

**Recorded Seminar**

**SESSION 1: OHS FUNDAMENTALS**

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# Goals

for today's session

1. Understand what OHS is and why it's important
2. Learn about why your voice matters!
3. How to set up the structures in your workplace to give workers a voice



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# OHS

## What is it?

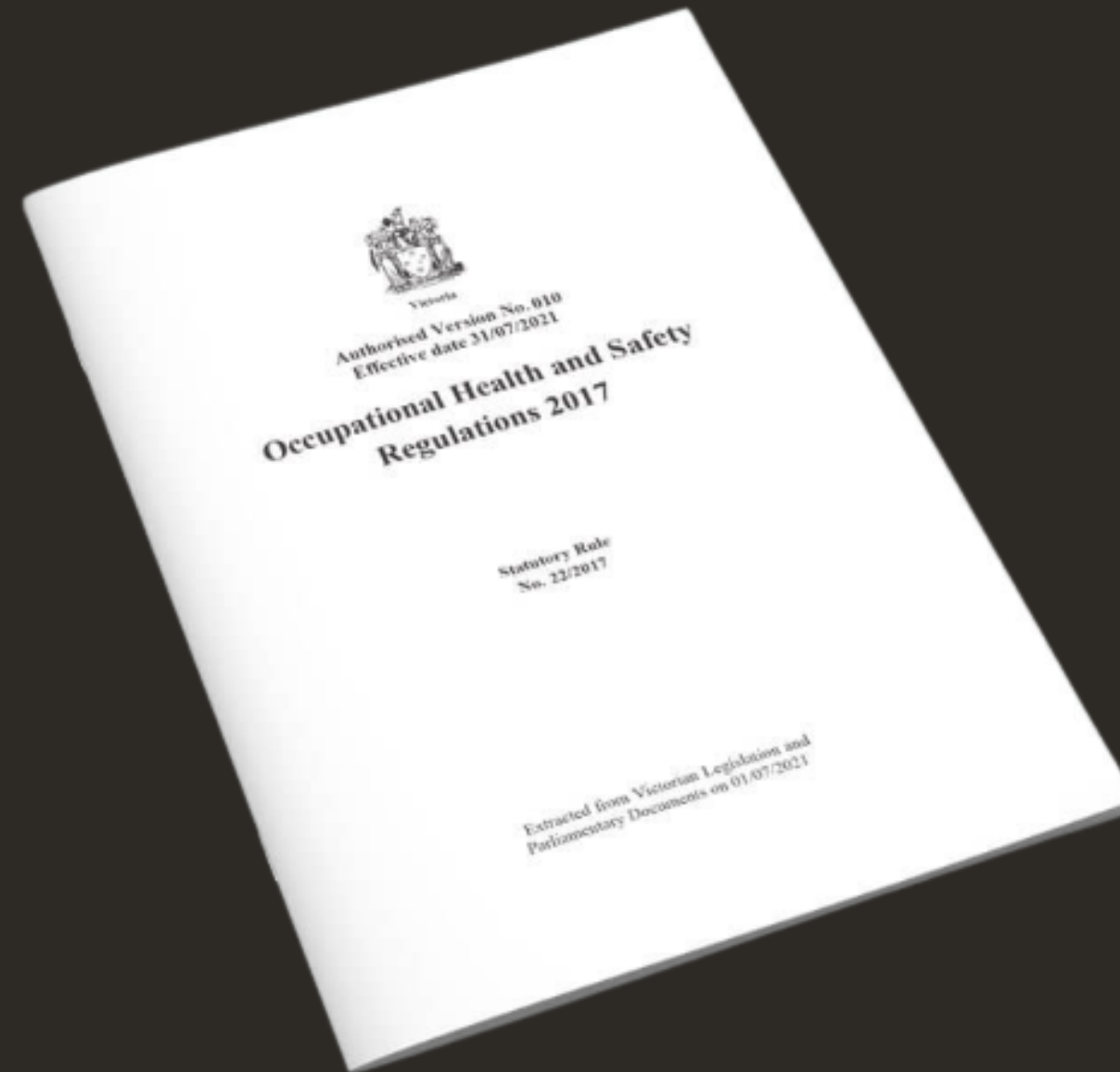
