

This tool will assist you in the process of electing a health and safety representative.

What is a Health and Safety Representative?

Health and safety representatives (HSRs) are workers who are elected to represent their colleagues on health and safety matters and receive appropriate training (see Tool 5 for the HSR's roles and responsibilities).

The minimum ratio of HSRs for a workgroup is 1 representative for every 19 workers.

The election of HSRs usually occurs if 1 or more workers request it or the school board of trustees initiates it. However, schools/kura with fewer than 20 workers are not required to have a HSR, though the board can still choose to have one.

What is a work group?

A HSR represents a specific work group in the school. The board of trustees decides, with staff consultation, whether the school needs one or more workgroups. Unless the board determines otherwise, a work group will comprise all the workers in the school. A work group could be a team, department, site or the whole workplace. It could be based on the type of work carried out (e.g. teaching or administration work) or the areas or places where work is carried out (e.g. different floors of a multi-storey building, or separate premises).

The board of trustees must ensure that school workers are grouped in a way that:

- enables the health and safety interests of the workers to be represented effectively by the HSR
- takes account of the need for the HSR to be accessible to the workers that he or she represents

Who is eligible to stand for election?

A person is eligible for election as a health and safety representative for a work group if the person:

- is a worker who is a member of that work group
- is willing to act as a HSR
- works sufficiently regularly and for a sufficient amount of time to be able to carry out the functions and to exercise the powers of a health and safety representative effectively

All members of the work group are eligible to vote.

Who is responsible for the election process?

The board of trustees is responsible for ensuring the election of HSRs takes place, although responsibility for organisation of the election process may be delegated to the principal, worker(s), an HSR, a union or other representative.

What is the election and voting process?

The following guidelines are designed to help schools/kura with the election and voting process:

1. elections should be held at least every three years – or a shorter period if agreed by the work group and the board
2. the principal or other delegated person should manage the election process with help from the current HSR, unless they are a candidate for the election
3. the election organiser calls for nominations for the HSR position by a certain date - all workers in the work group must have the opportunity to nominate and elect their HSR
4. if more than one person is nominated, a vote is organised
5. elections may be undertaken using any form of voting, and can be as simple as a show of hands, writing the name of the person on a piece of paper and putting it in a voting box or by secret ballot (if requested by a member of the work group, a candidate for election or the board)
7. once the votes have been counted, the successful candidate will be appointed as the HSR for the work group