



# International Safety Awards 2017

Chief Adjudicator's Report

# British Safety Council

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#### Results

A total of 580 applications were received for the International Safety Awards in 2017 and 92% of these successfully achieved a Pass grade or higher.

The grading distribution among the applications in 2017 was as follows.

Distinction	31	(5%)
Merit	301	(52%)
Pass	201	(35%)
Fail	47	(8%)

There was no quota of grades to be awarded and nor will there be in future years. If every applicant meets the required standard, every applicant will be awarded a Distinction.

#### General Comments

As in previous years, there was evidence of considerable care being invested in those submissions to the International Safety Awards that scored well. Strong applications were characterised by each question being analysed and answered in full, the use of practical, real-life examples from the workplace to support each response and clear evidence of initiatives that make an appreciable difference to people's health, safety, welfare and wellbeing. Highest-scoring applicants continued to make their submission site-specific as required. The adjudicators reported many instances of good practice among the applications this year - and in some cases, exceptionally good practice illustrated with examples.

The adjudicators remain mindful of the financial and wider challenges faced by many organisations and the implications of this on planning and expenditure. The adjudicators were therefore greatly encouraged to observe safety, health, welfare and wellbeing retaining the prominence that these areas warrant within organisations' financial expenditure and future commitments.

The standards required of applicants to the International Safety Awards continue to be robust. For applicants wishing to score well, it is essential that they dedicate sufficient time to the careful analysis of each question and its requirements before a response is embarked upon. It is equally important that applicants ensure each question is answered in comprehensive terms since the top mark bands for each question can only be accessed where all of its aspects have been addressed in sufficient detail. As in previous years, weaker submissions tended to digress from the questions posed or otherwise restricted responses through partly relevant information. Applicants are once again strongly encouraged to make use of the marking scheme and the Chief Adjudicator's Report from the previous year as a guide to the standards expected. Taken together, the questions, mark scheme and Chief Adjudicator's Report are clearly of key importance to any successful application. It is therefore a matter of some disappointment that a significant proportion of applicants continue to overlook aspects of this information.

As with the 2016 awards the responses to Question 1 in this year's scheme usefully illustrate how certain answers might gain or lose marks according to their structure and focus; Question 1 required, for the specific site concerned, examples of how the most significant health and safety hazards are determined. The majority of high-scoring applicants clearly identified the various components of the question and then tackled it fully by addressing both health and safety and by providing an appropriate discussion of the relative significance of the hazards concerned. The latter point clearly required applicants to respond in discursive and evaluative terms; those responses that listed or simply outlined safety hazards could not expect to access the higher mark bands.

As with previous years' Awards, higher-scoring applicants consistently utilised the 500 words that are available per response. In most cases, it was evident that such applicants had planned and approached their responses with care and as a consequence achieved higher scores without breaching the word limit. Responses of less than 300 words almost inevitably scored lower marks through insufficient detail - again, those that simply listed activities or factors with limited context could not expect to access the higher mark bands.

The adjudicators recognise that there is a limit to the amount of detail that can be provided given the word limits that are in place. Applicants should look to communicate the salient points of their systems, methodologies and approaches to planning and include some relevant detail or examples in support. It is not a requirement of these awards for applicants to describe everything in detail in order to gain full marks. A 6,000 word submission (i.e. 12 x 500 words) across a range of questions is quite sufficient for an adjudicator to make a valid judgment regarding an organisation's approach to health and safety management.

## **Describe the main business activities at this site / in this business unit.**

Whilst not marked, this question is an essential component of the application as it contextualises all subsequent responses. A number of responses to this question were noted as including lots of corporate information which, whilst often interesting, did little to 'set the scene' in terms of health, safety and welfare at the site concerned. Higher-scoring applicants focused on those activities posing the most significant risks to health, safety and well-being and in doing so established a stable foundation for the remainder of their application.

### **Question 1**

#### **Describe the approach taken for identifying the most significant health and safety hazards at this site?**

As noted under *General Comments*, this question required applicants to respond across a range of aspects; explaining significance, identifying health hazards, identifying safety hazards and ensuring that the response was both context and site-specific.

To score well on this question, an emphasis on the approach to assessment and hazard determination was essential.

Those that scored well deconstructed the question and covered both health and safety hazards, an explanation of why these were significant and why they were significant for that site. Highest-scoring applicants typically structured their response in two parts; the first part addressed what the health hazards were, why they were significant and why they were significant at that site and the second part covered the equivalent for safety. This was an effective approach and one that allowed the adjudicators to easily discern the foundations of a comprehensive response. It is worth noting that techniques of this nature were observable throughout the submissions of those that scored well.

