

STATE OF THE NATION

PETER BATEMAN analyses the results from Safeguard's sixth annual State of the Nation survey, followed by a selection of respondents' most effective or satisfying interventions.

We didn't quite get to 1000 respondents this year, but given the nation has been focused on Covid-19 for the last twelve months – particularly Aucklanders – we're grateful to the well over 800 people who took the time to complete the survey.

As always, our thanks go to the various membership bodies which graciously allowed us to piggyback the survey onto their own communications, including WorkSafe New Zealand.

The survey is restricted to three categories of respondent, who all answer the same set of questions. The categories are:

- H&S practitioners (including occupational health nurses);
- H&S representatives; and
- Business owners/senior executives.

While most indicators remain fairly similar to last year, there are a couple of falls worth noting. Respondents were less happy with WorkSafe's performance, with both questions about the regulator falling by four points compared to 2020. Similarly, three questions relating to some aspect of worker involvement in H&S fell by 3 or 4 points.

The money question – about being confident no one at the respondent's

workplace would be harmed or made unwell – fell by 3 points to 42.6%, its lowest level ever. The fall isn't much but the trend isn't good. H&S practitioners were particularly gloomy, fully 10 points below the average for this question.

INDUSTRY SECTOR

A deeper analysis by industry sector shows only 33% of respondents in manufacturing (N=175) and transport (N=147) were confident on this question, both 9 points below the overall score. However, respondents in the utilities sector (N=95) scored 50.6% on this question, fully 8 points above average.

Gloomiest sector (as always) was Healthcare (N=71), where only 64% of respondents thought worker safety is taken seriously and 47% thought the same about worker health, well below the average.

(Note that to calculate the table – see over page – we aggregate the percentage of those who responded to questions with “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”; and for the question about the respondent's personal dealings with WorkSafe, we remove those who indicated no contact with WorkSafe in the previous 12 months.)

LOCATION

An analysis based on respondent location brings out a few regional differences. Auckland respondents (N=215) were gloomy on worker health being taken seriously, with only 44.6% agreeing, while Bay of Plenty/Taupo respondents (N=72) were more chipper, with 62.3% on the same question.

Respondents from the Waikato (N=64) were happier all round, with 80.3% thinking NZ's H&S performance is improving (9 above average), 57.4% thinking WorkSafe is doing a good job (8 up) and 47.5% confident no one will be harmed at their workplace (5 up).

BIGGEST CHALLENGES

As always, respondents were presented with nine options and asked to select only one as their biggest H&S challenge over the next 12 months. As in earlier years, the top two places were Culture (23.5%, same as last year) and Contractors/other PCBU's in second (15.2%, down 6 from 2020).

The next two places swapped from last year, with Health risk exposure (including mental health) third at 14.5% (up 4 points) and Leadership (10.4%) in fourth.