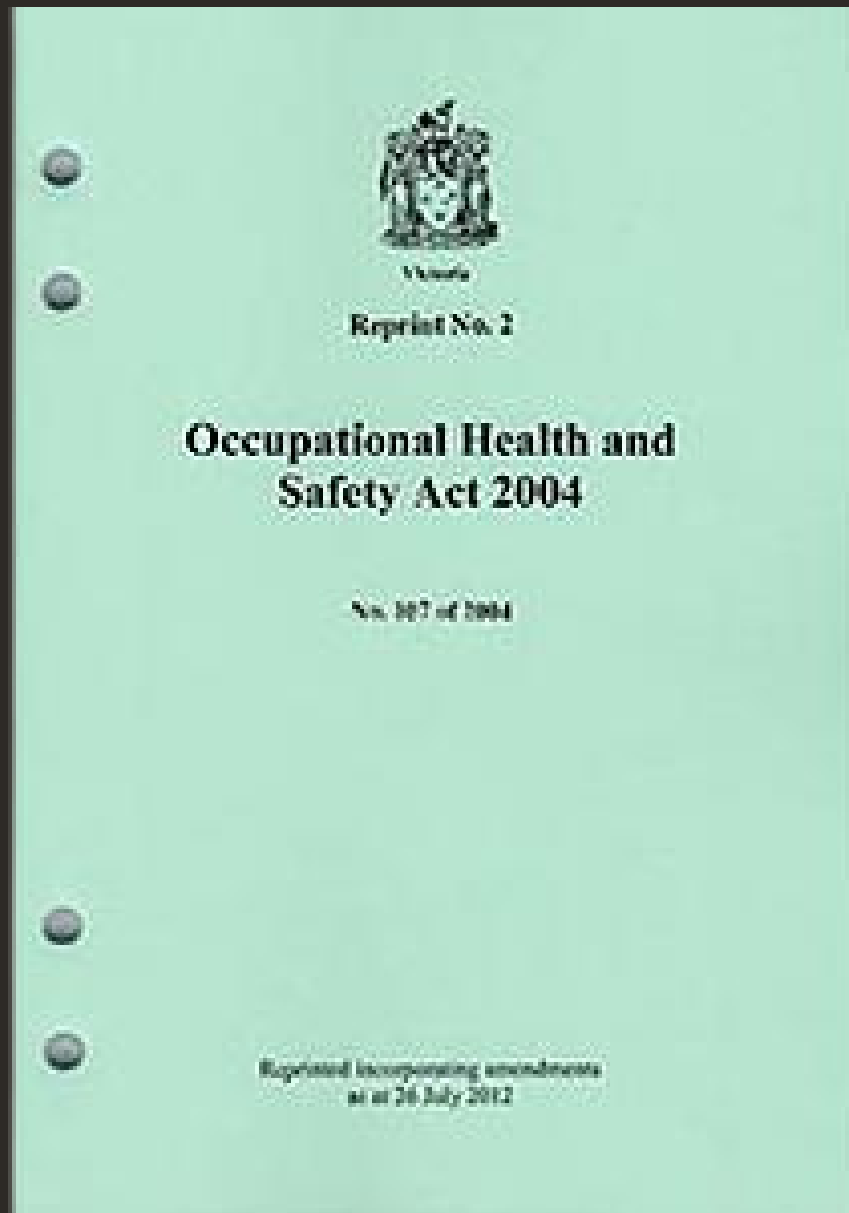
- Every worker has the right to come home safe after a day's work and to work in a safe and secure working environment, free from hazards.
- Occupational Health and Safety is about protecting the safety, health and welfare of workers at work and preventing injuries, illnesses fatalities.
- Most of these rights and the obligations of employers are covered in The Occupational Health and Safety Laws.

