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The LifeCare Newsletter

Health Checks & WorkSafe Obligations: What You Need to Know

Mid-Year Check-In on Workplace Health Compliance



Kia Ora!

We're halfway through 2025, making it a great time to pause and review how your workplace is tracking against key WorkSafe health monitoring obligations.

If your teams are exposed to health risks, such as noise, dust, chemicals, or repetitive strain, health monitoring isn't just best practise, it's a legal requirement.

This newsletter is here to help clarify what WorkSafe expects and how you can meet those standards in a practical, effective way.

What Does WorkSafe Require?

Under the **Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA)**, businesses and organisations (PCBUs) are required to **protect and monitor the health and safety of their workers** when there is a **risk of harm to themselves or others**.



Determining the Need for Health Monitoring

To identify whether health monitoring is required, a PCBU should first conduct a workplace risk assessment. This process not only evaluates potential exposures to work-related risks but also considers whether workers may have underlying health concerns that could pose risks to themselves or others. This involves:

- Reviewing the nature of work tasks and environments
- Identifying known or potential exposure to hazards such as chemicals, dust, solvents, and noise
- Drawing on historical health data, incident reports, and consultations with staff

Monitoring is generally expected when:

- Health risks are identifiable
- Significant exposure could result in serious illness or injury over time
- Monitoring can detect early signs of health effects before symptoms become severe
- Effectiveness of existing control measures needs verification (e.g., PPE or engineering solutions such as silencers, noise barriers, etc)

Health monitoring may be particularly relevant in workplaces where:

- Hazardous substances like solvents, dust, or fumes are used
- Physical hazards such as high noise levels, repetitive movements or heavy lifting exist
- Workers have raised health concerns, or there's a history of health-related incidents



Even in cases where there is no explicit regulatory obligation, employers should still consider health monitoring where credible risks to self or others are present and where validated medical tests can detect associated health effects. This precautionary approach supports both legal compliance and worker wellbeing.

How to Build a Compliant Monitoring Programme



1. Conduct a Risk Assessment

Start with identifying all potential hazards, such as exposure to chemicals or noise. Review work processes, roles, and environments.

Example: **Reviewing Work Tasks and Environments**
Scenario: **A mid-sized furniture manufacturing company**

Work Tasks:

- Employees use table saws, sanders, and spray guns.
- Tasks involve prolonged standing, repetitive arm movements, and lifting heavy timber.

Work Environments:

- Enclosed workshop with limited ventilation
- High ambient noise from machinery
- Presence of fine wood dust and chemical fumes from finishing sprays

Assessment Outcome:

- Identified risks: noise-induced hearing loss, respiratory issues from dust and fumes, and musculoskeletal strain from repetitive tasks.
- **Conclusion: The business needs to implement regular audiometry (hearing) tests, spirometry (lung function) monitoring, and musculoskeletal assessments as part of a health monitoring programme.**



2. Engage Workers

Involving and educating workers helps ensure transparency and builds trust. WorkSafe encourages consultation and informed consent.

3. Choose a Qualified Provider

Engage health providers who have a proven track record delivering health monitoring across various industries and company sizes.

LifeCare delivers health screening to over 30,000 individuals in their workplaces annually. We use a **blended delivery model** that combines the skills of both **Occupational Health Nurses** and **Allied Health Practitioners**, ensuring flexibility appropriate to your business needs and clinical depth.

Our Clinical Governance team oversees the training, service delivery, and reporting standards for all health programmes. Our comprehensive Health Hub gives clients access to secure, dynamic health monitoring reports within 24 hours of service delivery. These reports present health results in more detail, deterioration over time and are benchmarked against our global data set, allowing clients to compare their organisation's performance against industry averages.

4. Determine What to Monitor

This might include:

- Hearing (audiometry)
- Lung function (spirometry)
- Vision
- Blood pressure
- Fatigue
- Functional Capacity and Musculoskeletal assessments or
- Skin checks, depending on the hazard profile

5. Maintain Confidential Records

Ensure data privacy is maintained. Results should be stored securely, and access should be limited to authorised personnel.



6. Respond to Results

If issues are identified, take appropriate steps. This might involve changing processes, updating PPE, or further investigation on whether an employee is safe to continue to work in their current environment.

7. Communicate Outcomes

Share general findings (while maintaining confidentiality) to demonstrate commitment to workplace health and to foster continuous improvement.

Spotlight on Musculoskeletal Risk and New WorkSafe Tools

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) remain one of the leading causes of work-related ill health in New Zealand. In a recent update, WorkSafe released new manual tasks screening tools and risk assessments to help PCBUs better identify and manage musculoskeletal risks in their workplaces.

