

A GUIDE TO
THE WSH
ADVOCATE
PROGRAMME

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INTRODUCTION

Safer and healthier workplaces
through employee participation



Developed by Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council, the WSH Advocate Programme is a **voluntary programme** any company can adopt to generate support for WSH across all levels in the company.

Companies that adopt the programme identify and empower suitable employees to engage their peers in improving WSH in their workplace. A WSH Advocate can be any one who devotes his time and attention to keeping his workplace safe and healthy (i.e., workers, supervisors or managers).

A formal or informal WSH Advocate Programme will recognise the WSH Advocates within your company and raise WSH awareness amongst your employees.

**WHEN YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE INVOLVED
IN WSH, IT HELPS TO:**

**DEVELOP A POSITIVE SAFETY AND HEALTH
CULTURE AT YOUR WORKPLACE;**

**IMPROVE INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP
FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH;**

**ENHANCE MOTIVATION AND
IMPROVE WORK PRODUCTIVITY;**

**REDUCE WORKPLACE INCIDENTS,
ACCIDENTS AND/OR ILL-HEALTH
AND THEIR ASSOCIATED COSTS; AND**

**BOOST CONFIDENCE IN BUSINESS
DEALINGS.**

Why should all your employees be involved in workplace safety and health?

Creating and sustaining a safe and healthy workplace is not possible without engaging all your employees. Every employee is a stakeholder and all of them play a significant role in helping you achieve a safe and healthy workplace.

Every stakeholder should recognise that WSH is a personal responsibility and share the belief that workplace accidents are preventable, and therefore unacceptable. In a successful employee-involved organisation, every stakeholder looks out for his own safety and that of those around him.

The active participation of managers, supervisors and workers in the various WSH initiatives provides all employees the confidence that adequate WSH standards are in place.

To engage employees in the programme, the senior management should involve them when making decisions that affect their safety. The management should also value the ideas and feedback of the employees and communicate to them the relevant actions taken.

Employees who are involved in improving the workplace environment are more motivated to work. More importantly, employee involvement will help nurture a progressive and pervasive WSH culture in your workplace.

WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF WSH ADVOCATES?

They are **V.O.I.C.E:**



VOICE

WSH Advocates serve as feedback and communication channels between management and workers.



OBSERVE

WSH Advocates look out for unsafe acts and conditions at the workplace; they are an extra pair of eyes to make sure that the workplace is safe.



INVOLVE

WSH Advocates walk the safety talk and are very involved in safety and health activities in the workplace.



CARE

WSH Advocates encourage their fellow workers to work for the safety and health of one another.



ENCOURAGE

WSH Advocates help their fellow workers reinforce the learning points from past accidents.

As a WSH Advocate, you should influence those around you to have WSH as a top priority. You can start by raising awareness of WSH issues in their daily work.



You can keep a look out for unsafe work practices and, if it is within your means, correct them. If matters are beyond your job scope, report the issue to your supervisor immediately.

You can also share knowledge and lessons learnt with your peers to keep them informed and updated on WSH concerns.

To engage your peers to do more for WSH, you can encourage them to join you as part of the Advocate family. Simple quizzes and competitions can also be conducted to test and improve their knowledge on WSH. Alternatively, approach your management or safety personnel to co-organise events such as an in-house WSH Day or WSH Campaign.

Ultimately, all your efforts will contribute towards inculcating WSH awareness and good WSH practices as a way of life for all employees in your company.

Tips on Effective Peer Engagement

Sometimes, the fear of conflict or confrontation hinders timely and crucial safety feedback from being communicated. As a WSH Advocate, you should not be afraid to speak up to protect your peers.

Here are some tips on how you can get them to pay attention to WSH when they work.



Dos

Approach your colleague as a concerned friend.

Focus on the unsafe condition or action.

Highlight the importance and benefits of safety.

Provide constructive alternatives to address the issue.

Allow your colleague to explain his actions.

Thank your colleague for participating in the conversation.



Don'ts

Be authoritative and demand action.

Target his person or character.

Forget to give rationale for corrective action.

