

September 2013

Transport Safety Networks

*'Low cost, high impact':
Transport Safety Networks
building a safer industry*

No. of Participants:

500

No. of Networks:

8

CASE STUDY

NRSP
NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY

PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAM

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Organisation: Transport Safety Networks
No. of Participants: 500
No. of Networks: 8



Case Study:

Collective Wisdom: Industry takes a collaborative approach to improving workplace road safety

Key Outcomes:

- Sharing individual knowledge builds collective wisdom, so transport industry operators don't need to 'reinvent the wheel' to address workplace safety
- A sustained commitment over time and a clear strategy, informed through proper consultation, are vital to engaging industry to participate in safety forums
- Allowing industry to set the safety agenda increases engagement, ensures relevance and makes operators more motivated to act
- The transport industry is highly competitive, however once operators share experiences they realise they face common challenges and are prepared to work together for a common safety objective
- Focusing on 'low-cost, high-impact' safety solutions transcends the most common barrier to addressing safety: cost
- While transport operators are committed to safety, they have many competing demands. Having a group that facilitates regular safety forums is crucial to maintaining sustained action
- Taking a partnership, rather than compliance, approach helps regulators engage companies to work with them – and each other – to improve workplace safety

Synopsis:

The transport industry in Queensland is working together, and with the workplace safety regulator, to devise and share effective 'low-cost, high-impact' safety initiatives to improve workplace safety throughout the state.

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Introduction

The transport industry in Queensland is working together, and with the workplace safety regulator, to devise and share initiatives to improve workplace safety throughout the state.

Eight Transport Safety Networks have been created across metropolitan and regional areas, with up to 500 industry operators meeting regularly to highlight areas of concern and work collectively to devise 'low-cost, high-impact' safety measures to address them.

The networks, established and facilitated by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ), include national, state, long distance and local transport operators, owner-operators, taxis and couriers, the supply chain and industry associations and unions.

Regular industry participants include transport company national and state managers, depot and safety managers, supervisors and owner-operators.

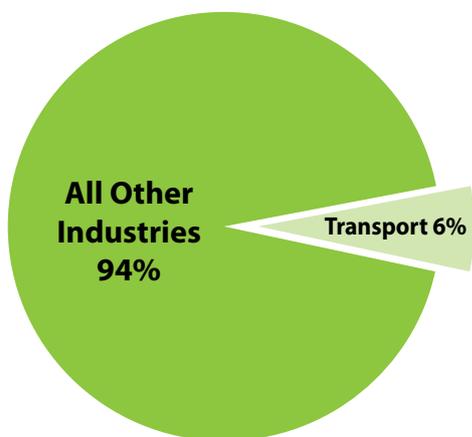
High Injury Rates Prompt Action

High compensated injury rates in the Queensland transport sector prompted Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) to establish a Transport Strategy Group to work with industry to improve safety management.

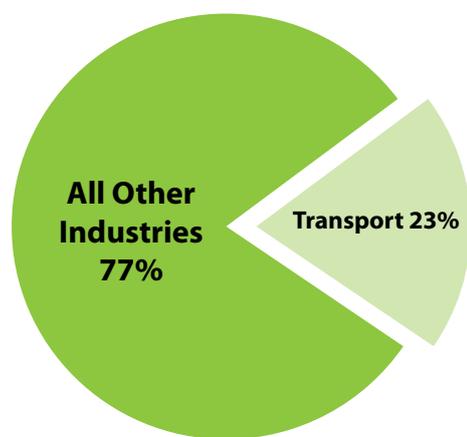
At the time, the transport industry employed less than 6 per cent of the State's workforce but accounted for nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of fatal Workers Compensation claims. Statistics showed that in 2008-09 the fatality rate for the transport and storage industry stood at 12 fatalities for every 100,000 workers, four times the all-industry average, and many deaths were caused by incidents in depots, involving loading, unloading and falling objects.

Non-fatal compensated claim rates were also 50 per cent higher in the transport industry, with muscular stress while lifting and handling, falls on the same level, and falls from height the most common causes of injury.

Proportion of Employed Persons by Industry 2008-09



Fatal Workers Compensation Claims. Transport Compared to Total 2008-09



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Step One: Talk to Industry

The first step in addressing workplace safety was talking to industry, so the Transport Strategy Group (TSG) spoke one-on-one to senior management from 20 transport and storage companies to find out what was going wrong.

Each discussion began with the statement: "I am not here to conduct an audit of your safety management system. I am sure that on paper it would look fantastic, but what I am really interested in is how safety is being managed through practical application at the coal face in your workplace."

The interviews identified specific challenges the industry faced in addressing safety, such as a scattered workforce and staff working on external sites. Common themes also began to emerge. There appeared to be general consensus, for example, that effective safety management required a strong commitment from the top level of management, and employers were realising that the key to improving safety in the transport industry was engaging workers in decision making.

Importantly, the industry interviews indicated there was a strong level of commitment to improving safety in the transport industry.

