

DIGGING DEEPER

10 Platinum Rules

First steps for action



NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES



Acknowledgements

This publication is commissioned by the NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council as a result of the Digging Deeper Project it commissioned in 2007. The NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council would like to acknowledge Shaw Idea Pty Ltd as the project leader of the consulting consortium that identified the “need to get the OHS basics right” with the Ten Platinum Rules as part of the Digging Deeper research project. This document is an extract from section 13 Volume 2 of the Digging Deeper Project final Report. The people of NSW who work in the mining industry are also acknowledged for their participation and contribution to the Digging Deeper Project.

The NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council

The NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council was established in 1998 following recommendations made in the Mine Safety Review and Gretley Inquiry. The Council was strengthened in 2006 through: the setting up of a secretariat within the existing structure of the NSW DPI; the appointment of two independent experts in OHS; and making resources available, when appropriate through the NSW DPI, on the Council's recommendation to explore issues and commission research.

The Council includes senior officials from some of the most respected bodies in the mining industry including the CFMEU (Mining and Energy Division), Australian Workers Union, NSW Minerals Council and Cement Concrete and Aggregates Australia. Two independent experts in occupational health and safety are also part of the Council. Mr Norman Jennings was appointed chairman of the Council in 2006.

The Council was established to provide the Minister with advice on critical OHS issues to the NSW Government. The Minister brings these matters to the Council for its consideration, requesting its advice on appropriate ways forward in the continual drive to foster improved OHS performance in the industry. The NSW Government's vision is for the Council to operate in an environment of trust and co-operation to address these issues and for all stakeholders to demonstrate a willingness to support the work of the Council and move forward on matters of importance as one group.

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The NSW mining industry is committed to improving health and safety performance at all levels in the industry. Making the workplace healthy and safe is the ultimate goal shared by management and employees alike. The Digging Deeper project found that it is not lack of knowledge that is holding the industry back from achieving the goal, but a lack of action.

Digging Deeper identified an underlying theme across the industry: The need to get the basics of OHS management right. In pursuing OHSMS certification, in implementing health and well-being programs to address fatigue and in dealing with the OHS and industrial relations complexities of production bonus and safety incentive schemes, sites may have lost sight of the basic principle of OHS management. To make the workplace healthy and safe, there is no substitute for making the workplace healthy and safe.

The Platinum Rules codify the fundamental steps the industry should take to more effectively manage OHS. Following these rules would substantially fill the gaps the Digging Deeper project identified in OHS management in the NSW mining industry. They are addressed to all people who work in the NSW mining industry – whether in management, the workforce, industry associations, unions or government – because each individual has some role to play in building a healthy and safe mining industry in NSW. How you apply them will depend on your role in the industry. Whatever your role, dig deeper into the culture and operating systems of your enterprise, identify where the gaps are and work to fill them. The Platinum Rules are a good place to start.

The Platinum Rules

- 1 Remember you are working with people:**
 - Don't exhaust them.
 - People aren't machines.
 - Treat them with dignity and respect.
- 2 Listen to and talk with your people:**
 - Be inclusive.
 - Do it frequently.
 - Value and develop people skills in supervisors and managers.
- 3 Fix things promptly:**
 - Don't let issues fester.
 - Keep people informed of progress.
- 4 Make sure your paperwork is worth having:**
 - Keep it current.
 - Make sure it's meaningful.
- 5 Improve competence in OHS:**
 - Particularly at management levels.
- 6 Encourage people to give you bad news:**
 - Canaries are the most important workers in a mine.
- 7 Fix your workplace first:**
 - Before even thinking about the bells and whistles.
- 8 Measure and monitor risks that people are exposed to:**
 - Don't just react to incidents: fix things before incidents happen.
 - Control risks at their source.
- 9 Keep checking that what you are doing is working effectively:**
 - Are you achieving what you think you are?
- 10 Apply adequate resources in time and money**

Rule 1

Remember you are working with people:

- Don't exhaust them
- People aren't machines
- Treat them with dignity and respect

