



Your New Year's safety resolutions

“If you cannot **measure** it, you cannot **improve** it.” — *Lord Kelvin*

A new year brings new beginnings and time to reflect. What did we accomplish last year, and what do we want to accomplish in the year ahead? It is the perfect opportunity to review the activities of the previous year and use that information to set health and safety targets and objectives for the upcoming year.

As Lord Kelvin once said, “if you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it.” That’s why modern health and safety practice uses performance measures. Without clearly defined performance measures, it is difficult to show that your health and safety system is working. The measures provide quantifiable information about your progress towards a goal and help to identify trends. When monitored regularly they also let you detect quickly when something is heading off track.

When deciding what measures to use, you should consider the areas that are most important to your health and safety performance and then commit to tracking and reviewing these measures. Performance measures should be

- chosen objectively
- reliably measurable
- broadly applicable.

All measures should be broken down into simple and understandable terms so they can be explained easily to all staff. Measures should also include both leading and lagging indicators.

Leading and lagging indicators

Leading indicators are conditions and activities that precede and affect the occurrence of workplace injuries and illness. They can uncover weak areas before something serious happens. Leading indicators should be a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data. Some examples of leading indicators are hazard and near-miss reporting, workplace inspections, site visits, training hours, and audit findings.

Lagging indicators measure the safety of a workplace in hindsight. They are helpful for learning from what has already happened, but they are not clues to something that may be unsafe now. Some examples of lagging indicators are number of medical-aid incidents, number of lost-time and non-lost-time injuries, and frequency rates of lost-time injuries.

All the measures should be consistent with the organization’s health and safety policy and should be based on reviews of the health and safety system. Each measure should be clearly defined, and the responsibility for tracking it should be assigned to an individual or group.

There should be a schedule for regular reviews of each measure to ensure that they continue to reflect the desired improvements in health and safety performance. It is also important that the data be gathered the same way and from the same source every time it is being reviewed.