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# OHS & The Law

**How Do We Know What Our Workplaces Should Do?**



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# Why is OHS important & a union issue?



More than 2 million people die at work each year.



safe work australia

Worker fatalities in 2020



**194**

workers were  
fatally injured  
at work



Home > News >

## No one immune from workplace tragedy

Victorian employers and workers are being urged to consider the lasting impact of workplace trauma after the tragic loss of 66 lives in 2021.

**16**

Workers have been killed in  
Victoria so far in 2022

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## **Key Sections of the Act**

**But Remember, it's ALL Important.**

s.21 - 23: Duties of the Employer

s.35 - Duty to Consult

s.58 - Powers of Health and Safety Representatives

NOTE: We'll be covering the importance of these parts of these sections of the act in later OHS Basics Month events so don't miss out!

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# A Safe Workplace

- **Safe systems of work create safe workplaces.**
  - This means identifying and controlling hazards and risks in the workplace. The OHS Act requires the employer to provide a 'working environment that is safe and without risks to health' and eliminate, so far as is reasonably practicable, risks to health and safety.
- **The primary responsibility for creating safe systems of work lies with the employer.**
  - The manufacturers and suppliers of plant and chemicals also have a duty to provide the necessary information to ensure their products are safe.
- **Individual actions are not the most important factor in health and safety.**
  - Blaming an employee for injuring themselves fails to recognise most injuries and illnesses are as a result of multiple failings, and means the various contributing factors are not fixed.

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# OHS

## A union issue



The first step to securing a safe workplace - **Join Your Union:**

- The union movement won many of the OHS rights we enjoy today.
- If you and your co-workers join your union and elect a union HSR, you'll be able to bring up health and safety issues in the workplace with confidence.
- This is because a unionised workplace puts the balance of power back into workers hands, you'll know you have co-workers that will have your back.
- Unions also give workers advice on issues and provide them with resources to win health and safety campaigns in their workplace.

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# Employee Representation

**It's your right!**

- Victoria OHS Law recognises the importance of workers and employees exchanging information and ideas on how to improve OHS conditions in the workplace.
- The best way to make sure workers' voices are heard is to set up the structures enabled and encouraged by the OHS Act to elect HSRs.
- Workers know what is safe at work better than their employers do, they do the job every day!
- Knowing your OHS rights will save lives!



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# OHS Structures

## What is a HSR?

- Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) are workers elected by their workmates.
- It's a voluntary role with no extra duties or responsibility.
- HSRs have powers they can elect to use to make their workplaces safer.
- HSRs are elected by a designated work group (DWG).
- HSRs are the best way for workers to raise OHS issues. It is very difficult to do so without one.

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# OHS Structures

## What is a DWG?

- A designated work group is a group of workers that perform similar jobs or have similar occupational health and safety concerns. There can be more than one DWG in a workplace.
- HSRs are elected by their DWG to represent them on health and safety issues.
- Any worker can be a member of a DWG.

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# OHS Structures

What do they look like?

- Your organisation is where you work.
- You can negotiate with your employer to recognise designated work groups.
- Your designated work group can elect health and safety representatives.



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**OHS Structures**

**A Practical Example**



# OHS Structures

**Talk to your coworkers!**

The first step to any workplace organising is to talk to your co-workers.

- What are their concerns?
- What hazards do you face in the workplace?
- Tell them why electing a HSR would be good!

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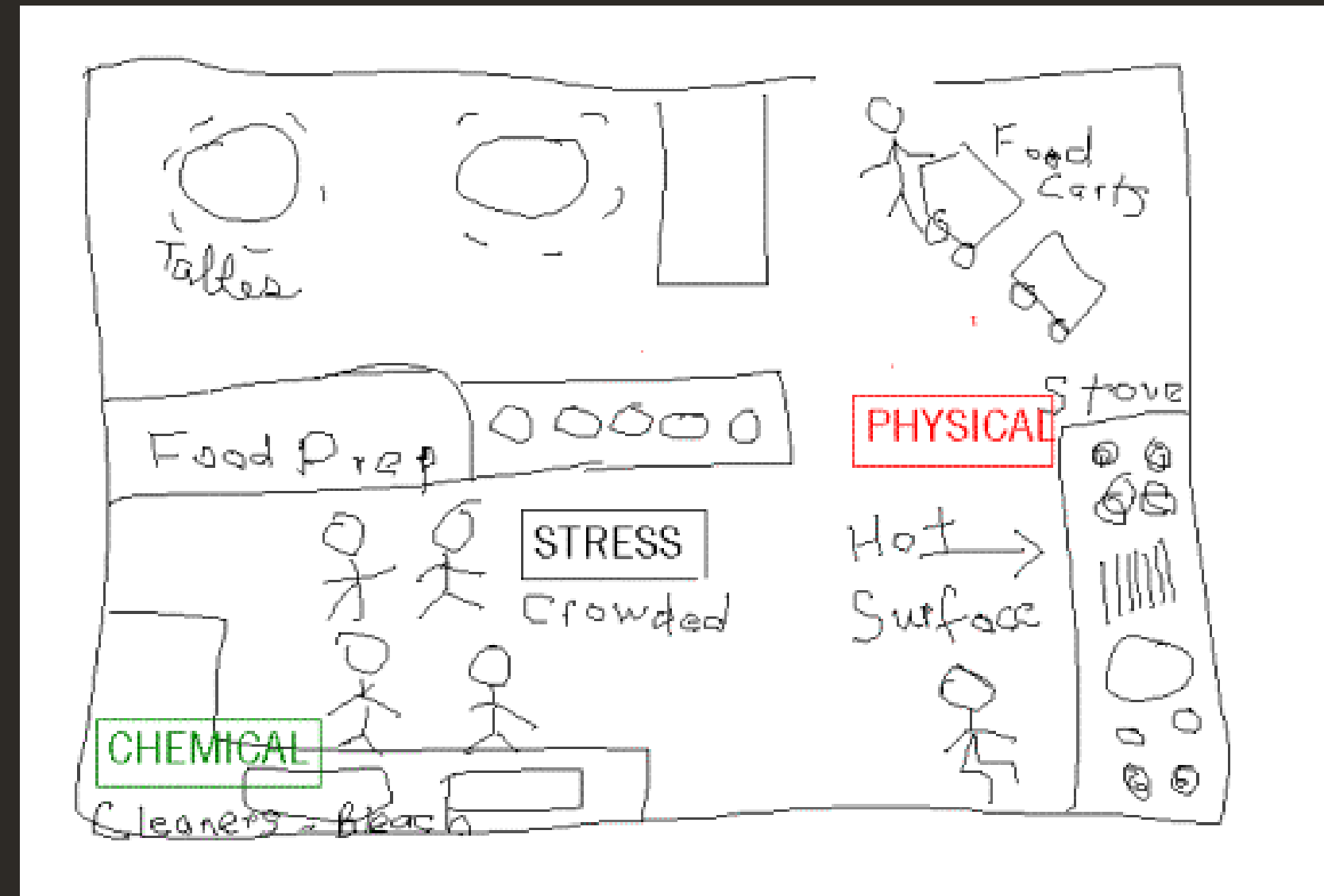
# OHS Structures

