

# A guide to running successful **Safety Hour** sessions



## Safety Hours... why bother?

Safety Hour sessions help all of us to gain a better understanding of the business, the things we do, and to learn from experiences, issues and events. Holding a Safety Hour session enables you to take time to have a discussion with your team on a relevant safety topic, experience or you can incorporate planned works. The aim is to support personal ownership, and help everyone to take responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others.

## Why was the Safety Hour initiative introduced?

Safety Hour sessions were introduced to improve communication and engagement between line managers and their teams; they puts the spotlight on safety, and what we can do to ensure everyone gets home safe every day. Safety Hour allows time for individuals to ask questions and discuss safety issues that affect them. It also enables individuals to look at safety events and relate those events to their own roles with a view to reduce risk and improve safety moving forward..

## What is this guide for?

This guide is designed to be a one-stop shop for anything you need to know about Safety Hour, including an introduction to the documents designed to support the process, top tips and an overview of the resources available to support you when hosting a Safety Hour.



## What is the difference between a Safety Hour and a safety conversation?

Ultimately there is no difference between a Safety Hour and a safety conversation, other than the positioning of their delivery within the business.

### Similarities - Safety Hours and safety conversations both:

- ✓ Encourage two-way conversations
- ✓ Are both discussions on relevant and local issues
- ✓ Focus on behaviours, learning and improvement
- ✓ Are based on observation, unsafe acts or a challenge around future behaviour or recognition of positive, safe, behaviour
- ✓ Focus on the solutions – *what can we do to change this?*
- ✓ They can happen at any time when safety is the topic of discussion
- ✓ Ask the questions
  - ✓ *How might this impact us?*
  - ✓ *How do our actions influence others?*
  - ✓ *Do we make decisions or changes that could affect the safety of others?*

### Differences -

Safety Hour	Safety Conversation
Aimed at teams	Aimed at 1 - 2 people
Is a planned time to discuss safety	Can be unplanned
Allows an hour	No time allocation – could be a brief chat



## What is the difference between a Safety Hour and a safety brief?

**Safety Hour** = An open discussion (ask and listen) and action plan. It is a proactive, solution focused, approach that encourages everyone to take ownership of the change we want to see.

**Safety Brief** = Often hosted as a presentation, a brief is one way communication (tell). It is a reactive, traditional knowledge import method of communication.

## What is the difference between a Safety Hour and a stand-down?

**Safety Hour** = open discussion (ask and listen) and action plan. You decide on the topic and the flow of the session.

**Stand Down** = key safety event to share learning, can be done within a Safety Hour. This is normally designed with a set format for you to follow, with a suite of resources available to support delivery. Facilitators will usually be asked to provide qualitative feedback following a Stand Down.

## What topics should I use for my safety hour session?

Topics are your choice and should be relevant to your team. Think about what is current to your teams situation, for example:

- Recent close calls
- An incident
- An issue raised by a team member
- Upcoming works
- An example of good practice
- Safety communications



## How often should Safety Hour sessions be taking place?

- ✓ The majority these sessions should be weekly
- ✓ They can be split over the week for example 1x 1 hour, 2 x 30 minutes or 4 x 15 minutes sessions

If your role requires a more flexible approach:

- ✓ Find Safety Hour sessions local to you – there are timetables across all parts of Network Rail
- ✓ Include time in other planned meetings where a discussion on safety can be held

## What should I be recording as part of my Safety Hour?

### Actions and commitments

Safety Hour actions and commitments can be recorded in the Safety Hour Record template can be used to track and discuss your team as all sessions. These records will show you and your team the improvements you are making to ensure you and your team are safe.

### Attendance numbers

In terms of reporting against KPI's, the number of attendees should be recorded and, a percentage of employee attendance reported each week. Each route has a designated contact for you to send your weekly numbers to

## Who should I be sending my Safety Hour data to?

Each Route or Function should be collating their own Safety Hour reports. This is to be determined within the individual teams. For all of the Routes this is reported back to meet agreed KPI's and displayed on visualisation boards. Some areas of the business are yet to report back on Safety Hours; but this is something that they will look to introduce moving forward.