Weaker submissions tended to focus on one or two aspects of the question - for example, by listing safety hazards and omitting those relating to health entirely.

### **Question 2**

#### **With reference to 2016, explain how the control measures implemented for the most significant health and safety hazards at this site were evaluated for their effectiveness.**

Only the strongest submissions responded to this question adequately and within the timeframe being examined (specifically 2016). Question 1 was designed to explore both health and safety hazards and to examine how the most significant hazards were identified at the site. Question 2 sharpened focus on these particular hazards and on how they were managed; assessed, controlled, monitored and reviewed (facets of effectiveness).

In order to achieve high marks for this question, the response clearly needed to flow through appropriately from the applicant's answer to Question 1 and explore, in detail, the most significant health and safety hazards. The hazards needed to be examined and the control measures clearly explained and justified. Responses offering a superficial or inadequately detailed response therefore scored poorly, as did those that strayed from the specified timeframe (i.e. 2016). A number of applicants provided a bland or otherwise unhelpful response here (e.g. 'We train our employees.'). Responses of this nature only partially answered the question and neglected important aspects such as suitability, maintenance, adequacy and operational impact.

Higher-scoring applicants observed the specific timeframe, followed the point through from the previous question and carefully organised their response by, for example, providing a heading for each relevant

aspect. Responses of this nature typically included headings for the identified hazard and discussed controls/specific controls in place to mitigate risk.

### Question 3

**Explain the process for identifying the legislative requirements and any relevant sector standards applicable to this site. State the associated measures for monitoring compliance with these requirements and standards.**

This question presented all applicants with a relatively unimpeded opportunity to score highly. It straightforwardly required of applicants an explanation of the approach (process) taken in identifying their legal and sector obligations and how compliance to these standards would be undertaken - an aspect of their site management that should already have been considered as part of the hazard identification and risk assessment process.

High-scoring responses to this question made reference to the fact that there are numerous pieces of legislation applicable to their organisation and site and developed this by detailing the site-specific obligations related to their activities. These responses recognised both legislative and sector requirements relating to their site and activities and were appropriately structured by careful reference to these obligations. High-scoring responses then continued on to provide an insight into the measures utilised to monitor compliance through an appropriate and robust range.

Given the nature of the question, it was regrettable that a proportion of the responses scored as modestly as they did. Weaker responses tended to list legislation, often neglecting any discussion relevant to the sector. They provided limited justification, explanation or context in view of the activities undertaken at the site - or failed to address the health, safety and welfare components with due balance. Responses of this nature suggest, quite strongly, that the question and/or marking scheme has been poorly studied or understood by the applicant - those that listed a wide range of legislation generally failed to meet two of the key requirements of the question (legislation and sector). The *'associated measures for monitoring compliance with these requirements and standards'* aspect was incorporated quite purposefully within the question so as to enable applicants to respond in flexible, dynamic and sector-specific terms that cover health, safety and welfare (i.e. terms that are quite different from simple legal safety compliance) and allow applicants an opportunity to share best practice.

### Question 4

**Explain how health and safety implications are considered as part of the process for managing operational or organisational changes at this site.**

This question proved to be a strong differentiator. Only the high-scoring submissions demonstrated a clear understanding of well-rounded evaluation resulting in conclusions. High-scoring submissions provided an overview of the performance review process, tools used and parties involved (e.g. quarterly panels with operational leadership teams or 1:1s with the Functional Director, Managing Director or Chief Executive) and the outcome (e.g. a change of strategy, new priorities, revised goals, etc.).

High-scoring applicants typically provided an overview of the evaluation tools used in assessing implications (e.g. dashboards, formal reports, gap analysis, etc.) and discussed these as part of a larger evaluation suite of documents that are capable of being supplemented by other metrics (e.g. financial performance, employee opinion survey data, attrition rates, etc.). Here, it was acknowledged that using various evaluation tools generally results in more comprehensive and robust conclusions - conclusions

that would naturally form an effective foundation for assessing the impact of change. Stronger responses also made the link between effective business strategies and strong business performance (to which health, safety and welfare makes a direct contribution) and looked to wider evaluation methods to determine success and how change may have a positive (or negative) impact and the resulting implications.

Again, only the stronger responses covered health and safety. Weaker responses focused disproportionately on safety and addressed operational changes only (i.e. omitting references to organisational change).

## **Question 5**

**Describe how senior management make effective use of competent health and safety support at this site.**

This question was designed to explore access to competent advice that the organisation and its leadership has and the process or processes used to access it.