Leave your colleague/s to resolve the problem themselves.

Ignore what your colleague has to say.

Walk off without ending the conversation properly.

You do not have to focus only on unsafe conditions; feedback can be used to reinforce positive practices too.

HOW DO YOU GET STARTED ON THE WSH ADVOCATE PROGRAMME?

A company can formalise its channels and platforms for WSH Advocates to operate. The way a company establishes its WSH Advocate Programme depends largely on the nature of business, organisation structure, the number of employees in the company, and so on. You may use the information below as a guide on how to get started on the Programme.

STEP 1

GET YOUR SENIOR MANAGEMENT ON BOARD.

- Senior management needs to understand their role in the programme, provide the necessary support and empower the WSH Advocates to promote safety and health in the organisation.

They would first have to endorse the submission form, indicating their intention to implement the Programme in their company, before declaring that workers have been identified as WSH Advocates.

STEP 2

IDENTIFY THE STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME MOST SUITABLE FOR ORGANISATION.

- This programme can be implemented formally or informally, depending on the staff strength, nature of business, and extent of participation and engagement by each Advocate.

For instance, if your company has more than 200 employees, a formal structure can be adopted. WSH Advocates can be officially appointed in different departments or business units. These identified employees will then have specific roles and responsibilities in their WSH Advocate committee.

For a smaller organisation with less than 200 employees, an informal structure may be adequate. These WSH Advocates will operate on an ad-hoc basis.

STEP 3

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL WSH ADVOCATES IN THE COMPANY.

- It is recommended that you identify a WSH Advocate for each level of the organisation as a start (senior management, middle management and workers level). A potential WSH Advocate should:
 - be passionate about promoting WSH;
 - show strong interest in WSH topics and activities;
 - be a role model in WSH initiatives and safe behaviours;
 - have good rapport with fellow colleagues; and
 - be able to influence colleagues positively.

STEP 4

IDENTIFY AND PLAN FOR SUITABLE TRAINING FOR EACH WSH ADVOCATE.

- There is no compulsory training required for this programme. The management should assess the competencies of their WSH Advocates and decide what is best for them.

Typical WSH trainings include but are not limited to: hazard identification, risk assessment and risk management, safety coaching, communication, and so on.
- If there are existing safety professionals in the company (e.g., WSH Officer), they can take the lead to share basic WSH knowledge with their non WSH-trained WSH Advocates.

STEP 5

WSH ADVOCATES CAN PLAN AND IMPLEMENT INITIATIVES.

- Explore the type of WSH activities suitable for your organisation. Here are some ideas the WSH Advocates can consider:
 - circulate WSH-related information;
 - organise competitions such as design of WSH logo, posters for specific WSH topic;
 - organise lunchtime talks or safety briefing events;
 - encourage your colleagues to participate in WSH-related events or seminars organised by WSH Council; or
 - assist in enhancing existing WSH systems (e.g., WSH issue reporting, WSH training).

STEP 6

REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND PROPOSE NEW INITIATIVES ON A REGULAR BASIS.

- Review the effectiveness of the implemented activities by comparing the company's WSH performance to your colleagues' feedback.
- Continue to improvise the implemented programmes; and
- Rotate the duties among the WSH Advocates and get more non-Advocate colleagues to participate in them.

STEP 7

RECOGNITION/ INCENTIVE/ REWARD SCHEME FOR WSH ADVOCATES AND WSH EFFORTS.

- Incentives/ rewards such as vouchers or gifts may be given to outstanding WSH performance by staff and/or WSH Advocates.
- Collar pin, badges, armbands, and so on may be issued to WSH Advocates as recognition and also to improve their visibility.

WSH ADVOCATE GUIDE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

What should I do as a WSH Advocate?

Everyone can be a WSH Advocate. Here are some pointers to get you started.

What should I do as a start?

- Be alert towards WSH issues.
- Be open towards your co-worker's WSH views.
- Take safety and health beyond the workplace.

What should I do to influence those around me?

- Set a good example by adopting safe work practices;
- Share WSH initiatives and information;
- Compliment employees on good WSH practices; and
- Gather peers to solve WSH issues together.

