

Occupational Health and Safety Officer		New South Wales (NSW)
ASCO Code: 2543-11	June 2008	
Labour market rating	Recruitment difficulty	
Comment: <i>Recruitment difficulties are evident for positions requiring a combination of skills in OHS and related areas such as environmental protection, workers compensation or staff training.</i>		

Occupational demand

Demand for occupational health and safety officers (OHS officers) has grown strongly in recent years following the passing of NSW OHS legislation introducing new general duties for employers, a number of new offences and increased penalties for reckless conduct. Census data indicate that employment of OHS officers in NSW more than doubled from 1000 to 2100 persons from 2001 to 2006. The consensus of employers and industry contacts consulted for this report was that growth in the profession had continued over the past two years.

Occupational supply

There is a number of courses at the Certificate IV level and above which provide accredited training in OHS and a wide range of higher education courses in health sciences and human resources are also relevant. While it is not possible to quantify a training rate for this occupation, it is clear that completions of relevant courses have risen significantly in recent years. For example, completions in TAFE Certificate IV and Diploma courses in workplace safety and occupational health and safety alone averaged 400 per annum in the four years to 2006, compared with 150 per annum in the previous four years. Immigration data are not available for this occupation. However, Census data for the broader category of occupational and environmental health professionals show a net loss of 63 workers interstate from 2001 to 2006 and a net gain of only 98 workers from overseas. This suggests that net immigration is not a major supply source.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for OHS professionals showed that 88 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks of the surveyed advertisements. Despite this high success rate, the degree of difficulty recruiting OHS officers varied. Vacancies requiring a Diploma or higher qualification in OHS plus three years or more OHS experience and experience in the employer's specific industry proved among the most difficult to fill. Recruitment difficulties were also evident for positions requiring qualifications or experience in OHS and another field such as environmental protection, workers compensation or staff training. Employers reported that most applicants had experience which was insufficient, or limited to only one of the required areas or confined to OHS compliance rather than OHS planning, risk management and managing change in workplace cultures. The consensus of respondents was that remuneration for experienced OHS professionals had risen substantially in recent years and that the government sector, not-for-profit organisations and smaller private sector employers often could not compete with the remuneration on offer in mining, construction and large corporations. Among the surveyed vacancies, several suitable applicants rejected job offers due to dissatisfaction with the proposed remuneration. Nevertheless, almost all of the surveyed vacancies were eventually filled at the remuneration proposed although some employers had to compromise on issues such as length and breath of experience or working hours.

Labour market outlook

Demand for this occupation is likely to increase moderately over the short term in line with general growth in the NSW economy. DEEWR projections indicate that supply to the occupation from local training is likely to remain high. While the supply of experienced workers will be more limited, it is likely that recruitment difficulties will be mainly confined to positions requiring a combination of skills and qualifications in OHS and a related area.