This question was generally well-answered and most applicants detailed the process for internal or external access to health and safety advice and support. The higher-scoring applicants responded in a site-specific manner and identified that there are times when traditional health and safety qualifications and experiences are insufficient (e.g. specialist work at height, construction work, work with chemicals or asbestos, etc.) and so explored the need for strategic or specialist partners/contractors to assist the organisation. The highest-scoring applicants built on their response by adding the need to have these partners on a preferred list so that relationships could be established and coordinated to aide planning and so support the development of a strong health and safety culture.

## **Question 6**

**Explain how relevant stakeholders are involved with the risk assessment process at this site.**

This question offers a good example of where referring to the marking scheme gives the applicant guidance on the question, the areas the question is exploring and how best to approach it. Risk assessment is clearly an essential component of good health and safety management, however this question centred on relevance and involvement and therefore required consideration as to how scope is determined, what stakeholders could/should be included and the process used. Higher-scoring applicants discussed the rationale to their approach and how risk assessment forms a tool used as part of a bigger and more detailed process of the day-to-day activities at the site.

High-scoring applicants identified that in order to determine scope the full range of activities and stakeholder groups needed to be considered and that partnering with specialist services may be necessary (e.g. fire authority, rescue services, insurers, regulators and enforcers). The highest-scoring applicants provided details of activities, determined which were high, medium and low risk and then reported on what stakeholders had been identified and engaged with. As appropriate to their level of risk, such applicants also included reference to scenario-planning, business continuity/disaster recovery planning and the importance of employee engagement in effecting high quality emergency plans.

## Question 7

### **Describe the approach for ensuring that contractors and visitors to the site understand relevant health, safety and welfare information.**

In essence, this question concerned the design and delivery of communications for contractors and visitors - essentially, that such communications allow for easy assimilation and that there is some post-communication process to check effectiveness.

Weaker responses to this question generally listed rather than described communication methods (posters, signing-in sheet, signs, etc.) and did not include any commentary demonstrating how these communications were understood.

Stronger responses determined that visitors are a vulnerable group, that they fall into a range of categories (e.g. client, contractor, supplier, member of the public etc.) and described how communications were tailored appropriately to meet these specific audiences. Such applicants then typically described how they ensured that the communications had been assimilated (e.g. via short tests or conversations). Stronger responses also explored the challenges faced when disseminating information to those with a differing primary language or those with limited literacy skills. In doing so, such applicants demonstrated an understanding that these issues require managing to ensure inclusion and reduce exposure to risk. The highest-scoring applicants explained procedures they had in place to accompany visitors at all times in high risk areas/hazardous industries or measures in place to exclude visitors entirely due to the high level of risk. Highest-scoring applicants also discussed the range (health, safety and welfare) and made specific reference to welfare communications, thereby providing a balanced treatment across all three areas.

## Question 8

### **Describe how management at this site positively influence internal and external stakeholder behaviours in relation to health and safety.**

This question was about how the management team at this site take an active role in promoting and maintaining a positive culture of health and safety. The adjudicators were looking for examples of how management, those in the operation and non-health and safety managers (for instance, those in HR or Finance functions or others not traditionally associated with operations) demonstrated an active engagement in these important matters. As most practitioners recognise, these groups play an important role in maintaining a positive attitude and they are to be actively engaged with.

Weaker responses often framed their response with close reference to their health and safety manager or managers rather than the wider senior management team. Here, references to the Chief Executive Officer or Managing Director (or similar role) also tended towards routine or 'business as usual' activity such as chairing meetings, approving budgets and signing policies/agreements. Higher-scoring applicants provided examples of senior management team members engaging directly with the workforce and other stakeholders - particularly external agencies - on health and safety matters. Such responses recognised that visible and felt leadership, active intervention and support can positively impact upon employee attitude, morale and relationships and ultimately upon performance. Responses of this nature also acknowledged the challenges faced by senior managers in their implementation of relevant initiatives, such as employee inertia or cynicism.

The strongest responses provided clear evidence of how the managers actively role model and 'walk the talk' and how this role modelling delivers significantly more value than rhetoric - delivering a flow-through benefit that contributes to a positive employee attitude.

As with Question 3, this question was an opportunity to share best practice, innovation and a non-traditional approach; weaker responses tended towards generic commentary with little or no direct linkage to site-specific activities.

## **Question 9**

**Describe how the potential for work-related stress is identified and subsequently managed at this site.**

This question was designed to explore how stress at work is identified and managed at the specific site concerned.

The strongest responses to this question were often divided into two parts - identification and management. This approach generally promoted the necessary balance between these different aspects of the question and fuller coverage of the significant points. As with most other questions, higher-scoring applicants responded here by ensuring that the points being covered were of direct relevance to the site and provided clear and relevant accompanying examples to illustrate.