How can I participate at the organisational level?

- Join and contribute in safety committees; and
- Be involved and cooperate during accident and incident investigations.

There are also specific roles that you as part of the senior management team, a supervisor or worker can look into.



SENIOR MANAGEMENT

How do I start?

- Conduct safety walkabouts regularly;
- Engage the workforce to solicit WSH feedback; and
- Practice WSH as a priority.

How can I influence those around me?

- Communicate the benefits of good WSH management.

What can I do at the organisational level?

- Adopt greater emphasis on WSH during decision-making, for example, when making policies, strategies, or organisational changes;
- Adopt knowledge management (KM) on WSH; and
- Be visible and lead WSH initiatives personally.



SUPERVISORS

How do I start?

- Understand WSH policies and guide workers to comply;
- Allocate time during meetings to address WSH issues;
- Raise WSH concerns, report WSH mistakes, and share lessons learnt and improvements achieved; and
- Ensure that information (e.g., instructions) communicated is clear and concise.

How can I influence those around me?

- Cultivate WSH interest in workers; and
- Encourage participation in WSH activities (e.g., talks, campaigns).

What can I do at the organisational level?

Facilitate communication of WSH matters (e.g., feedback, responses) between management and workers.



WORKERS

How do I start?

- Practice WSH as a way of life;
- Constantly upgrade knowledge and skills in WSH;
- Note and raise WSH concerns arising from operations; and
- Provide feedback on WSH measures for improvements.

How can I influence those around me?

- Help peers understand and value WSH; and
- Constantly remind peers to work safely.

What can I do at the organisational level?

- Join and contribute in Safety Innovation/ Improvement Team(s); and
- Gather workers' views on WSH issues and represent them in WSH committee meetings.

WHAT OUR ADVOCATES SAY

Keppel Shipyard Limited

Keppel Shipyard Limited has a formal structure for employee participation programme which is known as the Workforce Safety Council (WSC). It is a bottom-up initiative made up of only employees at the workers' level. Workers from various trades or sections are nominated by their fellow workers to be their representatives in WSC for a two-year term. The Chairman and Secretary of the WSC are subsequently elected from the representatives by the workers through a voting system.

The motto of WSC is "For the workers, by the workers" and their vision is "Create a safe and healthy workplace for everyone". Its main objective is to create a safe and healthy workplace for all personnel in the shipyard by providing a platform for workers' feedback, dissemination of management safety expectations, and encouragement of positive and safe work behaviours between workers.