## What are the organisational targets for Safety Hour?

The Safety Hour KPIs are to achieve 75 % attendance at Safety Hours each week. These are collated locally and shown on vision boards.

# Supporting Safety Hour documentation

(all accessible on Safety Central)

## Safety Hour Framework

The framework provides a guide to the format of a Safety Hour session; suggesting areas that should be covered as well as resources that can provide a good source of content for discussions as required.

## Attendance, action and commitment tracker

This template is designed to capture the time, date and location of the briefing as well as the number of attendees, any actions and commitments that are made during the Safety Hour session. This should be reviewed by the team as actions are completed and outcomes can be discussed.

Some Routes and other business functions have their own trackers.

## Attendance register

An attendance register is available to capture details of individual employees. This only needs to be used if it's useful to you.

## Discussion Pack template

This template has been created to capture a topic and enable discussion as part of a Safety Hour. This can be shared centrally via Safety Central to make this topic available to colleagues across the business to prevent duplications.

If you have a topic you would like to discuss as part of a Safety Hour and would like our support to create the materials, please contact [amy.murphy@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:amy.murphy@networkrail.co.uk)

**Safety Hour Framework**

Safety Hour is a vital tool to help you stay away from the day-to-day tasks to have an engaging discussion around safety. The framework is not set in stone, the aim is to provide a good foundation when holding a session.

Despite being called the Safety Hour – it is the value of the discussion that is most important. Some teams choose to host one one-hour session per week, whilst others will have four fifteen minute sessions in a week.

An example agenda for a one-hour Safety Hour is shown below.

Example Agenda	Review last Safety Hour's actions
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have they been completed?</li> <li>What was the outcome?</li> <li>Is there a good/motivating practice story that could be shared and recognised to help others?</li> </ul>
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible discussion points</li> <li>Case Call stories</li> <li>Safety Subject, alerts or notices</li> <li>Safety moment – any recent accident, near miss etc. that a member of the team would like to discuss</li> <li>Review of risk plans, anything of concern or to be challenged?</li> <li>Looking for solutions – is there anything we can do to make a difference?</li> </ul>
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible sources for content</li> <li>Centrally produced discussion packs available on Safety Central</li> <li>Safety Subject, alerts or notices</li> <li>Organisational health messages</li> <li>Team members</li> <li>Safety Central resource library</li> </ul>
15 minutes	Record any actions and commitments that are being taken away along with beneficial feedback to be given to the team where appropriate

**Safety Hour attendance**

Date/Time	
Location	
Facilitator	
No. of attendees*	

**Safety Hour actions and commitments**

Actions/Commitment	Owner	Timeframe	Action taken	Completed?

\*The number of attendees is the reportable part of a Safety Hour.

**Safety Hour Discussion Pack**

Topic: what is your topic?

**Purpose of the discussion:** why has this been chosen as a Safety Hour topic? Is there a risk, accident or change that the team need to be aware of?

Discussion points	Supporting notes
Question?	
Question?	

# Top Ten Tips For Safety Hour

## Facilitators

### Prepare

- What outcome do you want?
- What equipment/materials do you need?
- How many are in your group and who are they?
- Prepare yourself – are you in the right frame of mind? People will know!

### Set the scene

- Tell the group who you are, what you do and why your holding this Safety Hour
- Position the outcome you're working towards
- Explain how the session will run – how is it different from a brief?
- Encourage participation throughout

### Ask appropriate questions

- Open questions get the conversation started – Who, What, When, Why and How?
- Probing questions get the detail – Tell me more, Explain, Can you describe?
- Close questions get a summary and agreement – Did you, Can you?

### Use the tools

- What can you do to maintain pace and interest in a longer session?
- Use small group discussion and feedback
- Consider different supporting materials – images, videos, games, activities
- Use the help of a second facilitator

### Listen to understand

- Leave your personal opinion at the door!
- The knowledge is the room – your task is to help the group to find it and use it
- Reflect back – use the groups words to check you really did understand
- Record actions and commitments and recap

### Ask yourself 'How am I helping here?'

- Reflect on how you are doing whilst facilitating
- How are you currently supporting the conversation and engagement in Safety Hour?
- Don't be afraid to challenge, or direct the process and conversation when you need to – an outcome needs to be achieved!

