



Independent workplace compliance



## White Paper

# Health and Safety Management Training – Investing from the top

September 2025



## Health and Safety Management Training – Investing from the top

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While not always the case, when asking directors/senior managers “have you any specific health and safety training?” the replies are usually, “I have but it was a long time ago” or “I haven’t”. In terms of organisational culture or indeed possible defensibility, neither produce particularly good optics, legally, morally, financially or reputationally.

In today’s work environment, senior management health and safety training is not just a legal requirement, it’s a strategic investment. Whatever your business is, protecting people, minimising harm, and promoting the ethos and culture of your organisation has financial, moral and reputational benefits.

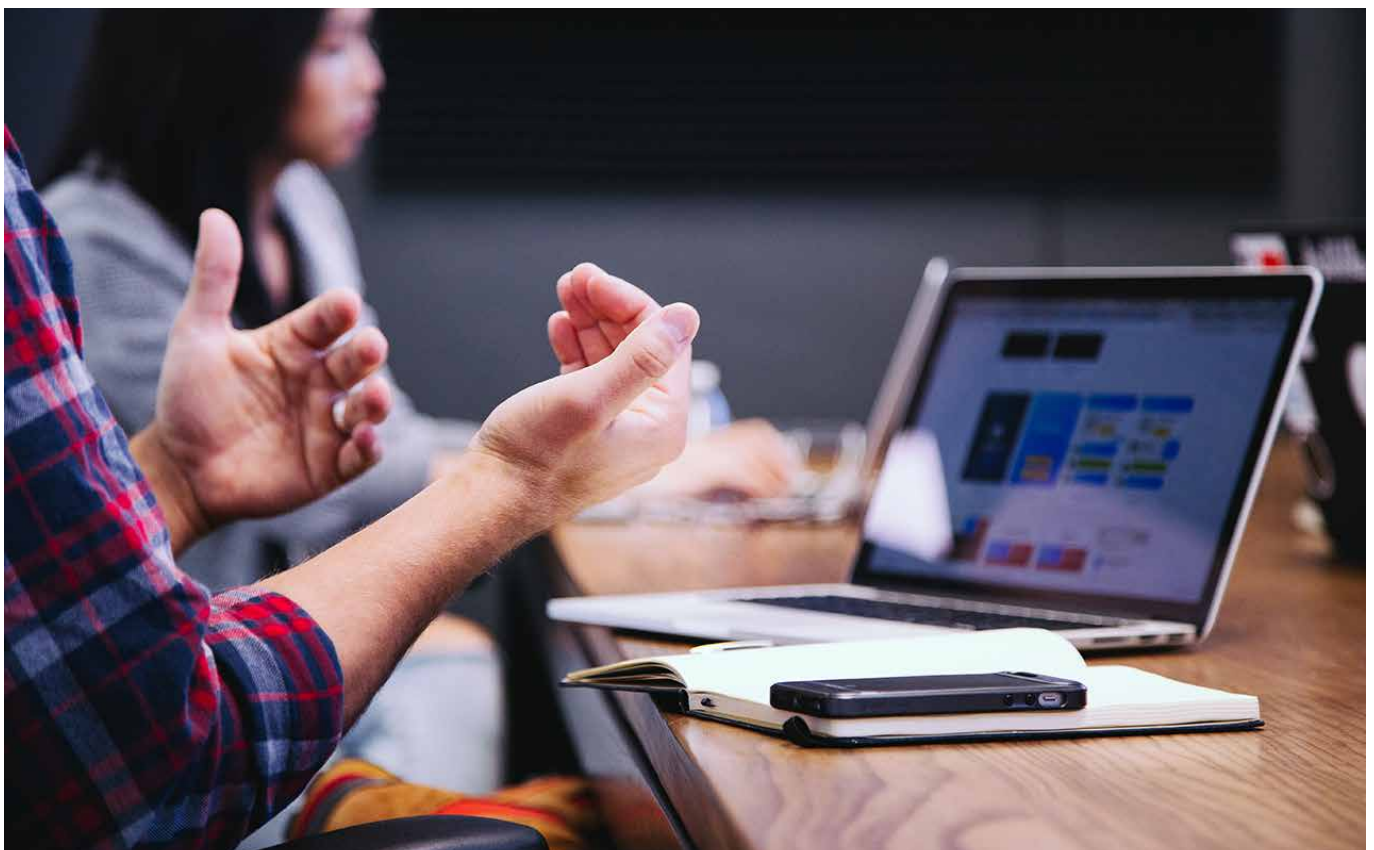
The other comments we often get during (or after) senior management training is “I didn’t know that”.

