

Background to SafePlus

The Independent Taskforce on Workplace Health and Safety recommended that the Government introduce a new voluntary health and safety rating scheme as part of a broad package of reforms (including legislative reform).

In response, Cabinet directed WorkSafe, ACC and the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to develop Safety Star Rating (SSR), a voluntary incentive initiative to recognise, reward and support businesses that have demonstrated robust health and safety performance.

The recommendations to develop SSR came about, in part, because the existing health and safety incentive programmes had not achieved the desired results in reducing injury rates and ACC claims.

In late 2013, a joint work plan was established between WorkSafe NZ, ACC, and MBIE to design the SSR. The SSR Programme Team was established and based in WorkSafe NZ and has been jointly resourced and governed. Ministerial responsibility for SSR's development was jointly with the Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety and the Minister for ACC. In February 2015 officials, Ministers, and health and safety experts agreed to continue with scheme design work with a view to piloting the SSR initiative.

To help inform the development of SSR two groups were set up to work with the SSR Programme Team, and provide input and feedback into the development of the initiative:

- **The Expert Design Group** – comprising expert health and safety practitioners, and
- **The Industry Reference Group** – a group of key industry stakeholder organisations (including the Business Leaders Health and Safety Forum, Business New Zealand, the Council of Trade Unions, the Employers and Manufacturers Association, the Master Builders Federation, Health and Safety Associations of New Zealand, the Institute of Directors).

By late November 2017 a tool had been developed and was ready for piloting with businesses.

Between November 2015 and June 2016, the SSR was piloted to test its effectiveness, relevance, and value to businesses. Ninety-five medium and large sized businesses participated across the following sectors: transport, construction, manufacturing, agriculture, warehousing and distribution, and public administration.

All 95 businesses undertook an online self-assessment exercise against a set of good practice health and safety standards. Thirty-eight of the businesses also had an independent onsite assessment of their performance against the same SSR standards, conducted by assessors from the SSR Programme.

In July 2016, ACC and WorkSafe released [Reducing Harm in NZ Workplaces Action Plan](#) to fulfil a statutory obligation for the two agencies to develop a workplace injury prevention action plan to establish the framework to guide key workplace health and safety programmes. SSR was included as a key component of this Plan.

An independent evaluation of the SSR was completed in October 2016. In summary, most businesses valued the assessment tool, felt the SSR standards focused on the right issues, and believed it has good ability to drive health and safety performance improvement in their business. Some tool design improvements were also identified, which were worked through during development of final design proposals.

In February 2017, the WorkSafe and ACC Boards agreed to a proposed delivery approach for this initiative. In summary, this involve three initiatives:

- Releasing the SSR resources and guidance that has been developed on WorkSafe's website (around September 2017)
- Releasing an onsite assessment and advisory tool, which will be used on a voluntary, open market, user-pays basis. This will involve individual businesses commissioning a third-party

approved private sector assessor to undertake their assessments, make performance recommendations, and provide guidance and tailored advice on how to implement the recommendations (September-October 2017)

- Developing a separate online Self-Assessment Tool that businesses of all sizes can use to self-assess their health and safety performance, and receive good practice guidance (but which involves no independent, third party, verification). Iteration 1, currently anticipated for mid-2018, will be customised for small to medium sized businesses, with subsequent iterations being customised by business size and high-risk sectors

This delivery approach was confirmed by Hon. Michael Woodhouse in his dual role as Minister for ACC and Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety. The Minister publicly announced the approach at the Safeguard conference on 1 June 2017.

SSR was renamed SafePlus following consultation with WorkSafe, ACC, MBIE, industry, stakeholders and market testing with business.

Evolution of SafePlus

SafePlus is the culmination of work to design a new health and safety initiative (that was initially called Safety Star Rating).

Initial thinking focused on SafePlus being a voluntary incentive initiative to recognise, reward and support businesses to improve their health and safety performance. However, during the design process it became increasingly clear that there was a need for SafePlus to be different from existing health and safety levy discount and compliance audit products in the market. These existing products predominantly use paper-based compliance audit approaches and focus on checking on documented management system policies and procedures. To-date, they have had limited impact on improving workplace health and safety outcomes. It was recognised that there was a need for 'something different', rather than 'more of the same'.

SafePlus is an educative performance improvement tool that can identify what businesses need to do to improve their health and safety performance, and give them tailored guidance and advice on how to go about this. Such advice will be tailored to their unique circumstances, risk profile, business maturity, and environment and will help support continuous improvement. SafePlus will:

- Provide a nationally recognised, widely accepted, authoritative, and credible standard of good practice health and safety that is aligned to New Zealand's regulatory framework, but goes beyond minimum compliance requirements.
- Use behaviour based assessments – with a heavy focus on interviewing workers and management and observing their behaviours and practices at work.
- Use a consultative partnership approach to 'work with' businesses rather than 'audit' them.
- Involve 'deep dive' assessment methodology that takes a detailed look at how businesses manage selected risks right through their organisation – from governance entities, executive and middle management, to front line workers. Risks include occupational health as well as safety risks.
- Provide businesses with greater confidence that they are meeting their health and safety legal obligations and that their health and safety is consistent with good practice
- Provide market intelligence which can be used to inform businesses and government's health and safety efforts.

A summary of the SafePlus value proposition for businesses, workers and the Crown is provided in the Value Proposition – see www.safeplus.nz (click Why use SafePlus)