WORKFORCE SAFETY COUNCIL (WSC) ORGANISATION CHART

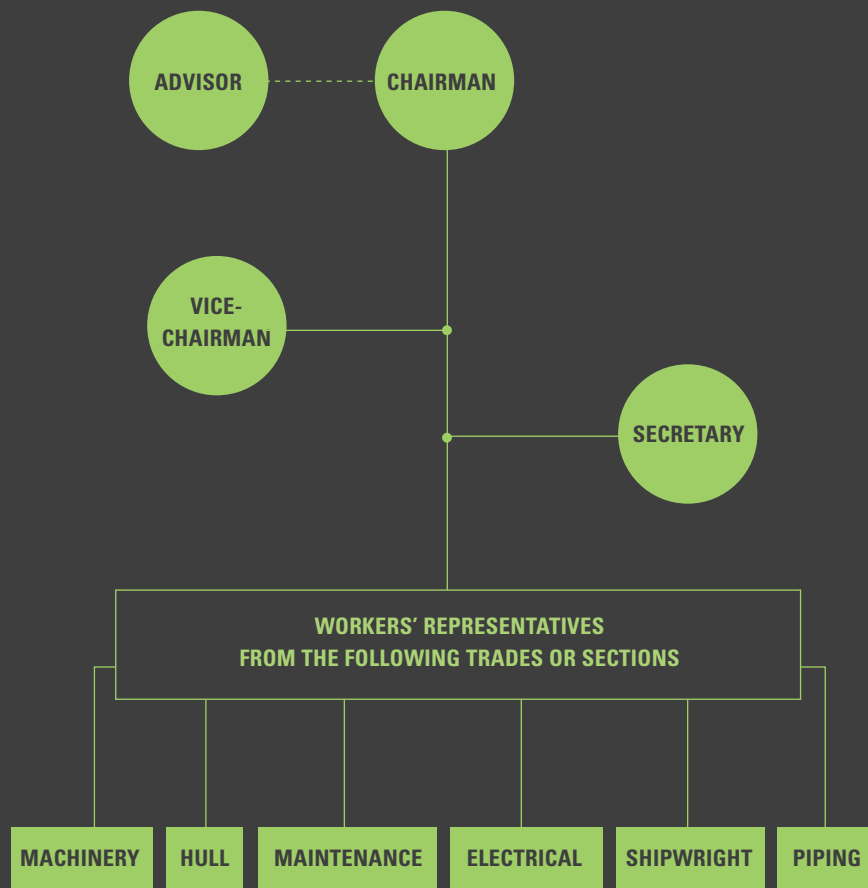


Figure 1 Organisation chart of Keppel Shipyard's Workforce Safety Council. All members, including appointment holders, are workers' representatives nominated by fellow workers.

The WSH Council speaks to members of the WSC to find out more about the initiative.

What does it mean for you to be a WSH Advocate?

We feel a great sense of responsibility towards our fellow workers because we are their spokespersons. We help to pass on their WSH concerns and feedback on safety matters to the management.

What do you do daily?

We rotate our WSC members to conduct "Traffic Marshal and Site Safety-Walkabout" duties in the morning to keep a lookout for safety at the workplace.

What other duties do you perform?

We participate in safety induction briefings as booth ambassadors to explain the hazards, risk and safety measures to new staff and visitors at our Keppel Safety Training Centre. We also attend meetings on behalf of my fellow workers in my section to share information and discuss WSH issues.

What are some of the challenges WSC faced and how did you overcome them?

All the claims and feedback from workers on poor safety performance must be investigated to prevent bias or abuse of WSC's powers. But these investigations tend to take time away from normal operation duties. So to prevent disruption of normal operations, supervisors are informed in advance on the scheduled meetings and duties of WSC for redeployment of manpower and planning of work tasks.



Figure 2. WSC member conducting safety induction briefing as booth ambassador.

What are some future plans WSC has for the organisation?

We are considering making the WSC stint a mandatory tour of duty for trainee supervisors in the future. This will ensure that future supervisors have the knowledge, experience, and heart to safeguard the safety of our workforce.

What are your motivations?

Being able to motivate and see improvements in the working conditions for fellow workers.

Are there any rewarding moments for your efforts so far?

Generally, we are able to address WSH matters concerning the well-being of workers more efficiently as the WSC convenes more frequently compared to union meetings.

Cleaning Express Pte Ltd

With numerous groups of employees deployed at varied locations, Cleaning Express established an informal WSH Advocate programme with WSH Ambassadors (also known as WSH Advocates) at various worksites to increase the reach and communication of WSH matters at the job sites.

On top of the in-house training that all staff receives, the WSH Ambassadors are also sent for external trainings or seminars to improve their knowledge in WSH. The WSH Ambassador's role is to share the knowledge acquired during training with their peers at work. The steering committee for the WSH Ambassadors Programme is renewed annually to increase staff exposure and maintain a supply of fresh ideas.

The WSH Council Office speaks to the WSH Ambassadors (also known as WSH Advocates) to find out more about what they do.



Figure 3 WSH Ambassadors (also known as WSH Advocates) at an in-house briefing and training.

What does it mean for you to be a WSH Ambassador?

It is part and parcel of our daily work. We are generally more aware of the safety aspects of our work and the safety of our colleagues based on our trainings and experiences.

What do you do daily as an Ambassador?

We provide safety highlights and reminders during daily briefing, and observe and coach fellow colleagues in performing tasks safely.

What are some of the challenges WSH Ambassadors faced and how did you overcome them?