Of least concern were Incident reporting (4.2%) and Compliance (6.0%). ■

State of the Nation 2021

QUESTION

	2017-all (N=776)	2018-all (N=905)	2019-all (N=1205)	2020-all (N=1145)	2021-all (N=869)	Difference from 2020	2021 – practitioners (N=460)	2021 – reps (N=271)	2021 – business owners/execs (N=138)
In NZ the safety of workers is taken seriously	77.7	79.6	77.5	76.4	76.0	-0.4	72.2	74.7	92.2
In NZ the health & wellbeing of workers is taken seriously	48.1	50.1	51.9	53.9	54.1	0.2	43.3	60.0	80.5
NZ's H&S performance is improving	82.0	83.4	75.9	70.9	71.8	0.9	65.4	78.1	81.3
The H&S regulator WorkSafe NZ is performing well	60.5	63.8	61.3	54.0	49.8	-4.2	39.8	64.5	54.7
In the last 12 months my experience with WorkSafe has been satisfactory	72.4	70.7	67.1	66.4	62.2	-4.2	59.0	69.1	61.5
Organisations in NZ view H&S as an opportunity to improve, not just comply	45.6	43.1	43.6	45.2	42.7	-2.5	33.7	49.8	60.2
In my experience most H&S professionals are competent	60.8	63.3	61.6	61.7	62.9	1.2	57.3	71.3	65.6
H&S has improved at my workplace over the last 12 months	83.0	78.2	74.8	75.5	74.2	-1.3	75.5	67.6	83.1
In my workplace we have identified our critical risks and have effective controls in place	n/a	n/a	n/a	83.1	80.1	-3.0	79.5	76.2	90.3
In my workplace workers are involved in identifying risks and making decisions about how to control them	86.0	83.6	80.9	78.4	73.8	-4.6	71.9	70.7	87.1
In my workplace when a worker raises a H&S issue his or her views are heard by management	86.0	83.1	79.5	79.6	75.4	-4.2	74.6	71.1	87.1
I am confident no one at my workplace will be harmed or made unwell as a result of activities in my workplace	47.3	46.7	44.8	45.8	42.6	-3.2	32.5	50.8	62.1
In my workplace staff are regularly asked for input into how H&S is managed	80.3	75.8	73.2	73.2	69.5	-3.7	68.2	65.6	82.3
In my workplace senior managers and/or board members regularly ask questions about H&S	77.3	72.1	68.3	67.9	67.9	0.0	66.4	61.7	86.3
In my workplace we discuss H&S risk with other businesses which share our site	72.2	67.3	64.0	67.4	65.3	-2.1	67.9	56.3	74.2

Over the last year, what was the single most effective or satisfying thing you did in health & safety?

An edited selection of replies from survey respondents.

BUSINESS OWNERS/ SENIOR MANAGERS

Implemented an electronic H&S system that is available to all staff on any mobile device.

Reduced our TRIFR by 70%.

Introduced a mandatory permit system before we put the directional drill in the ground.

Supported a revamp of the H&S committee to take itself out of the weeds and look for trends.

Completed the Sitewise assessment to see how we compare. We were able to make adjustments and improve.

Development of a more transparent and open safety culture where workers are now willing to speak out and get listened to and pull each other up on what is good and not so good practice in their workplace. Setting standards for each other.

Developed an electronic reporting system along with a complete overhaul of our H&S policy and worker involvement strategy.

Set H&S controls for specific construction sites and achieving zero harm.

Updated all SOPs by consulting team, then reinforcing the standards. Quite a lot of work, but so beneficial.

Understanding part 18 of the Hazardous Substances Regs.

Supported workers to manage their personal health risks that may affect safety in the workplace.

Worked to deliver a Covid-19 business continuity plan that protected workers and the public and allowed the business to keep serving our communities.

Introduction of rear/front viewing cameras, emergency stop device, and operator alert rotating beacons.

Make the creation of JSEAs the norm and not have to battle with team members to complete them appropriately.

Redefined our H&S committees. They are working much better now.

Got through Covid lockdown with everyone's

mental health staying intact!

Analysed critical risk in the area of working at height and Work Integrated Learning, resulting in new approaches to these risks in my division.

Put in place a code of conduct.

Set up a workshop committee which has monthly meetings with the managing director.

Dobbed in a contractor who had parked on a footpath to undertake their work without having provided a barricaded detour around their truck/work for pedestrians.

Being able to introduce a new and innovative way in dealing with the mental health of everyone in the workplace.

Commenced a critical risk management programme.

High level engagement with H&S reps, including completing a wellbeing project with them that 50% of the site participated in.

Phased out the use of quad bikes.

H&S PRACTITIONERS

Overhauled how mental health risks were identified and being managed.

Changed some contractors' behaviours with positive coaching and helping complete risk assessments to give them a better understanding. I find a lot of our workers complete the work safely but struggle to complete the necessary paperwork correctly.

Conveyor belts had no stop sensors to prevent fruit from falling. People were rushing, causing incidents, trips etc. Stop sensors were installed in every lane. No more rushing. No more incidents.

I let our leaders manage safety rather than me always stepping in to do it.

