand and to be able to track changes.



### Capacity & capability

We need to build the number and availability of skilled professionals who can help manage work-related health risks.



### Effective controls

We need to work with businesses (especially smaller businesses) to improve their understanding of risks and how to control them.



### Co-ordination

We need to connect across different sectors and government agencies to pool our strengths and co-ordinate harm prevention.

<sup>1</sup> WorkSafe New Zealand. (2019). Work-related health estimates.

<sup>2</sup> WorkSafe New Zealand. (2019). Revised work-related burden of disease estimates for New Zealand.

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# Overall objectives for work-related health

Fewer people experience work-related ill health  
Work-related health inequities are reduced

## Our aim

Improve knowledge and understanding of work-related health risks and harms in New Zealand and effective approaches to reducing risk.

Strengthen workforce capacity and capability to address priority work-related health risks and respond to emerging issues.

Improve how businesses identify and manage work-related health risks in a consistent way, especially in small businesses and organisations.

Develop partnerships across agencies and sectors to address risks and improve work-related health.

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## What we'll do



Review and revise regulatory frameworks to identify opportunities for setting standards to enable healthy work.



Develop a work-related health surveillance programme and implement plans for work-related health data collection.



Engage with and learn from workers, communities, whānau, unions and iwi to understand barriers and enablers to good work-related health.



Use engagement, education and enforcement interventions to improve how work-related health risks are managed.



Work to support increasing the capacity and capability of professional health and safety workforce groups.



Build capability for work-related health within WorkSafe's inspectorate through improved assessment tools, proactive workplace assessments, investigations and prosecutions.



Establish and promote principles of good work design to support businesses and organisations to create healthy work and work environments.



Develop guidance and tools on carcinogens and airborne risks, musculoskeletal risks and psychosocial risks and use a range of communication channels and formats to share these.



Explore innovative approaches to support small businesses and organisations to manage work-related health risks.

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