Map your workplace!

This is important when trying to figure out a DWG

- Who do you work with?
- Where do people work?
- What roles do people do?
- How are shifts structures?
- Do people speak different languages?
- What hazards/risks are there?

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# OHS Structures

Decide on your DWG

It is important to consider the best way to make sure that all workers can have their health and safety interests represented and that a HSR is accessible to each member of the DWG.



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# OHS Structures

## Establish your DWG

- Once you and your co-workers have decided on your ideal DWG, you should approach the employer to begin negotiations.
- Your employer has 14 days to commence discussions on specifics of the DWG.
- The Act specifically states your employer must not coerce you or your co-workers into agreeing to demands.

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# **OHS Structures**

## **Elect a HSR**

- Once the DWG has been established, each DWG can now elect a HSR.
- It is up to workers how to decide the best way to elect the HSR.
- If you are a member of a union, the union can advise on how to conduct an election if more persons nominate for the position of HSR/s than there are vacancies.
- Don't leave it to chance! Have an honest discussion among the designated work group about the qualities required and who might be a good fit.

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# Where can you go for help?

- Get HSR training
- Your Union!
- Ask Renata
- OHS Reps Network
- Young Workers Centre
- Migrant Workers Centre
- WorkSafe Victoria

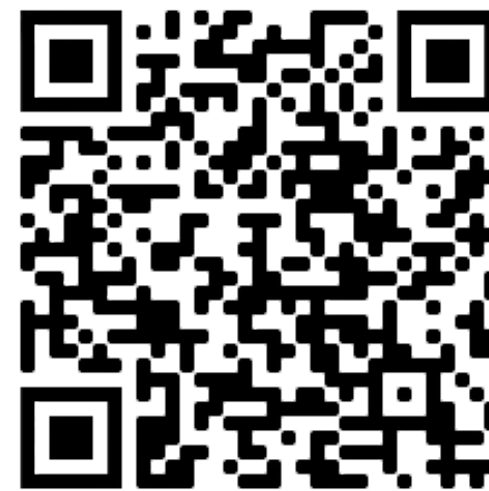
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# Want to learn more about OHS?



- Check out our website [www.ohsrep.org.au](http://www.ohsrep.org.au), it's one of the largest databases of health and safety tips, tricks, tools and information in Australia. Better yet it's made for you the worker.
- Come to our next OHS Basics Month seminar & workshop. We'll be covering the duty of your employer to consult workers and how to use the powers of health and safety reps to achieve health and safety wins. You can RSVP by scanning the QR code below.



**SCAN HERE  
TO RSVP**