Employers had identified and implemented several low-cost, high-impact safety initiatives in their own business, but they were also looking for someone to provide a coordinated approach to finding sustainable solutions to the problems faced across the industry.

The most commonly identified barriers to improving safety in the transport industry were cost and an embedded culture that accepted injury as part of working in transport.

Step Two: Industry Talking to Each Other

Crucially, this interview process allowed WHSQ to start building strong relationships with many operators in the transport industry. It also resulted in the key recommendation that WHSQ continue to engage in meaningful and productive discussions about managing safety with employers in the transport industry and that these discussions be expanded across the state.

The concept of Transport Safety Networks had been born and, in the process, a strong foundation had been set for their success.

Importantly, the industry interviews indicated there was a strong level of commitment to improving safety in the transport industry.

The networks aim to build cooperative relationships among transport operators and for WHSQ to be seen as a partner rather than an adversary. The primary focus of these networks is to provide information, support and opportunities for employers to improve workplace health and safety in the transport industry. Particular attention is paid to 'off-road' issues causing significant levels of injury, such as working at heights and managing the risks of falls; loading, unloading and securing loads; and hazardous manual tasks.

The networks create a practical opportunity for employers in the transport industry to work together to improve the safety of their workers and to keep informed and discuss issues that impact on the safety of the industry as a whole.

A key factor in making the networks more effective is that while each network is self-contained, all networks are linked to form a statewide network.

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Industry Feedback

"The Transport Safety Networks have improved industry communication in the area of safety by promoting information sharing between all sectors of transport, logistics and the supply chain across the State. The creation of the networks has been very a positive initiative that will ensure safety, and improving safety, remain a priority in the industry."

- Lisa Acret, Membership Services Manager, QTA

"At last a communication forum where everyone from all sectors can have a say. Thanks WHSQ."

- David Jarrett, Shift Safety Advisor, Toll NQX

"The value the Transport Safety Network Groups bring to the industry must not be underestimated. The openness, frankness and exchange of ideas between authorities, transport providers and customers have accelerated what was likely to require a generational change in transport to improve safety to one which is now clearly achievable in the foreseeable future."

- Graham Smith, State Contracts Manager, BlueScope ANZ Limited

"A broad industry forum for the free exchange of learnings and ideas targeting increased safety awareness and practical efficient risk reduction solutions."

- Ken Saxon, State Manager, Swire Cold Storage

"I am certainly surprised by the interest in South East Queensland. I have attended two different groups and the input from different transport and logistics networks is both refreshing and enlightening."

- David Hoppner, Queensland Risk Manager, Toll Contract Logistics

Collected Knowledge, Collective Wisdom

Up to 500 people from across the Queensland transport industry regularly participate in one of the eight Transport Safety Networks that have been established: Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Brisbane North-Sunshine Coast, Port of Brisbane-Gateway, Ipswich-Brisbane West and Toowoomba. Metropolitan networks were deliberately named in line with transport catchment areas to reflect an inclusive approach.

Each network meets quarterly. The agenda is set by industry participants and forums are facilitated by WHSQ, including performing the administrative duties of taking minutes and sending invitations.

The minutes from each network meeting are shared among all 500 network participants, so that industry can learn from industry. This has demonstrated that the primary safety issues are common across industry, such as managing falls and working at heights, traffic management, and working on external sites. Sharing the minutes is a key measure in creating a common sense of connectedness between operators.

It has also resulted in industry being connected with each other as operators in one network are informed about how operators in another network are addressing safety issues. Operators in Cairns, for example, can, and have, contacted the Transport Strategy Group and asked to be put in contact with an operator in Ipswich-Brisbane West who is successfully addressing an issue affecting workplace safety in the state's north.



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Success Not Left to Chance

While the initial industry interviews set a strong foundation for the establishment and success of the networks, WHSQ still formulated a specific implementation strategy before each industry network was established to ensure sustained industry engagement.

The first, and most critical, stage included visits to about 15 operators in each of the identified network areas to discuss workplace safety. The focus of these industry visits was for WHSQ to engage with industry in a non-threatening way, approaching workplace safety from an 'all-of-industry' perspective rather than focusing on individual business practices.

The second stage of implementation was holding a Transport Workshop in each area. The workshops, designed to bring industry together and to continue to foster a cooperative relationship with WHSQ, provided participants with basic information and tools to demonstrate that improved prevention and management strategies can drive safety improvements. Collective identification of issues and a coordinated industry approach to find solutions were emphasised, and the concept of forming a transport industry network received overwhelming support.

Transport Safety Networks were then established in each area, with the first network meeting held one month after the workshop to maintain and leverage the high level of interest created.

Setting the Agenda – 'Hot Topics'

One of the key principles underpinning Transport Safety Networks is that the issues discussed are decided by industry participants. To encourage this, network participants are asked at the end of each meeting to select a 'hot topic' to be raised at the next meeting.

