

Fatigue management initiative takes out national health and safety award

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, Wednesday 18 June 2025

The development of guidelines to manage the risk of worker fatigue at the country's ports has seen the Port Industry Fatigue Working Group take overall honours at this year's New Zealand Workplace Health and Safety Awards.

Fatigue is a significant risk given the 24/7 dynamic nature of port work. The Working Group saw 28 organisations work together in consultation with international experts to develop the sector's first fatigue risk management system guidelines and an implementation plan to put them into effect.

The awards were presented at a gala dinner at the Viaduct Events Centre in Auckland last night.

The awards, which began in 2005, are organised by Thomson Reuters, publisher of Safeguard magazine, and proudly supported by WorkSafe New Zealand and ACC.

Safeguard editor Peter Bateman, convenor of the five-person judging panel, said the Port Industry Fatigue Working Group's efforts are an inspiration to other industry sectors seeking to tackle their own challenging risks.

"This sector group brought together a disparate group of players historically at loggerheads – port companies, stevedoring and marshalling companies, container depot operators, unions, a regulator – and united them in a successful effort to tackle a long-standing and previously intractable problem."

The winners are:

The WorkSafe New Zealand/ACC best overall contribution to improving workplace health and safety in New Zealand

Port Industry Fatigue Working Group (winner of the Collaboration category)

SAFETY (sponsored by Dentons)

Fonterra Whareroa

The site replaced its chilling process with a new plant featuring five refrigeration units, reducing ammonia use from 27 tonnes to 1.5 tonnes and halving chlorine. Electric forklifts decreased LPG storage, enhancing safety for workers and the community.

HEALTH (sponsored by HSI Donesafe)

Stevenson Aggregates

An audit at Drury quarry found high silica dust exposure despite existing measures. A customised dust suppression system using compressed air, water, and atomizing nozzles was developed, reducing airborne silica dust levels at the primary plant by 90%.

WELLBEING (sponsored by Vitae)

NZ Post

Used a psychosocial risk framework to align wellbeing with physical hazard risk programs. Trained facilitators helped 43 teams identify factors affecting psychological wellbeing, leading to work redesign and significant improvements in risk factors.

ENGAGEMENT (sponsored by NZ Safety Blackwoods)*Comvita*

Adopted co-design, learning teams, plain language guides, and a distributed leadership model called the Safety Hive to help transform its safety culture, improve audit results, and reduce injuries.

INNOVATION (sponsored by Anthony Harper)*Dairy NZ*

Sprains and strains account for 40% of dairy farmers' injury claims, prompting a survey of 370 farmers. Three co-design workshops with experts led to the development and successful farm trials of prototypes like a calf trailer gate and an easy-lift bucket trolley.

SAFETY-II (Sponsored by HSE Global)*Department of Corrections*

Adopted HOP principles and Learning Teams to improve engagement and efficiency, supported by tools like templates and a question-bank, leading to better reviews and positive feedback.

COLLABORATION (Sponsored by IMPAC)*Port Industry Fatigue Working Group*

A group of 28 organisations developed Fatigue Risk Management System guidelines, which have been widely adopted, with most companies well progressed in their implementation journey.

GOVERNANCE (Sponsored by NZAAE)*Ministry for Primary Industries*

Identified the need for better governance oversight of critical risk controls. A comprehensive programme using a high-trust model and the three lines of assurance framework was implemented, proving the efficacy of controls like body worn cameras.

LEADERSHIP (Sponsored by ACC)*Coda Group*

Implemented advanced in-cab camera systems with 24/7 monitoring and mandated this technology across its transport network, leading to a significant decrease in fatigue and distraction-related incidents.

PRACTITIONER (Sponsored by NZISM)*Jo Bradley, C3*

Transformed risk control audits into learning reviews, and collaborated on safety improvements like grapple designs and auto tally systems.

EMERGING PRACTITIONER (Sponsored by edenfx HSE Global People)

Brittney O'Hanlon, Air New Zealand

Led a project to trial electric wheelchair solutions to reduce manual handling, tested powered aisle chairs for boarding ramps, and trained HSRs with customised programmes.

REPRESENTATIVE (Sponsored by Safeguard)

Beth Williamson, Boffa Miskell

Enabled a safe system for a crew working remotely and set higher expectations in high-risk activities like weed spraying, helicopter use, remote camping, and predator control.

MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPION (Sponsored by Site Safe)

Pauline Cox, NZ Post

Developed a psychological risk framework and conducted workshops with multiple teams to enhance work design and psychological wellbeing.

LEADER (Sponsored by Business Leaders' Health & Safety Forum)

Richard Marshall, Air New Zealand

Championed investments in traffic management and safety, commissioned a formal psychosocial hazard analysis, and revamped procurement practices to prioritise safety.

JUDGES' COMMENDATION AWARD (Sponsored by ecoPortal)

Land Search and Rescue Peer Support Network

A volunteer-run initiative which offers support to volunteers facing trauma during search missions. Network volunteers are trained in a variety of stress scenarios and, being LandSAR volunteers themselves, fully understand the potential for exposure to trauma. In 2025, 3480 conversations are projected, with 120 being potentially life-saving.

McConnell Dowell

The upgrade of Tonga's Queen Sālote Wharf helped lift health & safety standards. With 130 Tongans comprising 80% of the workforce, the project offered essential safety training and fostered a safety-first culture. The workforce was highly engaged and achieved 800,000 incident-free working hours while lifting local industry standards.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS (Sponsored by Woolworths New Zealand)

Felicity Lamm

For her academic work as a researcher, teacher and inspirational mentor and for using her networking ability to help strengthen the health & safety ecosystem, always with the goal of improving conditions for workers.

George Adams

For his efforts in influencing leaders to better understand how health & safety underpins organisational performance and for helping to initiate positive change in the forestry sector via his chairing of the Independent Forestry Safety Review.

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