

Manufacturing sector

Our priority plan for the manufacturing sector primarily targets the food product, metal fabrication, and wood product manufacturing sub-sectors, where most harm occurs. Around a quarter of WorkSafe’s targeted frontline activities will be in manufacturing because there are opportunities to significantly improve health and safety performance, reduce acute and chronic harm, and address inequities.

Manufacturing is a large and diverse sector with high numbers of Māori and Pacific kaimahi, and it has the largest total number of injuries of any sector. Accidents involving machinery remain a common cause of acute harm. Some kaimahi have high exposure to toxic dusts and fumes from production processes in workshops or factories. Injury rates in manufacturing have stayed the same or increased over the last decade, even when they have decreased in other sectors.

Improving performance starts with getting the basics right, like appropriate guarding and maintenance of machinery, controlling dusts and fumes, and good worker training and supervision.

WorkSafe’s workplace assessments will target the sub-sectors and businesses with the highest risk of serious harm. We will clearly communicate our expectations about risk management and how we will enforce if risks are not well controlled. We expect businesses to have appropriate processes for worker engagement, participation, and representation, and we will take action if this is absent. We will encourage businesses to engage with kaimahi in culturally responsive ways, especially in areas with a high number of Māori, Pacific or migrant workers.

Unlike other high-risk sectors, manufacturing does not have an established health and safety leadership group. We welcome the Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA) partnership with ACC to develop an industry-led health and safety plan.

WorkSafe’s priorities

Priorities	Why	Objectives
Reinforce sector led priorities	Being clear on our role in the system, and doing that well, will support the efforts of others who are seeking to improve health and safety in the manufacturing sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WorkSafe and sector partners have a shared understanding of the highest priority actions and who will lead - Improved trust and confidence in WorkSafe among our sector partners
Target interventions to address the most serious risks	Targeting the actions only we can take will make effective use of our resources to influence better outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Businesses make a change after interaction with WorkSafe - Investigations and prosecutions are targeted to maximise their deterrent effect
Encourage culturally responsive worker engagement	Culturally responsive worker engagement in manufacturing can improve health and safety practices and help prevent serious harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved understanding of health and safety responsibilities - Improved risk management practices - Improved ability for Māori and Pacific voices to influence health and safety practice in manufacturing

Top harms

- A worker is caught or trapped in machinery
- A worker is hit by a falling object
- A worker is hit or trapped by a vehicle or other moving object
- A worker is exposed to substances hazardous to health including silica dust, welding fumes, toxic metals, or wood dust
- A worker falls from height

Key risk factors

- Inadequate guarding, unsafe modification, and poor maintenance of machines
- Poor work organisation and planning practices
- Poor hazard identification and risk management
- Production time pressures
- Inadequate kaimahi training and supervision
- Disconnect between kaimahi culture and organisational culture and leadership

Partner concerns

- Insights and information about what WorkSafe is seeing
- Using business-oriented language to motivate change
- Good work organisation and planning
- Voluntary standards and developing sector leadership
- Induction training and progression
- Worker engagement and participation

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What WorkSafe will do:

Priority	Initiative	Initiative description
Reinforce sector-led priorities	Share WorkSafe data and insights with manufacturing sector leads	Share WorkSafe data and insights, including fatalities, notifications patterns, and what our inspectorate sees with manufacturing sector lead organisations with greatest influence in the priority sub-sectors, so that they can influence change through their channels.
	Give certainty to the sector through a clear and credible enforcement position	Clarify our enforcement position for the manufacturing sector, clearly communicate our expectations, and follow through with action consistent with our position.
	Contribute to the government response to health risks from engineered stone	Continue engagement and enforcement activities to improve risk management in the engineered stone sector. Support MBIE to develop advice on regulatory options.
Target interventions to address the most serious risks	Target machine safety	Undertake workplace assessments targeting manufacturing businesses with highest risk of harm from machinery. Prioritise response to notifications related to machinery harm. Where we find poor practice, take action aligned to the sector enforcement position.
	Target management of substances hazardous to health	Undertake workplace assessments targeting the manufacturing businesses with highest exposures to substances hazardous to health, including silica, welding fumes, toxic metals and chemicals. Assess compliance with storage and use requirements for hazardous substances. Prioritise response to notifications related to substances hazardous to health. Where we find poor practice, take action aligned to the sector enforcement position.
	Encourage effective worker engagement, participation, and representation (WEPR)	Encourage WEPR in large manufacturing companies in the priority sub-sectors. Where we find poor practice, take action aligned to the sector enforcement position.
Encourage culturally responsive worker engagement	Deliver tailored programmes to reach workers at greater risk	Deliver our Puataunofu and kaupapa Māori programmes, build our understanding of workers at greatest risk of harm and explore how WorkSafe can influence the relevant risk factors.

How we will track our progress

During Year 1 we expect to see

- Agreed sector priorities for guidance and information sharing.
- Targeted delivery of our equity-focused programmes.
- Workplace assessments targeted to manufacturing in line with our planned resource distribution, delivered in a nationally consistent way.
- Continued enforcement and investigations in accordance with our current policies and protocols.
- Continuation of targeted action in the engineered stone sector.

During Year 2 we expect to see

- Two-way information sharing between WorkSafe and manufacturing sector partners.
- Clearly communicated expectations for manufacturing businesses.
- Continued delivery of our equity-focused programmes.
- Consistent focus on key risk factors in our workplace assessments, enforcement, and investigations.