



IT'S THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS

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NZAS believes its health and safety priority is reflected in well-organised work areas, proactively maintained equipment, innovative process design, reduced manual handling and a company focus on wellness. The business has seen many benefits from this approach, including improved health and safety as well as increased plant productivity. The workers are fitter, they find the work less strenuous, they feel valued, and there are fewer equipment breakdowns.

As a result, NZAS feels that workers understand that good safety performance has many additional benefits both for themselves and the business. As Kevin explains, *"We haven't done any work that's been a bolt-on and then discarded if it didn't work. What we do, we do for a valid reason, give it time to imbed... And we do it as well as, not instead of."*



WHY HEALTH AND SAFETY IS IMPORTANT

NZAS believes it turned its health and safety performance around by realising that health and safety cannot be separated from productivity and cost, and that the best ideas can often come from the shop floor.

WHEN WE IMPROVED OUR HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES, WE SAW AN IMPROVEMENT ACROSS THE BOARD ON ALL OUR KEY METRICS

In the 1970s and 1980s, NZAS felt a negative work culture had developed where injuries were seen as almost inevitable. This culture was primarily focused on cost and productivity, despite accumulating an injury record of up to 200 people a year. The management approach was top-down, and staff had little or no input into work processes or daily operations. As HSE Manager Kevin Taylor says, *"The focus was on the old Kiwi adage—get in, show a bit of Kiwi ingenuity, and get it done. The injury statistics reflected that we didn't have a high enough emphasis on safety."*

Operations at NZAS are very different now, with about one recorded injury a year that results in lost productivity. Health and safety is seen as a critical part of the company's performance,

and to further this dramatic improvement, the company is still working to do better with a goal of zero workplace injuries or illnesses.

International and local motivations also reinforce NZAS's focus on good health and safety. As part of an international corporation, NZAS feels it needs to keep pace with the best plants from around the world. And locally, Southland has a tight labour market and an ageing workforce, making health and safety a key part of recruiting and retaining good staff.

"Because you can't separate safety and health, and environmental performance from productivity and cost, when we improved our health and safety procedures, we saw an improvement across the board on all our key metrics, including safety, including the environment, including communities, as well as seeing a direct improvement in cost and profitability," says general manager Paul Hemburrow.



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IT'S A TEAM APPROACH

The performance enhancement programme was launched to increase and improve employee participation at NZAS. The programme is about getting ideas from the shop floor and identifying how they can be put into action. Over 10,000 ideas have been generated, with 5,000 being fully analysed and over 1,000 implemented. As Kevin says, *"Personnel at all levels have genuinely contributed to the safety effort. Staff have 'buy in' to the new processes and are seeing their suggestions incorporated in their working lives."*

THINGS ARE NOW MILES BETTER, THE WHOLE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE PLACE. EVERYTHING'S DIFFERENT.

One initiative from the shop floor was originally driven by health and safety, but has subsequently delivered both safety and productivity benefits. By taking an innovative approach to part of the manufacturing process, workers no longer needed to work long shifts in a hot, noisy and dusty environment. By taking this process offline, they have created a more pleasant environment, increased crane use, cut down manual handling and dramatically improved the

shift pattern. This process used to take up to seven days and can now be achieved in less than 24 hours.

The safety leadership development programme is an NZAS initiative that creates a common understanding of what it takes to be a good safety leader. A person can go online, assess their knowledge and then use those skills. The management team recognise that the programme has built a culture of inclusion and ensures consistent safety knowledge across the business. Health and safety representative Tom Hackett agrees that staff are *"always looking for ways to improve their daily jobs... Things are now miles better, the whole psychology of the place. Everything's different."*

CASE STUDY



HEALTH AND SAFETY

MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

FACT FILE

COMPANY	New Zealand Aluminium Smelters Limited (NZAS)
STAFF	920
LOCATION	Bluff, Southland
BUSINESS	Manufacturing

NEW ZEALAND ALUMINIUM SMELTERS LTD

An employer that invests time and energy in ensuring a safe and healthy workplace for their employees can reap the benefits in a myriad of ways. New Zealand Aluminium Smelters Limited (NZAS) has made a significant investment in improving its health and safety performance and serves as a good example of what such an investment can achieve.

NZAS converts alumina to primary aluminium products for the domestic and export markets. Situated in Southland on the Tiwai Peninsula near Bluff, NZAS has been operating since 1971. The company employs 787 full-time staff and 133 contractors, and produces approximately 340,000 tonnes of aluminium per year.

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Department of Labour
TE TARI MAHI



"PERSONNEL AT ALL LEVELS HAVE GENUINELY CONTRIBUTED TO THE SAFETY EFFORT."

IT'S ABOUT CREATING A POSITIVE, SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKPLACE CULTURE

NZAS employees are encouraged and supported to make a real difference and genuinely contribute to the safety effort and NZAS's business success.

General manager Paul Hemburrow acknowledges that aligning the culture of an organisation across nearly 1,000 people is a challenge, but the key is to give the workers the opportunity to contribute to that culture, to let people know their contributions are valued. Paul says, "At NZAS, we have a goal of zero injuries, and we know it can be achieved. To get there is an on-going journey, and when we get there, which we know we will, we'll have to keep making improvements so that we stay there."

IT'S ABOUT INVESTING IN YOUR STAFF

NZAS reports that workers are taking fewer sick days and are engaging more with the business. Achieving this with an ageing workforce has been no accident. To ensure the long-term health and wellbeing of their staff, NZAS invests in a wellness programme. This programme helps workers manage their lifestyle out of work so that, when they come to work, they have the energy and alertness to work in a safe, healthy and productive way.

Exercise and healthy eating are top of the agenda to help battle fatigue and to improve physical fitness. NZAS offers wellness assessments, regular medicals, on-going support and have introduced healthy food options in the canteen.

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KEY LEARNINGS

- You can't separate health and safety from productivity and cost. Integrated safety performance has many additional benefits, including staff retention, process efficiencies and reduced costs.
- Staff need to be involved in identifying opportunities for improvements in health and safety and productivity. They need to feel like they're making a difference.
- Positive workplace interaction is critical. You need to work together, fostering willingness in employees to create a culture of inclusion.
- The health and wellbeing of staff is as important as safety. The better the staff feel, the more easily they can do their jobs and the less likely they are to get injured.
- Improving health, safety and productivity is an on-going challenge. Targets, systems and processes need to continually improve. A business needs to be good at adopting improvement initiatives and sustaining them.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

INVESTMENT	RETURN
Safety leadership development programme	Builds staff capability and ownership around health and safety. Empowers leaders. Makes staff feel they are really making a difference.
Wellness programme	Staff feel valued. Staff taking fewer sick days and having fewer injuries. Improved staff retention. Community engagement by promoting health messages that are as important at work as at home.
Performance enhancement programme	Enhanced innovation and efficiency in existing processes. Staff feel they are directly contributing to business successes across health, safety and productivity. Improving levels of safety and productivity.



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