Raised the profile of occupational health due to the pandemic response, elevating health risk out of obscurity. Hoping this won't be lost post-pandemic.

Left a job that was very dangerous.

Implemented a new quarterly H&S report which is personally covered off in a one-to-one meeting with each business unit director prior to the report going live. No surprises and better buy in.

Got collaboration with an occupational physician to assess the client and ensure harm was minimised to enable him to continue employment safely in his role with his medical condition.

Had input into building design.

Established a set of wellbeing focus topics through co-design and worker korero.

Identified the gap in our LOTO process and got buy in for change.

Cleared a two-year backlog of incidents that had not been investigated.

Initiated a health, safety and environmental walkaround programme where management is asked to get out and about and chat with people. Not just about health, safety and the environment, but just about their lives. The first goal being to make the executive more visible and approachable and help them to understand activities in different parts of the business.

Got a trial of a billboard series aimed at reducing the aggression and abuse aimed at road workers. We have measured the abuse first and will measure again in six months. The contracting teams think it's amazing a council would try to address the constant abuse they receive.

Developed a method for the reduction of shoulder injuries and rotator cuff strain in the log transport industry.

Have H&S matters brought up in a Zoom huddle meeting each morning with all staff and management, and acted on. Run in a fun way. All participate.

Developed a home office assessment which resulted in many staff getting office and IT equipment as soon as NZ moved from alert 4 to alert 3 to improve their home working environment.

Assisted a small asbestos removal company to be accredited against ISO45001.

Said farewell to a divisive and inexperienced H&S manager.

Moved focus from risk assessment to the consistent application of critical controls. Risk assessment doesn't save lives, but the application of controls does.

Raised a concern, spoke up, got managed out.

Identified that "all conversations are wellbeing conversations". This has re-set leaders to talk with the person or about the people first, then build their message onto this.

Modified processes and procedures so they are easy for frontline staff to implement. So they find no reason to take a short cut.

During regular annual health monitoring I recognised a significant change with two different employees, resulting in major surgery. Their outcome would have not been so great if not picked up early.

Got in front of every single employee and explained why their health, safety and wellbeing was more important than anything else they did that day.

Applied a human factors lens to H&S systems to simplify and eliminate unnecessary, confusing and compliance driven language.

Got agreement to do the SafePlus assessment, increasing the support of the CE and leadership team for H&S at all levels. They could see what 'good' looks like and what to strive for.

Made a community safer by relocating a major hazard facility.

Left my old job in H&S and started a new H&S role in a different industry. Handing in my notice at my old job was incredibly satisfying!

Supported our corporate cleaning team with knowledge about Covid as they had to work through Level 4 lockdown. Gained their trust by daily communications, in-house training on donning/doffing PPE, personal hygiene and 'speaking up' about others in the work area not adhering to the rules. Encouraged workers to view only vetted websites for

information, eg MoH, Covid19 government site, and Siouxsie Wiles.

I have a test & tag business. A vegetable processing business had imported a new machine. All appliances are washed every day and there is constantly water everywhere while operating. This machine was basically a metal box on rubber wheels. It had not been earthed. This was the perfect storm for an electric shock. Fortunately it didn't happen.

Have made progress promoting and facilitating safety in design workshops.

Set up a complete system for a company that hadn't done any H&S for five years. The level of staff uptake and culture change was effective and satisfying.

Working with a SafePlus assessor and seeing the level of engagement from staff go from 'not bothered' to 'we now understand where we are going with health and safety'. Getting away from the tick box audit worked so well for our organisation.

After extensive consultation we introduced an organization-wide fatigue risk management procedure, which clearly states maximum work hours and minimum rest periods. Risk-based, it allows for flexibility dependent upon the individual worker and their situation.

Learned to use the Functional Resonance Analysis Method for work-as-done vs work-as imagined reviews.

In my current role I am not able to effect much change, which is rather soul destroying.

Left my role with a large national company which did not have the focus on H&S and started my own H&S consultancy business.

