



Rydges airport hotel development

Positive worker engagement is at the heart of Wellington International Airport's major new hotel construction project.

The airport has 're-launched' its highly successful Safety Wingman health and safety programme used on its domestic terminal expansion and multi-level transport hub for the development of the 134-bedroom Rydges Hotel.

Wingman is designed to drive improvements in behaviours and encourage workers to not only look out for themselves, but to look out for each other and get home safely.

Previous Wingman programmes have proved highly effective in earlier projects to extend the airport's South Terminal and the construction of a multi-storey car park. The programme has driven high engagement with the construction teams.

Wingman 3 is a joint initiative between Wellington International Airport Ltd (WIAL) and Arrow International, which is constructing the hotel at the airport. Work began at the end of May 2017 and at its peak the 18-month project will see 200 workers on site.

Joeli Nagera, WIAL Project and Safety Co-ordinator, said Wingman is all about doing things differently "to create an environment where safety is at the core of everything that we do."

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The onus is on positive participation and engagement with and between workers - for instance, workers are encouraged to nominate colleagues for leadership in safety, with a winner selected and award presented at each monthly toolbox meeting.

All three Wingman programmes have been fronted by Kiwi adventurer, TV presenter, motivational speaker and leadership development consultant Jamie Fitzgerald.

"The focus is on health and safety being put first. Workers should observe and look out for their colleagues on the work site in order for everyone to get home safely every night," says Joeli.



“We have created three new pillars for Wingman 3: teamwork, awareness and equipment, and have a unique programme tag ‘Taking Safety to New Heights’ to show we are serious about workers’ safety and taking safety to a new level.”

Andy Gibb, Arrow’s project Health and Safety Adviser, said Arrow sees Wingman 3 as an opportunity to reiterate key health and safety messages through his own organisation and use it as a template for positive change.

“It’s fantastic to work with a client who is so passionate about health and safety. We are a team, we talk openly and we have a good laugh – and long may that continue.

“We are still in the early stages of the project, but we are seeing improved safety awareness, improved safety reporting and a really positive culture evident both on the workforce and at our purpose-built site based Safety Hub.

“Workers are nominating their colleagues for the safety leadership awards and we’re getting amazing feedback – sub-contractors are telling us they have never worked on a construction site like this before.”

A key part of Wingman 3 is the safety ‘Hub’. A ‘one stop shop’ for health and safety information, as well as a place to relax during breaks.

“The Hub has been built at the centre of the site,” says Emily Howarth, Project Administrator for Arrow. “It’s a very visual, vibrant environment and raises the profile of safety as part of everyone’s day. People drop by as needed. We have installed a ‘hydration station’ water fountain and given every worker a refillable water bottle with the Wingman logo. It’s encouraging them to be healthy and hydrated while reinforcing that message.”

The Hub includes a large TV screen with a ‘Wingman channel’ playing on a loop.

“That’s going really well,” says Emily. “It’s got an induction video, WorkSafe and training videos, and short snippets with key messages. We also put site content on, showing progress and examples of good or bad practice. An example of the good practice was footage of the trenches and excavation work, showing Multi Civil’s good use of the trench boxes and plates. For bad practice, we showed the guys pouring concrete without using safety glasses. We asked them to stop work and to put glasses on and then showed footage with them wearing the correct PPE. We then added a message onto the TV about the importance of wearing safety glasses when pouring concrete. There’s real competition to star in the good practice – a buzz goes around when we bring the camera on site.

“WIAL and Arrow meet every Friday. That communication is crucial being proactive rather than reactive.”

“We also provide statistics around incidents, near misses and progress and show how we are tracking against other sites. The workers take their breaks in the Hub and watch the programmes. We change the content monthly, to keep it fresh and to tie in with current critical risks.”

Critical risks for the project include mobile plant, deep excavations, working at height and, the unusual challenge of undertaking major construction while maintaining business as usual in a busy airport environment.