So, this month we are taking a look at what constitutes good senior management training in health and safety.

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### In this whitepaper:

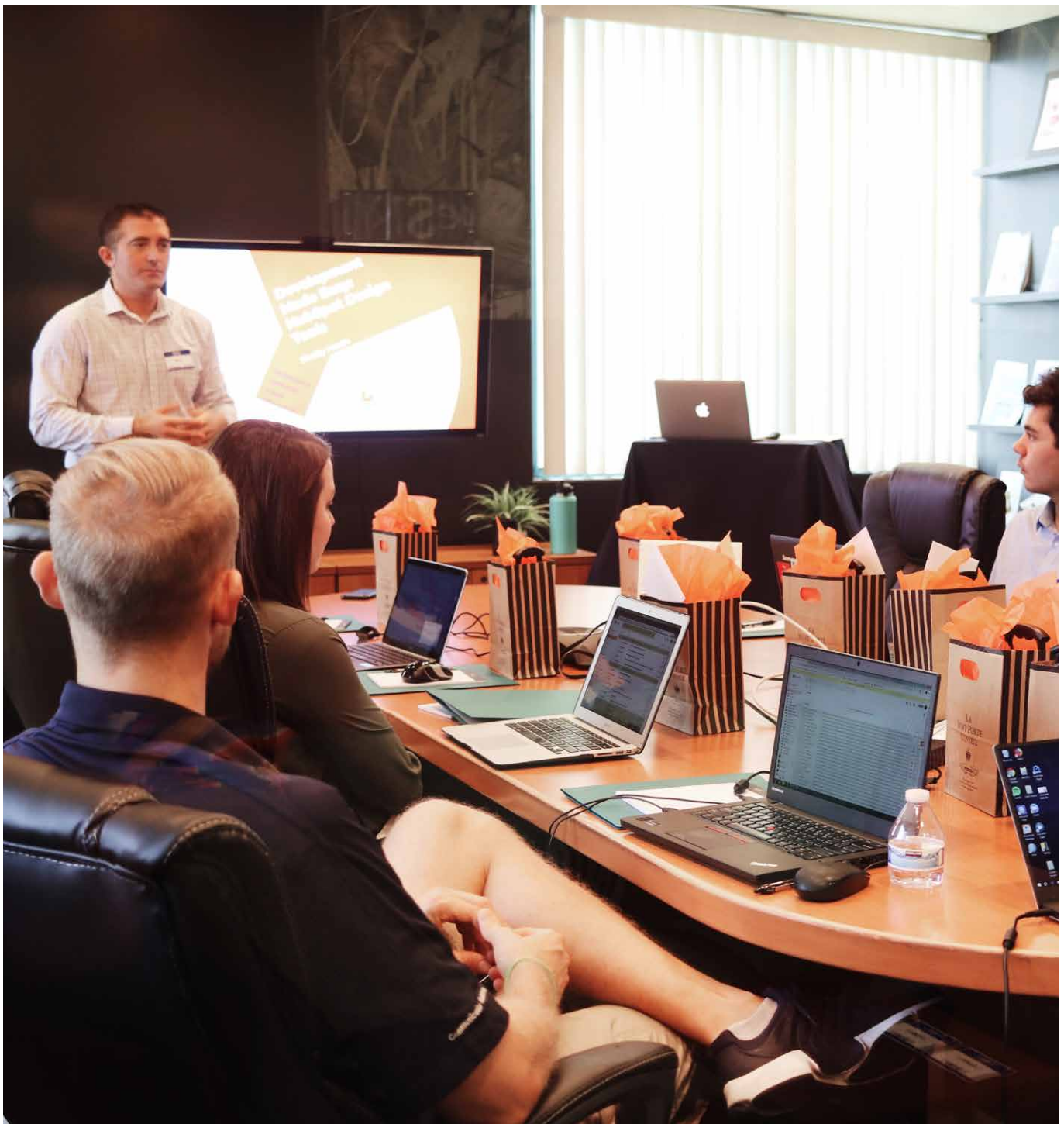
- [1. How is Senior Management Health and Safety Training different?](#)
- [2. Why is Senior Management Health and Safety Training so important?](#)
- [3. What should you be looking to cover in your Senior Management Health and Safety training?](#)
- [4. The benefits of good senior management health and safety training](#)



