Creating and maintaining safe environments:
The role of technicians in health and safety

Catrin Harris – Research Fellow, MI TALENT

Ed Bowerman – Technical Training Manager, MI TALENT

Overview of session

- The report
- Findings and recommendations
- Activity: prioritising the recommendations

Report published September 2023

Considers technicians' roles in and views on health and safety

Survey – 1448 responses

36 interviews

10 recommendations

Key themes

Roles and responsibilities

Qualifications and training

Value, recognition and representation

Health and safety culture

Roles and responsibilities

91% of technical staff have health and safety responsibilities

99% of technical managers have health and safety responsibilities

Icon created by Cuputo from the Noun Project

The 5 H&S activities that technicians are most involved in doing

- Writing risk assessments
- General preventative maintenance
- Working with hazardous substances
- PPE – maintenance / storage / signing out / guidance
- Training staff

On average technical staff spend **22%** of their time on health and safety responsibilities

83% of technical staff had provided informal training to other staff and/or students

41% of technicians feel their health and safety responsibilities are not adequately reflected in their job descriptions

Technical managers, safety officers/head of health and **safety** and **technicians** themselves were most likely to sign off health and safety work

Roles and responsibilities - recommendations

- R1. **Understanding Responsibilities**: Managers, colleagues, and employers of technical staff must understand the time commitment required for health and safety tasks, actively backing and enabling these responsibilities.

- R3. **Accurate Job Descriptions**: Employers should ensure that health and safety responsibilities are accurately reflected in technical job descriptions.

- R6. **Resources**: Employers of technical staff and technical managers should ensure that technical staff have the appropriate resources to ensure that their health and safety responsibilities can be carried out effectively.

Qualifications and training

99% of technicians had received internal training

68% of technicians had received external training

82% of technicians felt training was somewhat or completely accessible

17% of technicians wanted to complete a NEBOSH qualification

Qualifications and training - recommendations

- R4. **Training and Development**: Technical staff need access to comprehensive health and safety training, including pathways to external qualifications. Employers should ensure that appropriate training is available and accessible to them, and that 'on the job' time to complete health and safety training is supported.

Value, recognition and representation

Perceptions of technical staff's own value

Technical colleagues

Manager

Academic colleagues

Postgraduate students

Undergraduate students

Senior leadership in organisation

Other colleagues (e.g. professional services)

National policymakers

Value of technicians' contributions in specific areas

Carrying out activities

Advising others

Providing training

Setting the health and safety agenda/culture

Writing policies

39% of technical staff and **31%** of non-technical staff/technical staff without health and safety responsibilities believe technicians are well recognised for their contributions to health and safety

36% of technicians with a H&S role are on an appropriate committee

94% are members
10% are Chairs
2% are secretaries

# Health and safety committee membership

Value, recognition and representation- recommendations

- R2. **Visible Roles**: Employers of technical personnel should ensure their pivotal roles and contributions to health and safety are visible and recognised.

- R8. **Representation and Participation**: Employers must ensure continuous representation of technical staff on health and safety committees, fostering active involvement.

- R10. **External Recognition & Engagement**: External organisations should recognise and engage with the technical community, to provide recognition for their contributions to health and safety, and avenues for professional development.

Health and safety culture

74% of technicians feel they have a significant role to play in setting the health and safety culture/agenda in their workplaces
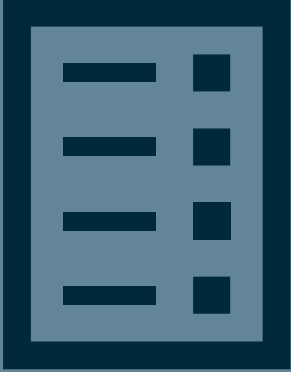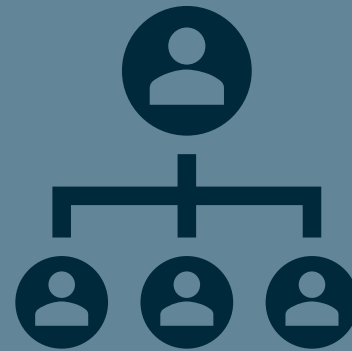
82% of technical staff agreed that health and safety was considered when projects were planned

79% of technical staff felt conversations about health and safety took place frequently

46% of technicians feel conversations about health and safety take place formally

54% of technical staff feel their work in health and safety is openly discussed or delegated

Creating a better health and safety culture

Changes in attitude

Health and safety integral to roles

Involvement in health and safety planning

Transparency and openness

Better policies and procedures

Communication

Staff relationships and interactions

Support

Health and safety culture - recommendations

- R5. **Leadership in Safety**: Senior leaders should promote a culture of positive engagement with health and safety from their whole organisational community. Regular training and engagement in processes and with colleagues with health and safety responsibilities should be promoted.