When network participants decided that reporting and recording of near misses, for example, needed to be put on the agenda, operators emailed near miss reporting and recording information to the facilitator. This was circulated and became the basis for discussion at the next meeting. Similarly, participants wanted to address managing fatigue in their network area, so they each identified their concerns, which were collated and distributed and then drove the discussion at the next meeting. When required, the Transport Strategy Group also organises for subject experts to attend network forums to discuss particular concerns, such as sleep apnoea and the fear of losing driver's licences.

The 'Hot Topics' initiative encourages engagement and continued participation from industry participants, and because the participants themselves identify the most pressing issues they are more motivated to address them in their own workplace. They also represent a tangible and practical outcome of the quarterly forums.



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Sharing Strategies – At a Glance

Like 'Hot Topics', production of 'At a Glance' materials also promotes the principle of industry working to help itself. At a Glance materials are short documents focussed on a specific safety issue. Generated by one network, they are shared across all networks to build collective knowledge.

They are not designed to be a 'silver bullet', rather they allow operators to share experiences and advice on measures that may be worth other companies considering to address a specific issue.

For example, the Ipswich-Brisbane West network's At a Glance materials on near misses identified the issue as one of the most common safety concerns for the industry. It suggested that to address the issue, companies need to define what a near miss is, explain to employees why it's important near misses are reported, and that reporting mechanisms need to be simple and based on consultation with the workforce.

The same network's At a Glance materials on fatigue management took the issue beyond log books and driving hours, with network participants highlighting relevant information operators should know about their staff, such as if they have or a new baby or any factors causing loss of sleep, and outlining indicators of fatigue, such as changes in appearance, and strategies to address it.

This focus on sharing of ideas is reinforced by different companies regularly hosting network meetings, which includes a tour of the facility. This demonstrates the practical outcome of measures the host company has implemented and also provides it with first-hand constructive critical feedback on those measures, which often includes input on alternatives that others have successfully implemented to reduce risk.

Industry Safety Showcase

One of the most high profile and visible results of the Transport Safety Networks initiative was the Transport Safety Showcase, held in Brisbane in August 2013.

The event originated from a suggestion by the Port of Brisbane-Gateway network to showcase some of the 'low-cost, high-impact' safety measures identified through the networks.

The showcase, which demonstrated a variety of workplace safety solutions through exhibits, business stands and panel discussions, attracted 350 industry operators, CEOs, safety managers, consultants and suppliers – all engaging with the issue of workplace safety.

The event was also well supported by industry, with operators taking vehicles off the road and taking time away from their business to exhibit safety solutions that industry themselves are implementing to improve the safety of their workers. Solutions included exclusion zones around petrol tankers and LED lights around drop trailer coupling units so drivers can see if a trailer is connected at night or in the early morning.

The free event featured Q&A sessions, with employers outlining specific issues they faced and how they addressed them in their workplaces, and a panel discussion with prominent industry figures highlighting the importance of strong safety leadership in improving safety.

Once operators began to discuss their issues, concerns and experiences, participants realised they had the same issues and began to see their competitor as an ally with a common objective.

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Barriers to a Collective Approach

The transport industry is highly competitive and operators are not accustomed to working together to identify issues and find solutions. This was one of the first challenges the Transport Strategy Group faced when establishing networks. Having skilled facilitators able to 'draw out' information from participants – whose presence was itself an indication of a willingness to address workplace safety issues – was a key factor in overcoming that hurdle. Once operators began to discuss their issues, concerns and experiences, participants realised they had the same issues and began to see their competitor as an ally with a common objective.

Cost is another commonly identified barrier to improving safety, which is why the Transport Strategy Group set its primary focus from day one on discussing and sharing low-cost, high-impact solutions.

Other traditional barriers, such as engaging hard-to-reach groups like owner-operators and an acceptance in the industry that transport operators are likely to be injured, are addressed as the Transport Safety Networks demonstrate sustained relevance and practical application. Over time, that translates to increasing participation and changing embedded attitudes. Similarly, the TSG was deliberately up-front in outlining that the networks would focus on safety management in the workplace, and improving safety for the actual worker, rather than on-road issues.

Key Lessons Learned

The growth and success of the Transport Safety Networks has been built on a simple principle: you talk, we listen. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland coordinates the forums but operators raise and discuss what is important and relevant to them. The agenda for the network meetings is set by industry, as they are aware of what should take priority, making them more motivated to act as issues addressed are directly relevant to them.

Like most people, operators don't want to be told how to do it, they want guidance to realise how to do it. Transport operators are busy and have many competing demands. While they are committed to safety, having a group that coordinates and facilitates regular forums is crucial to maintaining networks and continuing to build collective knowledge.

The regulator has taken a non-traditional role, with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland participating as another industry partner helping the industry address concerns, rather than taking a monitoring or compliance approach. The regulator behaves as part of the industry – it's not 'us and them' – with all partners working towards the common goal of improving workplace safety.

Some attitudes towards safety in the transport industry have been entrenched over time. A sustained commitment is therefore also required to convert some of that 'traditional' thinking and to demonstrate the continued relevance of the safety networks and value in sustained efforts to improve safety.