### What's working here?

- Build on the positives, and help the group to recognise them
- Help the group to find their own solutions and to take ownership for achieving these
- Don't play the blame game
- Make the topic relevant to your group

### What if no-one is participating?

- Re-phrase your question and try again
- Check that the group understood the purpose of the conversation
- Ask one or more friendly individuals a direct, open question
- Don't fear silence – they may just be thinking!

### What if they won't stop talking?

- You are there to help the group achieve an outcome so take control. Summarise the point, thank them for their input and then direct the group back on track with a relevant question – this avoids people going off on a tangent and controlling the discussion

### What if one person is dominating the conversation?

- Thank them for what they've had to say, and ask them to briefly sum it up in a couple of sentences. Thank them again and then ask the group for thoughts on what they have just heard

## Getting started

Here is a basic agenda for you to plan your Safety Hour session

### Beginning

- ✓ Introduction of session
- ✓ Purpose of session – *This sessions is about....*
- ✓ Desired outcome - *At the end I would like your commitments...*
- ✓ If it's your first session introduce your ground rules – working in the mess room you could always put this up on the wall
- ✓ Timing: How long it will take
- ✓ Review of Actions from previous Safety Hour sessions
- ✓ Overview of topic being covered

### Middle

- ✓ Ask questions that are
  - Open
  - Probing
  - Enquiring
  - Solution Focussed

### End

- ✓ Agreed Outcomes – *What we do differently as a result of this Safety Hour?*
- ✓ Actions – Use Tracker
- ✓ Next session
- ✓ Thank you for attending

### After Session

- ✓ Send numbers to your designated person
- ✓ Communicate your action plan:
  - Update absent team members
  - Escalate issues and suggestions for improvement
  - Allow time for improvements

# Safety Hour Facilitation

## Opening a Safety Hour session:

In order to engage your audience from the start:

1. Ask them to break into small groups (4-5 people per group) and then ask them to discuss between themselves what they believe are the most significant risks/hazards that they see in carrying out their roles
2. Ask them to share their findings with the room (recording them on a flip chart for all to see) and encourage a group discussion around them, asking open questions to encourage greater exploration of these topics
3. Ask them to collectively rank them to see if there are any that everyone registers as an issue. If there is, suggest that as your first topic for the Safety Hour, if there isn't reach a consensus about which one to explore.
4. If there is a group of people in the room for whom there is a key issue and a group for whom it is not directly relevant, split them up into their two respective groups and ask them to explore the issue with an emphasis on what questions would the two groups ask in order to find a potential solution. With people for whom this is not an issue this is an opportunity to use fresh eyes to possibly inform those who know more about it

## Other ideas for starting a Safety Hour or moving on from the first exercise include:

Ask the group to pair up with people who have a mobile device and ask them to search any company website or medium (e.g. Connect) to find a safety related issue that they'd like to discuss. Get them to share what they find, record them on a flip chart and get a group consensus on which to explore.

# Ground rules of a Safety Hour

1. Have an open mind



2. Full participation



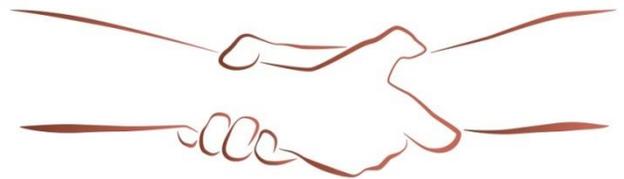
3. No mobiles



4. Commitment to change



5. Respect each other



## DO's of Safety Hour facilitation

- DO** choose a topic in advance
- DO** open up the topic and let the discussion flow
- DO** listen and ask open questions to check your understanding and encourage discussion
- DO** observe everyone in the room to ensure they are all participating
- DO** encourage the quieter team members to speak
- DO** be flexible and prepared to change the agenda
- DO** ask for support and ideas
- DO** make it fun!
- DO** record actions, commitments and follow up on these
- DO** look for solutions so that everyone can identify with their responsibility to be safe
- DO** report back on success and examples of best practice with other facilitators