Healthy and safe workplaces have a culture of respect at their foundation. Building a culture of respect starts at the individual level, but it needs to permeate through organisations and ultimately through the whole industry. Respect is not something given lightly, it needs to be earned. Leaders in organisations, at whatever level of the hierarchy they are found, have an important role in making the first moves. It takes people with gumption to do this because change is not always comfortable; it can challenge the way accepted norms operate in an organisation, even if those old norms make the workplace an uncomfortable place to be. It requires persistence and patience to get respect off the ground. People may throw challenges in your way and test your sincerity, so sticking to the script is imperative.

There is a two way street here too – if workers react aggressively we end up with quite a poisonous work environment. Give people the benefit of the doubt. Stay engaged.

Treating people with respect is not just about changing the language you use – although this may well be an action you take. What you say must be backed up by what you do. There is no point telling people you care about their health and safety if your shift regimes prevent them from being able to drive home safely and have a decent nights sleep. In any case, if your employees are always tired, then they can't do the best job for you, even with the best will in the world.

Rule 2

Listen to and talk with your people:

- Be inclusive
- Do it frequently
- Value and develop people skills in supervisors and managers

Good consultation is critical to effective OHS. Workers' knowledge of their workplace and conditions is valuable information for any enterprise. Taking advantage of that knowledge is cost-effective and good management practice.

Consultation relies on being able to work with people – managers and supervisors need to be able to manage effective consultative processes. Listening is the core skill of consultation. Good consultation also relies on being able to hold respectful conversations.

Set up agreed formal structures for consultation so that everyone can be confident that consultation is happening, and that there are clear responsibilities and accountabilities for all participants. In small organisations this need not be complex, but as organisational size increases, so the complexity of formal structures may increase. Include people who can represent the variety of people in the organisation— shift workers, part-timers, casual workers and contractors are most frequently left out, even though they bring a different perspective and may have needs and concerns that are unique to them. Terms of reference or a constitution for a committee, developed consultatively by the committee, and in the words of the participants (not copied from a consultant or some other source) set the ground rules for consultation.

A calendar of meetings shows that everyone is prepared to give priority to OHS. Members must also actually attend meetings and contribute constructively to demonstrate their commitment. Most importantly, the results of consultation must be acted on, for example, by changing the work environment in response to consultation. Such actions will increase confidence in the process and its outcomes.

Informal consultation, such as 'corridor conversations', discussions over a meal and so on, can occur within the formal framework and be linked to them. Informal interactions can also help to build trust and mutual respect.

Rule 3

Fix things promptly:

- Don't let issues fester
- Keep people informed of progress

When OHS committee members find the same items on the agenda month after month, with no resolution or explanation for the lack of progress, they reasonably assume that the personal effort they put into consultation is wasted. When people who raise concerns with their supervisor or manager see no outcome, they do not believe that OHS has priority. When issues are allowed to fester that sends a clear message to the workforce that OHS is important in name only, that dealing with OHS is "all talk". The result is that people grow cynical, become frustrated and strident, leave the process, or just go quiet and stop reporting issues. None of these outcomes is desirable and they work against achieving the goal of a healthy and safe workplace and of being an employer of choice.

If an issue can't be fixed straight away, then people need to be informed about the reasons. This especially applies to those who raised the issue in the first instance. Although management makes the decisions about the use of resources and the priority given to particular tasks, feedback to employees is critical.

Rule 4

Make sure your paperwork is worth having:

- Keep it current
- Make sure it's meaningful

You need documents that ensure that you:

- Comply with the law, such as plant and equipment maintenance records, training records, medical and other records of personnel and so on.
- Clearly set the boundaries of your operation or establish rules about the various aspects of the business, such as policies and procedures.
- Set out what needs to be done or establish your goals, such as plans, hazard reports and so on.
- Report on how you are progressing towards achieving your goals, such as reviews, audits, minutes of meetings and so on.
- Create continuity and allow important information to be passed on to the next shift, and new employees.