A new induction video has been created for each of the Wingman programmes with Jamie Fitzgerald taking one or more workers from the site to their induction – via an adventurous route. For Wingman 3, they start off with a skydive in Taupo – focusing on the crucial importance of equipment, teamwork and awareness.

Jamie will continue to be involved throughout the project, acting as a strong advocate for the programme and interacting with project members on a personal level – including at toolbox presentations.

“Every single person undertakes our health and safety induction before they step onto the site, and that begins with the video,” says Joeli.

“The induction forms the link between the concept of the Safety Wingman and every member of the project team. The theme is creating a workplace less ordinary, focusing on preparation, using the right equipment, awareness of hazards, looking out for your mates and encouraging safe behaviour.”

Andy says connecting with each and every worker at the time of induction, and discussing what getting home safe means to them, is key.

“My experience is that sub-contractors aren’t always comfortable asking questions. So, at the beginning, I’ll let them know there will be a short quiz about the content at the end – that gets their attention. It’s just eight questions, but it gets us all talking.”

A schedule of events has been mapped out for the entire project, to continually update and engage workers at different stages of the project and as new critical risks come into play.

The onsite Safety Hub also has a ‘permit’ wall with all H&S forms and documents which need to be filled out, and three boxes, one for near-miss reports, one for suggestions and one for nominating workmates for good health and safety practice.

“You can walk in, grab a permit and fill it in, all in one central location. The process for reporting a near miss used to be quite lengthy, but now you just pick up a card, jot down a few words about what’s happened and drop it into a ballot box. We check the box several times a day and follow up and do the full report.

“For instance, some of the carpenters stripping off shuttering panels for concrete had laid the panels against some piles, and the piles started to shift. A worker raised the incident as a near miss through the Hub and Arrow took immediate action to resolve the issue, which avoided a potential workplace accident occurring.

“A good example of the safety nominations is a guy who nominated a colleague who needed to move some heavy poles and asked someone to help him, rather than trying to lift them all himself.

“Workers are nominating their colleagues for the safety leadership awards and we’re getting amazing feedback.”

“We select a winner from the nominations and they get an award. Jamie and Joeli make the presentations at our monthly toolbox meetings. We’re having a special Christmas Celebration Shout and awards too.”

Emily says everyone gets a high viz vest with an individual number on the back when they are inducted.

“It’s a big site and people might not know everyone’s name but you can take note of a number and flag up good practice or a near miss that way.”

Toolbox meetings are scheduled for Friday afternoons every month, and everyone downs tools to take part in listening to talks or getting involved with more hands on activities. Topics for discussion will range from working at height and harness safety, through power tool and cable safety to rubbish removal and lifting and handling. The talks are interactive and hands on to engage the subcontractors. As an example, a presentation about crane and lifting safety was tied in with the arrival of the crane for the structural steel erection.

“Arrow and WIAL looked at the critical risks for the programme as it progresses and structured the topics for toolbox meetings around that,” says Joeli. “We alternate between having an in-house and an external expert speaker or demonstration every month – for instance WorkSafe talking about excavation and site safety.”

Andy says ongoing open communication between WIAL and the Arrow project team is also critical to the success of Wingman 3.

“WIAL and Arrow meet every Friday. That communication is crucial being proactive rather than reactive. We are also talking daily, both formally and informally. We can collaboratively plan things to fine detail but at the end of the day it is construction work which is always changing and always having unexpected circumstances arise. Therefore, it is crucial to keep that communication channel ongoing.”

WORKER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

The best outcomes are achieved when a business and its workers work together on health and safety. Worker Engagement and Participation is about having planned ways for:

- workers to give input on issues which will (or are likely to) affect their health or safety. This includes asking for and taking into account their views
- workers to improve work health and safety on an ongoing basis (eg by raising concerns or suggesting improvements).

This will help you and your business make better decisions – and keep your people and productivity thriving.

KEY POINTS

Worker participation in health and safety leads to:

- improved safety awareness and reporting
- workers nominating their colleagues for safety leadership awards
- open communication about health and safety risks and issues on-site.

For more examples and information visit [worksafe.govt.nz](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)