## 1. How is Senior Management Health and Safety Training different?

Health and safety training for senior management is more about the why than the what. Most will never perform many of the tasks the wider organisation carries out, but they do set the culture and expectation for the rest of the organisation in how they approach and perform those tasks.

Whereas the majority of health and safety related training is operationally focused (i.e. assessment, procedures, activities, etc.), for senior management it needs to be targeted strategically: it should also be relevant to the organisation and sector. Knowing that the law says you have to do something is, of course, important, but understanding, why you must or should do it, and the benefits of doing it well - or indeed the liabilities, individually and organisationally, for not doing it - is the key element.



## 2. Why is Senior Management Health and Safety Training so important?

The central purpose of any training is to improve an individual's skills, knowledge and understanding of a subject/topic and should look to achieve specific objectives.

"The fundamental principle of health and safety law is that those who create risks are best placed to control them" according to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This means employers have a clear and established duty to assess and manage the risks they create, as well as train those involved in these activities. This includes governors, boards, directors and senior management teams and they need to be competent too.

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), competence is defined as "the combination of training, skills, experience, and knowledge that a person has and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely".

- **Operationally**, this means having the theoretical knowledge and practical ability to implement the controls/perform the task safely and effectively;
- **Strategically**, it means a level of understanding to set the agenda for the effective leadership of health and safety within the organisation.

If your policy and procedures are going to appropriately reflect the tone, direction and culture you want to achieve in your health and safety management and the risk appetite you want for the organisation, it must be led and delivered from the top.

Better informed people also make better decisions.



### 3. What should you be looking to cover in your Senior Management Health and Safety training?

Health and safety training can range from basic awareness courses to advanced certifications for safety officers and managers. For senior management training to be effective it has to be tailored to the audience and relevant to the organisation. There are a number of styles and types of senior management health and safety courses available, run by a range of providers and can be provided externally or in-house. In general, most courses cover a core content of:

- The law;
- Policies and responsibilities;
- Risk assessment/risk management; and
- Health and safety management.

Additional content can cover topics including, for example:

- Emergency preparedness and response;
- Safe use of equipment and machinery;
- Ergonomics and workplace design;
- Incident reporting and investigation; and
- Mental health and wellbeing.

The extent to which these topics are included will depend on the provider and hopefully a discussion before the training takes place. It should also reflect relevant industry specific risks and controls, i.e.:

- **Construction:** working at heights, PPE, site safety, and machinery operation;
- **Healthcare:** infection control, lifting and handling, violence and stress management.
- **Manufacturing:** equipment safety, hazardous substances, and noise control.
- **Corporate Offices:** fire safety, ergonomics, and mental health awareness.

What you need and so what should be covered will depend on the specific circumstance and objectives for your training. For example, some employers proactively manage their health and safety and target briefings and updates, others need more detailed training following a review or change of personnel and yet others schedule training only following an event or incident.



#### 4. The benefits of good senior management health and safety training

Well prepared and delivered training, as well as improving knowledge and understanding of health and safety also:

- **Promotes your safety culture:** Training fosters a shared responsibility and accountability across all levels of an organisation.
- **Helps reduce accidents and incidents:** Proper training helps employers and employees collectively better recognise and manage hazards and respond appropriately
- **Improves risk management:** Management led safety encourages more effective risk control.
- **Boosts morale and productivity:** Employees who know their employer takes health and safety seriously feel safer, are more engaged and productive.
- **Supports Legal Defence:** In the event of a possible incident, good risk management/control, including documented training demonstrates due diligence.

Good health and safety management offers more than just regulatory compliance, it is pivotal to responsible leadership. It empowers employees, fosters trust within teams and actively contributes to a more loyal and productive workplace.



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