Regularly review your paperwork to check that it still contributes to the overarching goal of making the work place healthy and safe. If not, then it might well be time to stop keeping some of it. If people who collect and maintain your records don't understand what they are for or what their value is, then they are unlikely to put effort into ensuring that they are accurate anyway. If it requires more effort to complete the paperwork than the perceived benefit, then it won't happen.

The documents you do decide to keep must be maintained well so that they are meaningful and current. Good document control is essential if paperwork is to be useful rather than a burden. Also keep the format and language simple – make sure that instructions are clear and address the target group. Make it easy for people to use the paperwork, for example make hazard reporting easy.

Rule 5

Improve competence in OHS:

- Particularly at management levels

The Digging Deeper project showed that people believe in the commitment of managers who are also competent in OHS. Unless they demonstrated competence in OHS, employees did not believe that they were committed to OHS. Building competence in OHS at management level will therefore contribute to building an effective OHS culture.

Without a reasonable knowledge of OHS at management level, judging the quality of the advice received from both internal and external sources may not be reliable. Good advice is critical so that decision-making about OHS matters contributes to making the workplace healthy and safe. Trained Health and Safety Representatives often have better knowledge about OHS than their supervisors and managers. This can lead to unnecessary and destructive disagreements.

Rule 6

Encourage people to give you bad news:

- Canaries are the most important workers in a mine

Being able to see what is wrong or what is likely to go wrong is a vital part of making the workplace healthy and safe. The first step in the hazard management process is to identify hazards. Some people are more alert to finding fault, and some of these are quite willing to let others know what they see — and sometimes they earn a negative reputation and a label as a result. These people can be challenging, but they are also valuable. Brought into discussions and treated with respect, they are likely to have a positive influence. Marginalised or labelled as “whingers” or similar, they will tend to respond negatively.

Sceptics and organisational dissidents who look for error, fault and problems need to be engaged to help improve OHS. Like the canary in mines in the old days, they tell you what’s going wrong. It is much better to hear what’s going wrong than to be told that things are going well when they are not. Rewarding people for highlighting problems is a positive reinforcement of the type of behaviour that creates a healthy and safe workplace.

Rule 7

Fix your workplace first:

- Before even thinking about the bells and whistles

Go back to basics; the way to make the workplace healthy and safe is to actually make it healthy and safe. There is no substitute for taking action to get things right. Behaviour has a role to play in OHS, but if behaviour is the focus before fixing the travelling/haul roads, the dust, the noise, the toilets, what message does this send to the workforce? In the context of a less than satisfactory working environment, introducing behaviour-based safety systems and well-being programs is like putting the icing on the cake before the cake is put in the oven. The law places the responsibility for providing a healthy and safe working environment on management. That is the bottom line – make the workplace healthy and safe. Just do it.

Rule 8

Measure and monitor risks that people are exposed to:

- Don’t just react to incidents: fix things before incidents happen
- Control risks at their source

Monitoring exposure to the risks and controlling risks from this information means you can act to make the workplace healthy and safe before people are injured or made ill. Monitor the physical conditions in the workplace through regular inspections; monitor exposure to hazardous substances through appropriate techniques, keep track of manual handling exposures, monitor hours of work and sleep opportunity. Use this information to design better risk controls. Don’t wait for the incidents, injuries or diseases to occur before you act.

The most effective control measures act on the source of the risks. Relying on worker behaviour will always fail – we are all human and make mistakes. Worker behaviour will not be able to reliably make up for dangerous working conditions. If the workforce doesn’t get enough time for adequate sleep, then redesign shifts so that the sleep opportunity is increased. Management has no right (or capacity) to control the behaviour or activities of employees in their private lives, so simply advising employees to eat right and sleep longer will not work to control the risks of fatigue.

Rule 9

Keep checking that what you are doing is working effectively:

- Are you achieving what you think you are?