In order to score well, this question required applicants to discuss the identification tools used and to provide examples (i.e. stress risk assessment) and to then build on this through discussion of how the findings are then managed - again, with appropriate examples, (e.g. counselling, employee assistance programme, referral to a specialist). It was important for the whole response to remain relevant throughout and remain within a wider mental health context in order to score high marks.

Weaker responses tended to focus a single aspect (typically identification or management) or neglected to discuss this in the context of a wider health risk assessment approach or mental health landscape – resulting in a weaker response or one that lacked sufficient context.

## **Question 10**

**Explain the process for determining the health, safety and welfare objectives for this site for 2017 and outline the different factors considered.**

As with several other questions, the flexibility provided here to applicants offered the potential to score highly - though again, only where the marking scheme was followed and an appropriate rationale included within the response.

The highest-scoring applicants generally answered this question in full by identifying the health, safety and welfare targets appropriate for the forthcoming 12 months (i.e. 2017). These applicants listed health, safety and welfare targets, addressed the specifics of the site and clearly linked their response to delivery within a 2017 timeframe. As with previous Awards, it was notable that such responses often linked back to other key business priorities, such as a HR priority to improve talent (e.g. the associated health and safety priority being to up-skill manager health and safety competence, resulting in both enhanced competence and talent within the management population).

Strong responses to this question also presented a clear series of targets that were realistic and

achievable. The highest-scoring responses made a link to overarching 'SMART' targets and objectives for 2017 (SMART being Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound), avoided reference to 2016 or earlier and detailed specific timeframes and individual responsibilities.

Weaker responses to this question tended to list activities, rather than targets or SMART objectives. Responses of this nature often resembled a 'to do' task list of activities with limited accompanying rationale, overarching theme, timeframe or clarity of direction. Here, the absence of a coherent strategy or apparent 'direction of travel' meant that the organisation's objectives and targets in these important areas were difficult to determine with the precision that is required.

### **Question 11**

**Describe how the effective participation of employees in relation to the achievement of health, safety and welfare objectives for this site will be achieved in 2017.**

This question was designed to explore the methods employed in communicating change to the wider workforce (e.g. employees, contractors, temporary staff, agency staff, etc.) and obtaining their participation; effective communication, engagement and employee inclusion are essential in achieving any business objective and all are of direct relevance to good health and safety management. Stronger responses demonstrated an appreciation of these factors, referenced the use of different engagement tools (face-to-face, written, etc.) and detailed examples of how their organisation had 'gone the extra mile' to communicate their strategy and targets (e.g. open days, drop-in sessions, away days, seminars, safety days, quizzes, competitions, etc.). The highest-scoring responses provided examples where solutions to achieving targets had been co-created between management, supervision, front-line employees and (where appropriate) union involvement/wider consultation.

Regrettably, weaker applicants tended towards 'telling' rather than 'selling' the message to employees and did not appear to understand the engagement aspect (opting instead for a more directive approach). Responses of this nature often also omitted reference to the various channels that can be used in communicating targets and the associated change and failed to recognise that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is ineffective. To illustrate, the use of the company intranet is inappropriate for those employees without easy access to a computer - such as delivery driver out on the road or a tower crane operator, or those with limited literacy skills/non-native speakers.

Highest-scoring applicants made reference to either a two-way dialogue or the use of more innovative methods of communication that demonstrated that they did not rely solely on the traditional channels of newsletters, emails and briefings. Examples of this included employee huddles, tool box talks and personal letters sent to employees at home (i.e. to read in their own time, with the complicated language often associated with legislation and policy simplified) as some of the approaches used to personalise the change and gain better buy-in toward achieving the targets set.

### **Question 12**

**Describe how the effective management of health, safety and welfare issues at this site will enhance and support the organisation's continual improvement.**

Applicants were called upon to discuss how effective management of health, safety and welfare matters reflected effective operational management overall and how this approach made for a more sustainable business in the future. Higher-scoring responses included commentary on how success in the areas of health, safety and welfare was reflected in strong business performance and vice versa. The Health &

Safety Executive (HSE) in the United Kingdom, for instance, continue to promote their '*Good Safety is Good Business*'<sup>1</sup> philosophy. Question 12 explored this general principle and reinforced the importance of safety, health and welfare being integrated into the operation to achieve maximum benefit.

Regrettably, there were a number of very brief and rather generic answers to this question which neglected important aspects of effectiveness analysis. In order to achieve high marks, applicants needed to both associate their response across the range (i.e. health, safety and welfare) and also explore how this contributed to continuous improvement together with relevant accompanying examples.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hse.gov.uk/business/business-benefits.htm>