- R7. **Teamwork**: Employers, technicians, and other health and safety stakeholders should forge collaboration and communication channels, sharing best practices and lending mutual support. Solid teamwork cultivates a healthy working environment.

- R9. **Transparent Fora**: Organisations should ensure the creation of platforms for open and transparent health and safety dialogues that focus on improvement and best practice sharing, steering clear of placing blame.

Activity: prioritising the recommendations

Go to **menti.com**   Enter code: 5468 8988

Choose the three recommendations that you would prioritise in your institution.

R1. **Understanding Responsibilities**
R2. **Visible Roles**
R3. **Accurate Job Descriptions**
R4. **Training and Development**
R5. **Leadership in Safety**

R6. **Resources**
R7. **Teamwork**
R8. **Representation and Participation**
R9. **Transparent Fora**
R10. **External Recognition & Engagement**

Mentimeter

Account

Content

Design

Settings

1

1

1

0   0   0   0   0   0   0

1   2 Visible Roles   3 Accurate Job   4 Training and   5 Leadership in   6 Resources   7 Teamwork   8   9 Transparent   10 External
Understanding   Descriptions   Development   Safety   Representation   Fora   Recognition
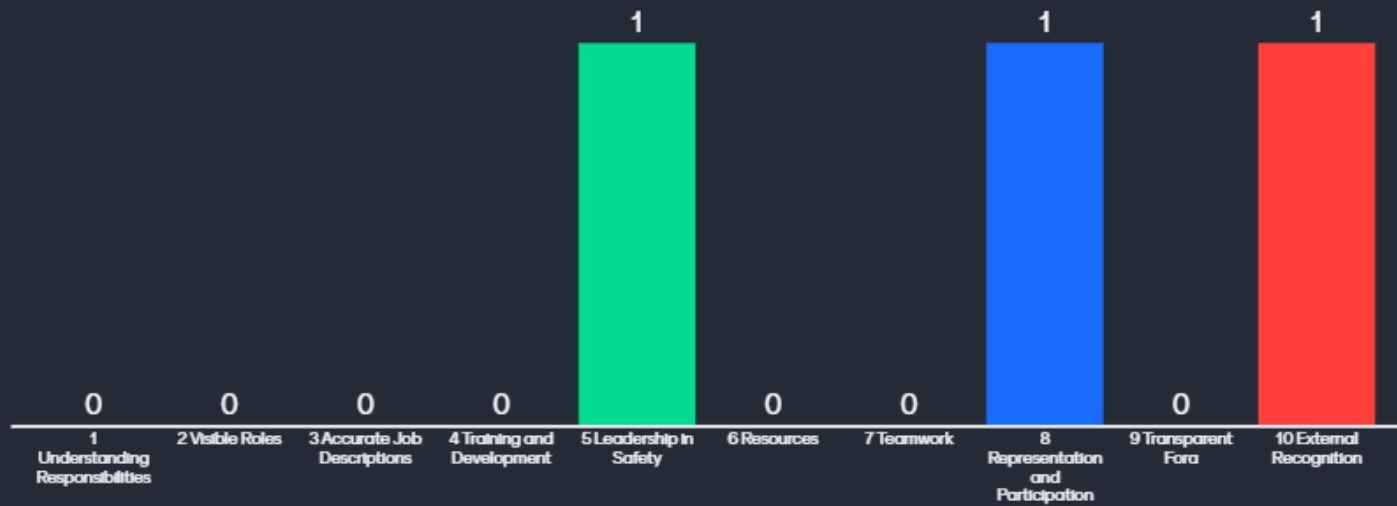Responsibilities   and
                                                                                                                  Participation

Help &
Feedback

Discuss your next steps

Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments:
The Role of Technicians in Health and Safety

Thank you!

catrin.harris@nottingham.ac.uk
edward.bowerman@nottingham.ac.uk

https://www.mitalent.ac.uk/Resources