You might be very, very busy with managing OHS, but is your effort effective? Is your workplace healthy and safe? Knowing your LTI rate won't tell you if your workplace is healthy and safe. In fact, depending on other aspects of your business, your LTI rate might fool you into complacency; it's relatively easy to have low LTI rates, but much more difficult to make the workplace healthy and safe.

There are some key sources of information that can help you assess your performance:

- Formal and informal consultative processes give you the opportunity to hear how the workforce sees OHS and its management. They are a good place to review performance against key performance indicators, especially if those indicators are lead, rather than lag indicators.
- Workplace inspections tell you how things are working on the ground.
- Hazard reports tell you where things have gone wrong and need fixing.
- Internal and external audits deserve a close look because they tell you if you are doing what you said you'd do. But they won't tell you what you ought to be doing; you need a review process to tell you this.
- Put your effort into keeping the focus on the levels of exposure, rather than outcomes: for example, knowing how much respirable dust there is will tell you much more about how healthy and safe your workplace is than the number of people with dust-related disease. You are then forewarned and able to take action to control the risk at source — before people are made ill or are injured.

Rule 10

Apply adequate resources in time and money

Being healthy and safe, consulting effectively, fixing hazards in the workplace — they all cost time and money. If you skimp on this, then it will show. The workforce, who face the reality of working around poorly controlled hazards, inept systems and long working hours, will only stay in the job as long as they have to. The organisation may well be an employer of necessity rather than choice.

Yes, OHS costs money, and sometimes you won't see an immediate or a direct return on this investment; but more often than not spending on OHS pays off. You are likely to see the results in higher productivity and quality — where the impact is directly on the bottom line. You are also likely to see an improvement in morale and all the associated areas of workplace culture that make your organisation a desirable place to work. This also has an impact on your bottom line. At a time of skills shortage having a healthy and safe workplace can be a strategic, competitive advantage if you want to attract and retain skilled employees.

Importantly, decide what it is you need to do (ideally through a strategic plan) and fully fund and implement it. Drive it from the most senior levels. If you add activities refer back to your plan and consult with your people, then add sufficient additional resources or cut something you are currently doing to free up resources. You may not be able to do everything you want this year – so you need to plan ahead and keep employees in the loop!

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1. *Chlorophyll a* (Chl a) is the primary photosynthetic pigment in most plants and algae. It is a green pigment that absorbs light energy in the blue-violet and red-orange regions of the visible spectrum. Chl a is essential for the light-dependent reactions of photosynthesis, where it converts light energy into chemical energy.

2. *Chlorophyll b* (Chl b) is an accessory pigment that broadens the range of light wavelengths that can be absorbed by the photosynthetic system. It is a yellow-green pigment that absorbs light energy in the blue and orange-red regions. Chl b transfers the energy it absorbs to Chl a for use in photosynthesis.

3. *Carotenoids* are a group of pigments that include carotenes and xanthophylls. They are responsible for the yellow, orange, and red colors seen in autumn foliage. Carotenoids act as accessory pigments, absorbing light energy and transferring it to Chl a. They also play a role in protecting the photosynthetic apparatus from damage by reactive oxygen species.

4. *Xanthophylls* are a subclass of carotenoids that are primarily responsible for the yellow color of autumn leaves. They include pigments like lutein and zeaxanthin. Like other carotenoids, they assist in light absorption and energy transfer to Chl a, and they are involved in photoprotection.

5. *Anthocyanins* are water-soluble pigments that give plants their red, purple, and blue colors. They are not directly involved in photosynthesis but are produced in response to environmental stressors such as low light, cold temperatures, and nutrient deficiencies. They can also act as antioxidants and protect plant tissues from damage.

6. *Flavonols* are a class of flavonoid pigments that contribute to the yellow and white colors of many flowers and fruits. They are also found in autumn foliage. Flavonols have antioxidant properties and are thought to play a role in plant defense against pathogens and herbivores.

7. *Anthoxanthins* are a group of flavonoid pigments that are responsible for the white and yellow colors of many flowers. They are also found in some autumn foliage. Like other flavonoids, they have antioxidant properties and may be involved in plant defense.

