

hunter health
AUD \$5-7 MILLION SAVED THROUGH REDUCED WORKERS COMPENSATION PREMIUMS

DuPont Safety Resources
BUILDING A SAFER WORLD®

HUNTER HEALTH REDUCES INJURIES BY 50% AND SLASH WORKERS COMPENSATION COSTS BY MAKING SAFETY EVERYONE'S BUSINESS.

Based in the greater Newcastle area of New South Wales, Hunter Health is a major provider of public health care and a range of preventative, acute, community and support services in Australia. Managing 17 significant hospitals, three aged care facilities and a range of community care facilities, Hunter Health is the region's largest employer with over 9,000 employees.

CHALLENGE

When DuPont partnered with Hunter Health, the organisation had experienced over 500 lost time injuries and 846 workers compensation claims over a 12 month period. Of significant concern was escalating workers compensation costs, which had forced the reduction of services, increased delays in elective procedures and compromised patient care.

As the CEO of Hunter Health, Professor Katherine McGrath recognised there was a real business need to improve this performance and to use safety as a catalyst to achieve a step change in culture and behaviour across the organisation. In particular, shifting the focus to the prevention of injuries would enhance both financial and human outcomes.

"Deep concern about injuries to our staff and the loss of resources that could be spent on health services precipitated our call to DuPont," explains Professor McGrath. "Our benchmark target for Lost Time Injury rates was falling more rapidly than we were improving, so the premium gap was widening."

SOLUTION

DuPont and Hunter Health worked together to create a sustainable safety excellence journey that would address the needs of all stakeholders, including employees, clinicians, contractors, visiting public and community members. Importantly, Hunter Health were committed to the philosophy that all accidents are preventable and the concept that all stakeholders needed to become more personally aware and accountable for safety if change was to occur.

"Rather than having a single manager that is accountable for the safety of the entire organisation, we decided the prevention of injuries should be a core requirement for all line management," says Daryll Hadfield, Hunter Health's Director of Human Resources.



HUNTER HEALTH
Improving Health in the Hunter



The miracles of science®

DuPont applied the principles that underpin their world-class safety performance to meet the unique needs of a healthcare environment. A series of customised training and coaching activities were developed for employees across all levels which focused on Hunter Health's main safety concerns of manual handling, occupational violence, infectious risks, stress and emergency response procedures.

In addition, a number of strategies were implemented to encourage all stakeholders to adhere to Hunter Health's safety vision on a day-to-day basis. These include:

- Improved communication of safety policies, expectations and performance
- Development of safety plans across all levels of the organisation
- Improved auditing of safety systems and processes to measure and manage effectiveness
- Ensuring non-compliance with safety expectations was addressed promptly
- Reward and recognition strategies for safe behaviours
- Creation of the Hunter Health Area Safety Committee, which brings together a cross-section of employees to analyse and discuss safety issues and liaise directly with the Senior Management team
- Renewed focus at the front-line level to ensure the safety message is clearly understood
- Improved case management of injured employees

As the safety excellence journey progressed, the visibility of senior leadership and their personal involvement and commitment to safety became a significant influence in the reduction of injuries and workers compensation costs. Through the establishment and monitoring of standards and expectations, instigating quality incident investigations and follow-up, developing personal safety action plans and actively encouraging employee dialogue, safety became a key leadership priority.

Frank Cordingly, Director of Corporate Services, reflects on the cultural shift he has witnessed at Hunter Health. "Safety is now one of the top two to three issues in the minds of all management. Staff and management have internalised and personalised safety - we are all accountable."

Prior to partnering with DuPont, Hunter Health's focus was very much on managing workers compensation costs, not injury prevention. "We concentrated on patient care and minimising workers compensation exposure by getting staff back to work after an accident," says Daryll Hadfield. "DuPont helped us turn this around to focus on prevention rather than return to work. They have helped us realise that safety is achievable - it is possible to operate at zero injuries."

RESULTS

Since partnering with DuPont, Hunter Health has achieved a remarkable improvement in their safety performance. Injuries have been reduced by over 50% and approximately AUD\$5 to \$7 million has already been saved through reduced workers compensation premiums. The improvements in safety freed up to AUD\$5 million for investment into Hunter Health's strategic technology plan, which has delivered tremendous efficiencies and benefits to patient care.

"DuPont helped us realise and articulate that no accidents are acceptable" says Professor McGrath. "DuPont brought tremendous rigour to the way we managed safety throughout the entire organisation." Patient safety, quality of care and corporate image have also greatly benefited from the commitment to employee safety and Hunter Health now enjoys a reputation of being a leader in the field of providing a safe workplace in the healthcare industry.

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