

Worker engagement in health and safety at M&A Doocey



Key successes:

- Improved worker attitudes and engagement in health and safety (H&S) mean that M&A Doocey have seen significant improvements in their health and safety performance.
- There is a shared understanding of workers' and managers' respective responsibilities in controlling risks.
- Workers are more confident in stopping work on safety grounds and seeking advice.
- Workers and supervisors are more aware of how fatigue can affect their ability to carry out work safely.

Who are M&A Doocey?

- M&A Doocey is a civil engineering and utility contractor providing a range of services for clients, such as Morgan Sindall, National Grid, South Staffordshire Water and Integrated Water Services.
- The company was established in 1981 and employs approximately 150 members of staff.
- The company has achieved several industry accreditations, including the BSI qualifications for Quality (9001) and Environment (14001) Management Systems, and Contractors Health and Safety accreditation.

Why M&A Doocey used the Leadership and Worker Involvement Toolkit (LWIT)

Management at M&A Doocey are committed to H&S and looking after their employees. This commitment is evident through: providing the best available personal protective equipment; funding twelve supervisors and two managers to attend Site Supervisors Safety Training (SSST) in how to engage staff in H&S discussions; carrying out frequent site inspections and audits; holding daily meetings between supervisors and workers to go through risk assessments to ensure that work plans are understood and learning by reviewing trends in incidents and near misses.

Whilst these actions have resulted in several improvements in H&S over recent years, workers' attitudes presented some challenges for management. Specifically, it was acknowledged that certain types of damage particularly underground cable strikes could be prevented by challenging 'bad habits' and unsafe practices among the workforce. Further, due to the nature of the work, the company's workforce is 'mobile' and works remotely, often covering long driving distances within a single day. Management was concerned about the potential impact of driving on workers' concentration and fatigue levels. M&A Doocey used the LWIT to:

1. Improve worker attitudes and promote a shared responsibility between workers and managers for decisions about H&S, and
2. Engage staff in risk management and build up workers' confidence in knowing when to stop work and seek advice, including recognising any potential risks from fatigue.

HSE/HSL and Morgan Sindall supported M&A Doocey in using the LWIT over a 14-month period as part of a research programme looking at how the toolkit was being applied by small and medium-sized organisations.

Which Steps from the LWIT did M&A Doocey use and why?

■ Step 1 - The Health and Safety Diagnostic Tool (HSDT)

The Safety, Health, Environment and Quality (SHEQ) Manager completed the HSDT in July 2012 to understand how well developed M&A Doocey's overall approach to H&S was. Results showed that the company was committed to H&S and had a number of positive practices in place to ensure that there are high standards of safety on site (e.g. encouraging workers to raise safety concerns and make suggestions to improve H&S and management meetings to review H&S statistics on a weekly basis).

The results from the HSDT showed that the prioritisation of H&S was as an area where improvements could be made. Although supervisors and team leaders reinforce the message that safety is a priority there were times where productivity still took precedence over safety due to external time pressures (for instance, having to complete jobs quickly to ensure that the public is not left without water). There was a need to engage staff with risk management practices in order to improve attitudes towards H&S and foster a shared responsibility between workers and managers for decisions about H&S.



■ Step 3 – Make it Fit with What You Do

Step 3 of the LWIT was used to develop a series of tailored, interactive briefings for managers and workers on the main H&S risks that they encountered on the job. The briefings aimed to raise awareness and prompt discussions about the types of risks that workers faced in their job and the responsibilities between workers and management in controlling these risks. The top 10 health and safety risks in Step 3 of the toolkit was a useful starting point, which enabled the company to narrow its focus on the risks that were most relevant to them within the utility industry and tailor them to the specific issues encountered by workers on a day-to-day basis.

■ Step 4 – Lead this in your company

The health and safety briefings that were run with management also incorporated information from Step 4 of the LWIT to encourage supervisors and team leaders to reflect on their responsibilities for planning and resourcing the work carried out on site. They also focused on the supervisory behaviours that are important in engaging workers with H&S when delivering toolbox talks and/or safety briefings.