You can access these tools on WorkSafe's official site: [Manual tasks screening tools and risk assessments](#)

Using Functional Capacity Assessments (FCA) Effectively

LifeCare recommends incorporating Functional Capacity Assessments (FCA) as part of both pre-employment screening and ongoing health monitoring. These assessments provide an objective measure of a person's physical capabilities in relation to job demands.

Benefits of FCAs:

- Identify mismatches between a worker's abilities and the physical requirements of the role
- Prevent injury by modifying tasks or providing early intervention
- Improve hiring decisions by ensuring job-fit
- Track musculoskeletal health trends over time

Example: FCA in Health Monitoring

A construction company introduced FCAs for workers in physically demanding roles such as scaffolding and material handling. During routine monitoring, several team members reported early signs of lower back and knee weaknesses.

In response, the company implemented tailored warm-up protocols, introduced modified lifting techniques, and restructured work schedules to allow for better recovery between shifts. These measures helped mitigate injury risk and supported ongoing task performance, demonstrating how proactive assessment and response can sustain workforce capability and reduce musculoskeletal strain over time.



Integrating these assessments alongside WorkSafe's new guidance offers a proactive and evidence-based approach to musculoskeletal risk management.

Let's Talk About Hearing Protection

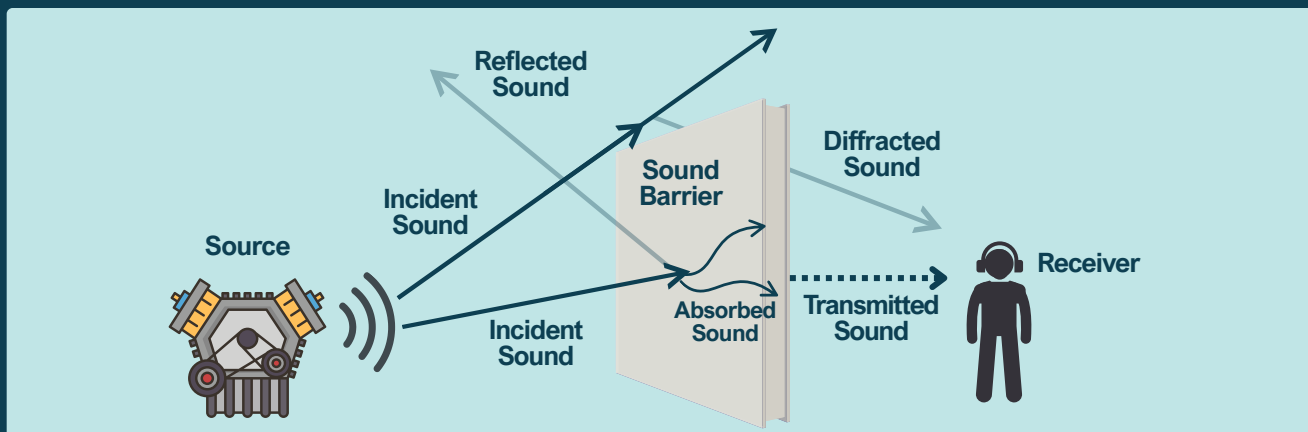


Did you know that hearing protection is actually the least effective way to manage noise risks? It should really only be used once you've done everything you can to eliminate the noise at its source or at least reduce how much exposure your workers have to it. That said, if noise levels at your workplace are still high even after controls, you must provide hearing protection and make sure your team knows how to use it properly. That includes fitting it correctly, knowing when to wear it, and understanding how to look after it.

Key Things to Know:

- **Noise Limits** - Employers must ensure that workers are not exposed to noise levels exceeding:
 - **85 dB(A)** over an 8-hour workday (average exposure)
 - **140 dB(C)** at any peak moment

If these levels are exceeded, employers are required to take action to manage the risk.



Hierarchy of Noise Control Measures - Employers should first attempt to:

- Eliminate the noise source entirely.
- Minimise exposure through engineering controls (e.g., silencers, sound barriers) or administrative controls (e.g., rotating tasks).
- Only after these steps should Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as earplugs or earmuffs, be considered.

Provision, Training and Supervision - Employers must:

- Provide hearing protection that is suitable for the specific noise levels and work environment.
- Maintain and replace hearing protection as needed.
- Ensure compatibility with other PPE being used.
- Train workers on how to protect their hearing in the workplace and outside, and the correct use, fit, care, and maintenance of hearing protection.
- Supervise to ensure hearing protection is worn correctly and consistently when required.