Changed my approach on leadership education, bringing in an external H&S 'industry expert' to discuss best practice principles with senior management team. (It was the same message that had been delivered by me as an experienced internal H&S professional for several years, but significantly enhanced by external validation.)

Intervened in a situation involving workers from an unrelated PCBU being exposed to falls of more than six metres. Workers thanked me for intervening on their part.

Held regular pizza afternoons that enabled drivers to call in at the beginning or end of their shifts, where SOPs and discussions on risk were covered, and the CEO and business owners were available to chat. The emphasis was on learning something and two-way sharing of information.

H&S REPRESENTATIVES

Gathered worker comments and described to management the intrusive and distracting aspects of a driver monitoring system. This has led to a working group to improve the system.

Identified over 400 hazards and near misses.

Got our processes for regular H&S meetings, site audits, vehicle checks, incident or injury reporting up to date and most of the staff complying.

Made mental health a critical part of lockdown H&S assessments.

Sat down with my manager and worked out our H&S plan for the area that we work in.

Supported a staff member who was heading towards a PIP (performance improvement plan) to have the PIP delayed while managing significant health concerns in that staff member's family.

Helped with relieving anxiety for one of our whānau whose child had been in a serious accident at school. We did a full EOTC review and included the whānau in the process.

Talked about worker alerts for those of us in the community who work alone and had the chance to trial different devices.

Raised business risks surrounding our legal compliance and challenged leadership to set up a proper PCBU committee and take this stuff seriously.

Aggressive dog presentation to regional team, which had immediate benefits.

CEO asked me why workers had never commented that a certain process was a risk and now they are. Satisfying to get effective worker participation.

Got the hazardous substances sorted in our workplace.

Engaged our field staff in decision making about H&S improvements.

Introduced voluntary staff health checks by an external consultant.

I commenced Wellness Wednesday for our customer service and warehouse staff.

Highlighted a long-standing hazard and got it resolved without getting hauled over the coals for it by management.

Getting the guys to understand that they were being listened to and that things they brought up were being actioned.

Prevented use of ineffective ventilation system in welding areas.

Got our directors to listen.

Organised a mental health workshop and had all employees participate in it.

Helped clarify some of our safe work systems into plain English (instead of wordy-speak by someone who doesn't do the task.)

Refused to implement a policy that was more hazardous than the risk.

Got staff involved with Covid procedures for our business to put more safety in place over and above government recommendations.

Raised one hazard a week from the risk register to discuss/consult with the team to encourage engagement and awareness.

Having one-to-one reviews with all the HSRs in our region. Got great insight as to what was working well and not well, the support they were getting and ideas for improvement.

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Implemented a permit to work system with all training required.

At my old company, was part of a great team which won the H&S Gold awards. H&S there felt important and a priority; I have since learnt that it is not the same in every workplace, which is sad.

Getting the executive leadership member to assist managers to work alongside staff to progress the risk register.

Not signing a safety document due to it lacking emergency procedures.

Helped an injured staff member with rehabilitation.

Doubled manning levels – from one to two – at a worksite vulnerable to intruders.



The poster for the NZOHS Conference 2021 in Wellington features a circular logo with a stylized '3' and the tagline 'Change is in the air'. The NZOHS logo is prominently displayed at the top right. The main text reads 'NZOHS CONFERENCE 2021 WELLINGTON'. Below this, it lists the 'Conference' details: DATE 1 September 2021 and LOCATION Front & Centre, 69 Tory Street. It also lists a 'Social Event' on 31 August 2021 from 18:00 to 20:00. A blue banner at the bottom contains the text: 'The New Zealand Occupational Hygiene Society (NZOHS) is hosting a one day, work related health Conference. This will run the day before the HASANZ Conference. Great speakers, great company, come and join us!'. At the very bottom, it says 'Register at nzohs.org.nz/conference-2021'.

NZOHS
New Zealand Occupational Hygiene Society

NZOHS CONFERENCE 2021 WELLINGTON

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