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How did M&A Doocey engage workers in risk management?

M&A Doocey’s first initiative focused on developing a series of H&S briefings to raise workers’ awareness of the key risks in their jobs, and stimulate two-way discussions about workers’ and management’s responsibilities in controlling these risks. The initiative consisted of three stages:



Stage 1: The SHEQ Manager developed a list of the key risks across the company using information from the near miss and incident reports over the last two years. Information from these reports was then used to select the most relevant H&S risks from Stage 3 of the LWIT. Four key H&S risks were identified, namely: (1) crushed by falling excavation, (2) overturning plant, (3) exposure to silica, and (4) struck by plant.

Stage 2: The SHEQ Manager used the accident scenarios from Step 3 to develop a series of H&S briefings based on the top four risks. To ensure that the scenarios were tailored to the issues that workers faced on site, the SHEQ Manager set up a meeting with the H&S committee to review the most common incidents and near misses across the company and identify how they could be prevented. This process ensured that the H&S committee provided valuable input to the development of the briefings.

Stage 3: Interactive H&S briefings were developed to raise awareness of the responsibilities among managers and workers across the company in controlling the top four risks. The SHEQ Manager first ran the briefings with managers and team leaders. Each team leader subsequently delivered the briefings with their respective teams. All workers attended the briefings on the first two key risks (crushed by falling excavation and struck by plant). Due to the remote nature of the work and the difficulty of getting all staff in one place, M&A Doocey have currently rolled out the briefing on exposure to silica to approximately a third of the workforce. The company is in the process of delivering this briefing to its remaining staff, which will be followed by the briefing on overturning plant.



Other initiatives: Identifying workers at risk of fatigue due to driving

Through its participation in the research, the company also identified worker fatigue as a potential risk among the workforce. Due to the nature of the work, remote working is common practice, and workers often drive long distances within a single day. Management was concerned that excessive driving could potentially impact on workers' fatigue levels and their ability to carry out work as safely as possible.

With support from the HSE and Morgan Sindall, M&A Doocey developed a survey to identify workers that may be at risk of fatigue due to excessive driving requirements. The survey was administered to employees working outside a fifteen-mile radius from the company's Headquarters. The findings from the driver survey were reviewed with the H&S committee, and were communicated to all staff.

Example questions from M&A Doocey's survey on driver fatigue

- How many hours on average do you work per week?
- Do you ever get tired during your journey home? (never/rarely/occasionally/frequently)
- What length of time or distance would you drive before taking a break?
- Does your job require continuous attention? (some of the time/most of the time/all of the time)
- Have you ever felt that you may fall asleep whilst driving? (Yes/No)
- Is there a specific site you may attend when tiredness affects you more?
- What job have you done recently when you have become most tired?
- How would you rate your usual level of tiredness when finishing work? (rated from 1 to 10 where 1 is fully awake and 10 is extremely tired)
- Have you ever been involved in an accident or near miss which could have been attributed to tiredness? (Yes/No)
- Do you think that high levels of tiredness affect your work? (Yes/No)

In addition to the survey, text messages were sent to workers every Monday morning to advise them of any adverse weather conditions and to remind them to take frequent rest breaks. This was an additional initiative that the company implemented to raise workers' awareness about the potential impact of fatigue, due to driving, on safety.

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What has changed in M&A Doocey since the LWIT?

- Workers feel more confident in recognising risks and stopping work on safety grounds

The H&S briefings have helped to raise awareness among workers about the risks that they should be looking out for and their responsibilities in how to best manage them. There has been an improvement in workers' attitudes towards H&S where staff take more time in planning their work and thinking about the safest, rather than the quickest, way of completing a task (for instance adopting the safest approach when drilling underground). There is a perception that there is a balance between safety and production and workers are now more likely to stop work when they perceive that a task is unsafe and seek advice about the most appropriate course of action to take.