Hearing Checks Are a Must - For workers exposed to hazardous noise levels:

- Arrange for **hearing testing** conducted by qualified providers.
- Begin testing within 3 months of initial exposure. Reference/baseline audiometry at the start of employment of any new employee who will be exposed to noise that exceeds the exposure limits, preferably before they are exposed to any noise in the workplace
- Repeat testing at regular intervals to monitor any changes in hearing ability

Additional Risk Areas: Vision, Lung Function & Blood Pressure

Beyond hearing, WorkSafe NZ also recognises the importance of monitoring other health indicators, especially where specific tasks or environments create risks.

Vision Protection



Tasks involving flying particles, intense light, or chemical splashes, like welding, grinding, or chemical handling, can pose serious risks to eye health.

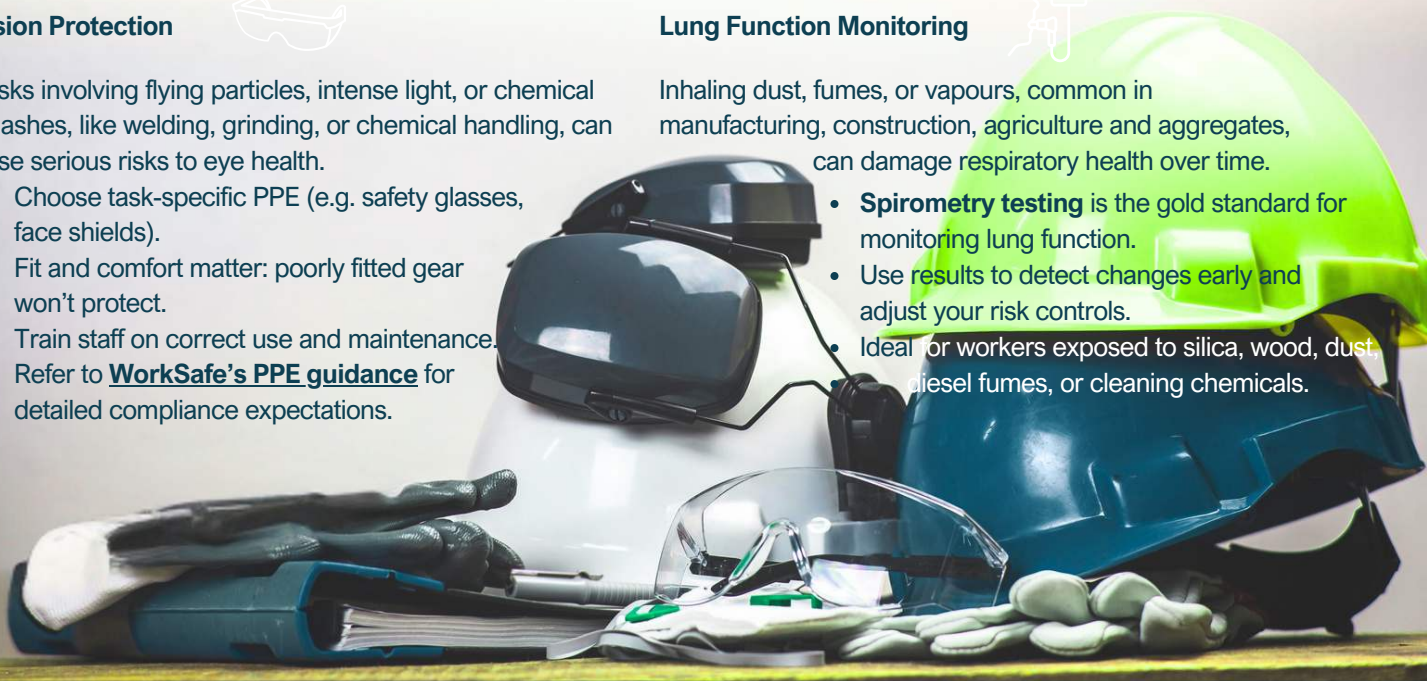
- Choose task-specific PPE (e.g. safety glasses, face shields).
- Fit and comfort matter: poorly fitted gear won't protect.
- Train staff on correct use and maintenance.
- Refer to [WorkSafe's PPE guidance](#) for detailed compliance expectations.

Lung Function Monitoring



Inhaling dust, fumes, or vapours, common in manufacturing, construction, agriculture and aggregates, can damage respiratory health over time.

- **Spirometry testing** is the gold standard for monitoring lung function.
- Use results to detect changes early and adjust your risk controls.
- Ideal for workers exposed to silica, wood, dust, diesel fumes, or cleaning chemicals.



