



Work Health and Safety in Work for the Dole Ernst & Young 200 On-Site Audits - Key Facts

The Work Health and Safety Aggregated On-site Audit Report, June 2016 has been released on the Department of Jobs and Small Business' (former Department of Employment) website.

Work health and safety is a priority for the Work for the Dole program. Generally, the work health and safety obligations which apply in the workplace apply to Work for the Dole activities.

Work health and safety regulators recognise that no workplace is risk free and that workplaces continually need to review and revise their safety practices to ensure the highest standards possible. The approach taken by the Department of Jobs and Small Business (the Department) in administering the Work for the Dole program is consistent with this. The Department undertakes a range of activities to monitor and drive improvement of work health and safety in the program.

As part of the Department's program assurance and to inform practice improvement, Ernst & Young was engaged to conduct on-site work health and safety audits of 200 Work for the Dole activities between January and May 2016.

The organisation hosting the activity and the Coordinator or jobactive provider which sourced the activity were informed by Ernst and Young on the day of the visit of what had been found and any aspects that could be improved at the particular activity or in future activities. The aggregated report and the findings of each visit were provided to the Department. Overall and individual results have been followed up by the Department with each jobactive provider or Work for the Dole Coordinator involved.

Many of the Work for the Dole activities that were audited were at small and medium not for profit enterprises which also benefited from the awareness building provided through the audits.

Audit Outcomes

As intended, the aggregated report by Ernst & Young focuses on areas of non-compliance to identify areas for improvement in on-site systems and processes. The average compliance score applying Ernst & Young's assessment tool was 91 per cent. Twenty (20) activities were assessed as 100 per cent compliant with no identified area for improvement.

The average compliance with the audit assessment was measured at 91 per cent, and the majority of the activities were assessed as having some recommendations to address.

In general, work environments were clean and had adequate light and ventilation. A positive workplace culture was observed at all of the activities visited.

Examples of work health and safety better practice observed in the visits included toolbox talks at the start of daily tasks, inductions including topics such as participant wellbeing, defined breaks and timeframes for manual handling and work outdoors, and regular internal reviews.

Areas identified for further improvement, although not applicable to every audit, included:

- providing more comprehensive descriptions and identification of hazards in risk assessments and ensuring that risk assessments are updated for any changes during activities
- while 98 per cent of activities involving use of equipment, machinery and hand tools were found to have equipment in good condition, power boards in use and rotating/moving parts guarded, testing and tagging of equipment and electrical leads could be improved
- 76 per cent of activities fully met the training and supervision requirements and, where activities did not fully meet requirements, it was mainly due to record maintenance
- while the majority of activities involving working at heights, manual handling and traffic management met requirements, improvements were identified for some activities
- most participants said they were familiar with site emergency procedures, however many activities had either not conducted or kept records of emergency drills, and some activities did not have emergency floor maps displayed and /or maintain fire extinguishers and first aid kits
- while all sites audited had designated rest areas and rest breaks, in two per cent of activities appropriate personal protective equipment for outdoor work was not being used
- almost all activities fully met requirements for incident management, however, participants at two per cent of activities were unfamiliar with local incident reporting requirements

There is no industry or public “standard” for work health and safety audit compliance on which to benchmark this result. However, the aggregated audit report has noted that deficiencies in risk assessment processes are commonly observed within organisations subject to audits by Ernst & Young. As such, the findings of this audit are not uncommon when compared to similar work health and safety audits across public and private organisations.

Illustrative Examples

Twenty activities were assessed as fully compliant with the audit requirements. The types of tasks involved and experience gained in these activities included hospitality and food preparation, lawn and garden maintenance, furniture and building refurbishment, warehousing, office administration, retail and customer service.

For example, a customer service activity for a city charity and a lawn mowing and maintenance activity in a regional area both had compliance scores of 100 per cent. The audit reports noted that work health and safety was being well managed and was in line with the risk assessments which had been completed.

As shown in the following examples, recommendations were made by the auditors where the requirements described in the assessment tool were not fully met.

- An activity which gave participants experience in gardening and landscape maintenance in an urban garden setting, the not for profit host organisation had a compliance score of 88 per cent. Immediately following the onsite audit, the host organisation took action to ensure exits were clear of vegetation, the Risk Assessment (Place) was updated with the skills and experience of the Activity supervisors and records of fire drills were updated. The provider has followed up the recommendations about the inclusion of all hazards in risk assessments. The provider also ensured the availability of protective equipment to participants to be used where appropriate.
- An activity, which provided participants with retail and customer service experience at a charity store, had a compliance score of 87 per cent. The onsite audit recommended better exit signage, clear exits, testing of emergency procedures and maintenance of records of emergency drills. Household cleaning products were observed on the premises and it was recommended that a hazardous chemicals register be maintained and corresponding safety data sheets are available. The provider has addressed these matters with the host organisation and in its risk assessment procedures, including the need to submit completed checklists when risk assessments for Work for the Dole activities are uploaded to the Department's IT system.

Two activities were assessed as having compliance scores of 60 per cent or less.

- Sales, merchandising and customer service opportunities were provided in this activity which had also involved store fitout at an earlier stage. The activity had a compliance score of 59 per cent. The risk assessment documentation for the activity was not complete or up to date so did not demonstrate that the work health and safety hazards had been adequately identified and assessed or controls put in place. As well as addressing the need to complete the risk assessment, the audit report made recommendations around addressing traffic management and warehousing hazards (such as defining and marking traffic areas and loading bays) and marking floor elevation, the availability and use of personal protective equipment, maintenance of work health and safety induction records, and emergency signage and procedures. The jobactive provider and host organisation have acted on all of the recommendations.
- This activity provided experience in stock management and merchandising for a community shop. The activity had a compliance score of 60 per cent. The audit report made recommendations to improve: the lighting, cleanliness and tidiness of the area; emergency signage, procedures, equipment and exits; marking of work areas and loading dock areas; storage arrangements; activity supervision; and maintenance of training records. It was also recommended that risk assessments be updated for any changes in circumstances during an activity as well as to cover all hazards. The host organisation committed on the day of the audit to improvements in work health and safety arrangements. While this activity has concluded, the recommendations were brought to the attention of the Coordinator and provider as well as the host organisation.

Departmental Action

The audit began six months after the start of jobactive and is a valuable tool for gauging work health and safety capability as well as providing education and awareness for Work for the Dole Coordinators, jobactive providers and organisations hosting Work for the Dole activities.

- On the day of each onsite audit, the host organisation received feedback from the Ernst and Young auditor on what had been observed and any recommended improvements. The Coordinator or jobactive provider which sourced the activity was also involved.
- All Coordinators and jobactive providers, including those that did not participate in the audit, have been advised by the Department of the key work health and safety areas for attention identified in the report. The importance of work health and safety has also been reinforced.
- Individual reports were provided to the relevant Coordinators and providers to act on the specific recommendations in current and future activities.
- All jobactive providers have been reminded of their incident reporting and management obligations.

The Department continues to undertake program assurance and education activities.