## **DON'Ts** of Safety Hour facilitation

**DON'T** do all the talking or tell people what they should think

**DON'T** be rigid in your agenda

**DON'T** assume you know all the answers

**DON'T** let powerful personalities take over

**DON'T** just read from a safety brief or PowerPoint presentation

**DON'T** just create a list of what other people/teams should do

**DON'T** take things personally

**DON'T** defend disagreements – it's ok to think differently

**DON'T** host a Safety Hour at the end of a shift

**DON'T** judge people based on their comments



## DO's of Safety Hour participation

**DO** share your ideas – it may be something others haven't thought of before

**DO** suggest topics for discussion

## DON'Ts of Safety Hour participation

**DON'T** judge people based on their comments

**DON'T** takeover the conversation based on your own viewpoints

**DON'T** be afraid to speak freely

### Supporting others?

If you think there is a topic that would be great for a Safety Hour, please contact [safetycommunications@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:safetycommunications@networkrail.co.uk) to discuss the creation of a discussion pack, or to share the information you have used for your Safety Hour, as this may be useful for another team in their Safety Hours.



## DO's of Safety Hour materials

- DO** make use of local issues, Close Calls and events.
- DO** make use of Route Safety Cascades, Safety Bulletins, alerts and shared learning
- DO** utilise the Safety Hour discussion packs available on Safety Central
- DO** share your Safety Hour materials to allow us to make them available for colleagues
- DO** use easy to read, visually appealing and clear materials
- DO** consider seasonal topics i.e. winter driving



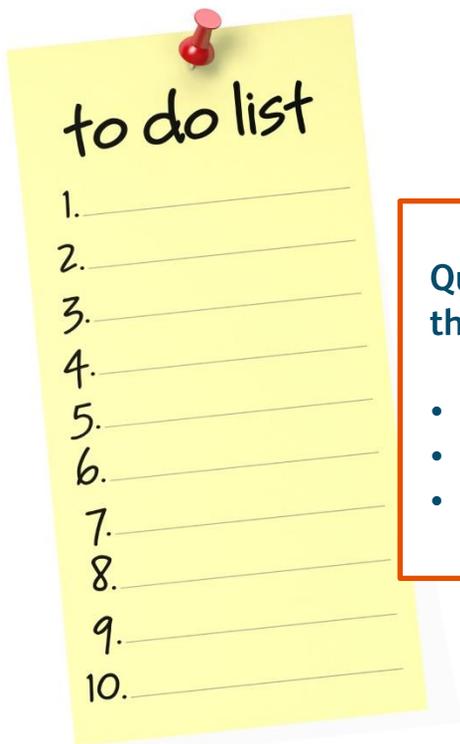
## DON'Ts of Safety Hour materials

**DON'T** rely on IT and powerpoint presentations

**DON'T** have more than 3 bullet points on a slide – we all prefer visuals!

**DON'T** make this a tick box exercise

**DON'T** use material that is not relevant to your team



**Quick wins... what materials are already available that I can use?**

- [Safety Hour discussion packs](#)
- [Safety Bulletins, Alerts and Advice](#)
- [Safety Central resource library](#)

# Safety Hour Facilitator Upskilling

As part of the national Home Safe project, there is support available for Safety Hour facilitators.

## Two Day Facilitator Training

Aimed at individuals who have had limited facilitator experience, who lack confidence in engaging a team and want ideas and resources to get started. This is a highly participative two days which gives individuals skills, knowledge and confidence to facilitate Safety Hour sessions effectively.

## One Day Facilitator Training

Aimed at experienced facilitators who just want a better understanding of the Safety Hour process and how to create topics and materials to engage their teams.

## Half Day Facilitator Coaching

Aimed at experienced facilitators there is the opportunity for you to work with a coach who will be happy to observe and give feedback of your Safety Hour session and to support both you the facilitator and your team to ensure Safety Hour sessions are worthwhile to all involved.

If you would like more information or to discuss any of the above development sessions and would like our support, please contact

[Paula.Isherwood@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:Paula.Isherwood@networkrail.co.uk)



**everyone  
home safe  
every day**