Blood Pressure Monitoring

While often considered a general health metric, blood pressure can be influenced by occupational stress and exertion.

- High-stress or physically demanding roles (e.g. security, construction, logistics) may elevate risk.
- Blood pressure checks are simple to conduct and valuable for early detection of cardiovascular strain. Employees with unmanaged blood pressure are at a higher risk of medical emergencies, which could lead to accidents or sudden incapacity, endangering themselves and others around them.
- Results can also guide decisions in pre-employment health screening or task reassignment.

Incorporating these checks into your health monitoring approach shows commitment to holistic wellbeing of your workers and others who may be impacted by them i.e. Driver roles.

Your Quick Checklist:

- ✓ Do a proper risk assessment.
- ✓ Use the hierarchy of controls—eliminate, reduce, then protect.
- ✓ Offer the right PPE and maintain it well.
- ✓ Train your workers and check their understanding.
- ✓ Schedule regular health tests and act on the results.

Structuring Monitoring for Practical Use

An effective monitoring programme offers actionable insights. **Examples of practical use include:**

- Adjusting equipment or PPE
- Redesigning workflows
- Updating risk management protocols
- Ensuring medical referrals are followed through

Useful performance indicators:

- Participation rates in health monitoring
- Improvement in outcomes – Less people referred
- Trends in early signs of health impact
- Proportion of cases requiring further intervention



When and How Often Should Monitoring Occur?

Frequency should match the level of risk:

- **Baseline Checks:** At commencement of employment
- **Regular Monitoring:** Annually, or more frequently for high-risk roles or individuals with suboptimal results.
- **Reassessments:** After process changes or identified incidents

Qualified health providers like **LifeCare** can assist with general advice on appropriate intervals aligned with WorkSafe recommendations and industry sector models.

The Value of Exit Medicals



Another important but often overlooked aspect of workplace health monitoring is the Exit Medical. Conducting a health check when an employee leaves your business provides a snapshot of their health status at the end of employment.

This serves two key purposes:

- **Protecting your business** – It creates a clear medical record that helps mitigate future health-related claims linked to past employment.
- **Supporting worker wellbeing** – It gives employees clarity around any health issues that may have developed and encourages follow-up if needed.

Exit medicals are particularly relevant in high-risk industries where cumulative exposure may impact long-term health outcomes. Including them in your health monitoring programme adds an additional layer of **proactive risk management and legal protection**.



ACC Workplace Audit Considerations

In addition to WorkSafe obligations, some businesses may also be subject to ACC audits, particularly those participating in ACC's Accredited Employers Programme (AEP)

ACC expects employers to demonstrate strong health and safety systems, including:

- Comprehensive risk assessments for all roles
- Ongoing health monitoring for high-risk exposures (e.g., noise, dust, chemicals)
- Evidence of early intervention and injury prevention practices
- Confidential, well-documented health records

Audits may involve reviewing your health monitoring records, employee health outcomes, and your use of data to guide risk mitigation efforts. Employers failing to meet these standards may risk losing discounts or participation in incentive programmes.

- Aligning your health monitoring practices with both WorkSafe and ACC expectations, businesses can reduce injury risk, maintain compliance, and access financial incentives.

Taking the Next Steps

If you're responsible for health and safety in your organisation, consider the following:

- Are all roles with risk included in a monitoring programme?
- Do you have recent health records for at-risk employees?
- Are your monitoring processes aligned with WorkSafe's good practice guidelines?

Regular reviews and updates ensure your programme remains effective and compliant.

Health monitoring is a critical part of ensuring worker safety, particularly when exposure to risks cannot be eliminated entirely. Compliance with WorkSafe's expectations can help prevent long-term harm and supports a responsible health and safety culture. By following structured steps and referring to reputable guidance, employers can meet their obligations with clarity and confidence.

How LifeCare Can Support You

While this newsletter is focused on helping you understand your responsibilities; we also want to reassure you that there are trusted providers who can help.

At **LifeCare**, we understand that many organisations don't know where to begin when it comes to health monitoring. That's why we offer more than just services, we provide clinical guidance, expert advice, and practical recommendations to help you take the next step with confidence.

LifeCare delivers:

- Tailored health monitoring programmes based on your specific workplace risks
- On-site and mobile clinic options for minimal disruption
- Comprehensive, confidential reporting aligned with WorkSafe standards
- Qualified health professionals and clinical governance that oversee the training, service delivery, and reporting standards for all health programmes.

Want help reviewing your current programme or planning 2025 checks? We're happy to walk you through it. No pressure, just guidance.

Get in touch today to learn more!

Thank you for reading!

The **LifeCare** Team