Given the diverse backgrounds and age groups of the work team, some colleagues may have less awareness or buy-in to safety practices. These colleagues require more coaching and monitoring to make them understand the importance of good safety behaviour.

What are your motivations?

To create a safer work environment, not only for ourselves, but also for the clients we serve.



Figure 4

Recognition badge awarded by Cleaning Express to their WSH Ambassadors (also known as WSH Advocates)

Are there any rewarding moments for your efforts so far?

We have observed that workers are able to retain safety knowledge better, and work more safely. Also, workers who have been less receptive towards safety practices before now seemed to have a change in mindset. They are more driven to practice safety at work. Sometimes, we receive compliments from our clients in appreciation of our good work.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Can the WSH officers (or any WSH Professionals) in my company be appointed as WSH Advocates?

Yes. However, we do not encourage WSH Professionals to be the only group of WSH Advocates in the company. WSH Professionals could help the other WSH Advocates by providing basic WSH knowledge through briefing or training which will help them spread the right message to their fellow colleagues.

What are the benefits of being a WSH Advocate?

WSH Advocates will be empowered in WSH-related matters, bringing with it the respect and recognition for making the company a safer and healthier workplace for everyone.

WSH Advocates will have better opportunities to attend WSH training and they would experience firsthand what it is like to build WSH competency; these would allow them to better handle safety and health matters when they are on or off the job.

What can I do if my colleagues refuse to listen to my advice as a WSH Advocate?

As a WSH Advocate, you can try your best to convince your colleagues by putting yourself in their shoes. They might have a different view on the way to get work done, but try to provide them the rationale of why you are advising them otherwise.

You should not create any conflict with your colleagues due to differing viewpoints. The bottom-line is to make them realise that you care for them and hope to achieve a safer and healthier workplace for everyone. Nevertheless, if there is any unresolved situation, please consult your supervisor or management for advice.

Do I need to fulfill any requirements or mandatory training as a WSH Advocate?

No. Your company has the discretion to decide what kind of training should be provided for their WSH Advocates. There are some recommended training courses listed on www.wshc.sg. However, you can explore any training beyond the list which could help you perform your role as a WSH Advocate.

How can I gather my colleagues to join the WSH Advocate family?

The recommendation is through word of mouth. You may start by sharing the satisfaction you enjoyed from being a WSH Advocate. You may also organise a recruitment drive or propose some recognition for all WSH Advocates.

If I am unable to perform my duties as a WSH Advocate, what should I do?

If you are facing some difficulties in managing your duties as a WSH Advocate, you may let your management know. You may also wish to sign up for WSH training or discuss suitable duties with other WSH Advocates.

What should I do if there is a lack of interest in WSH from my co-workers?

You can engage them to understand why they are not interested in WSH. Use a different approach to help them recognise the importance of WSH in their daily work and how their involvement can help to contribute to a safer workplace.

Alternatively, you may also seek management's support to encourage the employees to participate actively in WSH-related events at the company level.

If I join another company, what should I do?

You should discuss with your management on the transfer of your WSH Advocate duties to another colleague. You are also encouraged to bring your WSH Advocate spirit and experience to your new workplace. Most importantly, you should encourage your new company to join the WSH Advocate community at www.wshc.sg

USEFUL REFERENCES

The Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council has many resources to help you make your workplace safer and healthier. Visit www.wshc.sg for

PUBLICATIONS AND GUIDELINES

WSH BULLETIN:

Free e-newsletter featuring incident alerts, case studies, articles and announcements.

SHINE NEWSLETTER:

Quarterly publication featuring human interest stories and business-driven articles and case studies on best practices.

iWSH NEWSLETTER:

This is Singapore's first workers' newsletter and is available in English, Chinese, Tamil and Bengali.

You can also go to www.mom.gov.sg/workplace-safety-health for information on WSH-related legislation and guidelines, employer's obligations and WSH training opportunities.

CONTACT US

For enquiries, email WSH Council at contact@wshc.sg

For more information or to participate in the WSH Advocate Programme, visit www.wshc.sg/wps/portal/wshAdvocateProgramme

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