- Supervisors carry out weekly briefings and feel more confident in engaging with their team

Over the last twelve months, management have noticed that supervisors are more enthusiastic about health and safety, a change, which has been attributed to the use of the LWIT and attendance at the SSST course that was funded by the company. Supervisors' weekly briefings to their teams now have a more specific focus on excavation risks (from Step 3 of the LWIT), and are used as opportunities to go through everyone's roles and responsibilities in managing these risks. Supervisors are more confident in delivering the safety briefings and encouraging two-way communications with their respective teams.

- Workers are more aware of the impact of fatigue on safety

Use of the survey on driver fatigue as well as the weekly texts sent to workers has helped to raise awareness about the potential impact of fatigue when driving long distances. Supervisors now emphasise to workers the importance of taking regular breaks and working 'responsibly' (i.e. not carrying on working when fatigued). Feedback from staff on the use of text messages has been very positive and they are perceived as useful reminders for workers to look after themselves and take frequent breaks. This process also helped the company to appreciate that they were placing a disproportionate emphasis on distance travelled rather than on travel time (i.e. a 40-mile journey on A roads takes longer than a 60-mile journey on the motorway).

How has the use of the LWIT benefited the business?

■ Significant reduction in the number of underground damages

At the beginning of the research, the company had set a target of achieving a 10% reduction in the number of underground damages. By the end of the research, the number of underground damages had decreased by 30% representing the lowest number of such incidents that the company has had in the last six years. This significant decrease was attributed to improved worker attitudes in planning work and managing risks.

■ Reduction in the number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) and Lost Time Injuries (LTIs)

There has been a decrease in the number of RTCs, which has been a result of both improved awareness among the workforce regarding the effects of fatigue (through the survey and texts) and a reduction in the amount of travel time that the company has implemented for its teams. Over the last fourteen months, the company has also observed a significant reduction in LTIs. In 2013 the company only recorded 5 working days lost due to LTIs compared to 70 for the same period last year.

How does M&A Doocey plan to maintain these high standards?

■ Running the LWIT H&S briefings with managers and workers annually

M&A Doocey are keen to maintain the current high standards of H&S and further build on the positive changes observed in workers' attitudes towards H&S. The company will be repeating the H&S briefings on the top four risks as refresher training for both workers and management on an annual basis. The SHEQ Manager felt that the information contained in the Step 3 of the LWIT was 'too good' to not be used beyond the duration of the research programme. In addition, the feedback from the workforce on the H&S briefings was very positive. Workers felt that the briefings were very relevant to their work on site, and they helped to bring H&S at the forefront of everyone's mind.

■ Repeating the driver fatigue survey annually

M&A Doocey are currently developing a shorter version of the driver fatigue survey, which they will be administering on an annual basis across the whole of the workforce as a means of continuously monitoring fatigue levels among workers. Based on the findings from the survey, the company is currently updating the driver handbook and it will be incorporating specific guidance and advice on managing fatigue.

■ Adopting other LWIT practices

M&A Doocey recognise that rewarding safety behaviours play an important role in encouraging workers to adopt positive practices and maintaining high H&S standards. During the research programme, the company had already started to implement specific practices to reward workers' safety behaviours, which included sending 'accolade texts' and organising an 'award ceremony' as a means of recognising workers and/or teams for a job well done, which was completed to high H&S standards. The company is constantly looking for new ways of rewarding workers and it is considering using information from Step 5 of the LWIT to implement additional incentives for H&S in consultation with the H&S committee.

A final word from the Managing Director and SHEQ Manager at M&A Doocey...

"I can honestly say how delighted and honoured we have felt to be part of this national HSE construction industry case study for the last 14 months. Along with the help of our workforce and management team I feel improvements made in our health and safety performance over this period can be attributed to our participation in this case study."

(Managing Director)

"By measuring our performance over the last 12 months I can honestly say that by being part of this case study and with the assistance of the workforce and our peers we can really see some benefits achieved in our health and safety statistics, such as reduced lost time injury days, reduction in accident book, no RIDDORs, and major improvements in underground damages. I feel sure we will continue to use the toolkit to further enhance our health and safety performance in the coming months ahead."

(SHEQ Manager)