Health and safety in the workplace

Why is it important?

Synthomer manufactures speciality chemicals using large-scale, complex manufacturing processes, and uses hazardous raw materials to make some of our products. The safety of our people and those who work with us is our first priority. As a result, we adhere to the highest health and safety standards across the business.

Our commitments

Synthomer's Board, Chief Executive and Executive Committee are fully committed to continuous improvement in health and safety performance. Effective leadership to deliver such performance is a primary duty, and everyone at Synthomer is accountable for their own health and safety, and for the safety of those around them, regardless of seniority.

We encourage all employees to participate in SHE programmes that are aligned with Synthomer's three long-term SHE[1] goals:

- To minimise any environmental burden created by our activities
- To have no accidents or incidents
- To have no adverse impact on the health of those who work in, or live near our operations, or on the health of those who use our products.

Our Vision 2030 targets: health and safety

- Recordable injury case rate (RCR) target[2] of 0.20 by 2030
- Process safety event rate (PSER) target[3] of 0.10 by 2030

Additional short-term objectives to 2024

- Recordable injury case rate (RCR) of 0.22
- Process safety event rate (PSER) of 0.22

Our targets reflect our ambition to be in the top quartile for health and safety performance.

Associated policies

Our Health and Safety Policy – click here

1 SHE refers to Safety, Health and Environment – for the purpose of this document, we shall be focused on the safety and health aspects of SHE.

2 Per 100,000 hours for employees and contractors.

3 Per 100,000 hours for employees and contractors.

Focusing on our most material issues

Our approach is informed by the issues that matter most to our stakeholders, including employees, investors and customers, and that are most aligned with delivering our business strategy. We update our understanding of those issues through a materiality assessment, and completed our last one in 2021. Having reviewed that assessment, we believe we are still focused on the most relevant sustainability issues.

In our 2021 materiality assessment, stakeholders and the business ranked health and safety as a very important issue.

This year, we chose not to update our materiality assessment using our existing methodology, given the changing sustainability reporting requirements under the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB). We are developing a 'double' materiality approach, in line with CSRD and ISSB, that will assess the issues that are material to our business prospects and their impact on the wider world.

This is a significant project, but we believe it will help us further integrate sustainability issues into our decision making, performance and disclosures. We expect to complete this work in 2024.

Figure 1. Synthomer materiality matrix

Our approach

Our commitment to health and safety underpins our refreshed strategy and structure. Our SHE value, which states 'we always have time to work safely', sits at the heart of our five company values. It means striving towards our ultimate goal of zero accidents and no adverse impact on human health.

Our SHE management system (SHEMS) is our most important tool in helping us work towards our SHE goals. It includes 22 standards, and each standard has an accompanying mandatory requirement. SHEMS also contains more than 200 guidance documents. We expect sites to carry out an internal audit against these standards at least once every three years. Sites must audit themselves every year against areas that we consider to be of higher priority in terms of major accident prevention. In addition, sites must carry out annual internal compliance audits of our permits to work and management of change standards. Our central SHE team audits all our manufacturing facilities every three to five years, depending on performance and residual hazard prioritisation.

Synthomer has grown considerably in the past few years, thanks to several acquisitions. Integrating a new business is a complex, multi-layered process. As a result, we expect to see short-term fluctuations in our SHE performance. It is one of the reasons why we allow three to five years for new sites to meet our standards. We are taking a series of tried-and-tested steps to address key issues as we integrate our acquired adhesive resins businesses.

We place all new sites into 'supported status'. This means our health and safety subject matter experts provide the site team with additional support to help meet our minimum standards in areas such as process safety and asset integrity.

Sites 'graduate' out of supported status once they reach those standards. If any site – new or otherwise – drops below those minimum standards, it can be moved back into supported status. In some instances, we may also run a SHE transformation.

As we welcome new colleagues and integrate sites, our SHE teams have a central role to play in creating an inclusive working environment, where everyone knows how to use our processes and systems and demonstrate the right behaviours.

We expect all our sites to follow Synthomer's SHE Principles and 10 Golden Rules to directly target and improve the safe operation of our plants.

Our principles are:

- Look after yourself
- Look after each other
- Effective last line of defence
- Stop and think
- Safe workplace
- Safe vehicle, safe driver
- Safe processes and operations
- Safe systems of work
- No change without assessment
- Learning from our mistakes

Synthomer's 10 Golden Rules consolidate some basic guidance on good health and safety practice guidance for all employees:

1. Do not access working areas without the required general and/or task-specific PPE.
2. Only carry out routine tasks for which you are trained and authorised, and use the specified tools and equipment for the job.
3. On stairs and steps – take one at a time, using handrails where present.
4. Only drive vehicles for which you are authorised, and follow all signs and rules.
5. Do not by-pass safety devices or interlocks without authorisation.
6. When a work permit is required, ensure it is valid and complete, and do not deviate from its requirements.
7. Lock out and tag out all energy sources before working on equipment.
8. On tankers and other vehicles, ensure the fall protection and/or handrail system is in place before accessing the top.
9. Do not make any change, or carry out any non-routine work without following an accepted system with an appropriate assessment and authorisation.
10. Immediately report injuries, incidents and near misses to your line manager.

To ensure our employees and contractors understand our SHE principles and Golden Rules, we expect them to attend inductions and refresher sessions.

In addition to occupational health and safety, good process safety relies on effective layers of protection and controls to keep equipment working efficiently, and ensuring teams understand their role in helping to prevent unexpected releases, including of hazardous chemicals. We carry out routine inspections and maintenance to address issues before they become a problem, and site teams perform safety-critical steps to ensure they are compliant.

An area of safety management known as 'human factors' plays an important part in helping us improve our health and safety performance. This term refers to the specific elements, such as the working environment, and the human and individual characteristics that influence the way we behave in that environment, that can have an impact – positive or negative – on health and safety. Having analysed the human factors that are at play in Synthomer, our central SHE team has been working with our sites to strengthen their understanding of the different steps involved in specific safety-critical processes, and developing tools to help them stay vigilant. For example, we have introduced large-format 'job aid' boards at several sites, which provide a picture-based flow chart of the different steps involved in certain processes, the personal protective equipment the individual should be wearing to carry out the task, and key reminders along the way.

Our performance in 2023

We delivered much improved performance in 2023. Our recordable injury case rate (RCR) this year was 0.16, versus our 2023 objective of 0.29. This is a more than 50% improvement year-on-year and includes our best ever six-month RCR performance, in the first half of the year. It places Synthomer, as a company, in the top quartile for our industry.

Our PSER this year, was 0.18, versus our 2023 objective of 0.19, and has stabilised year-on-year. Both metrics are testament to the hard work of our site teams, who have remained focused on our value to 'always have time to work safely'.

Longer-term trends demonstrate that our approach to integrating newly acquired sites using legacy Synthomer's SHE management system (SHEMS) works over time – since our statistics now clearly show that the longer a site is part of SHEMS, the better its safety performance. That is why some of our legacy sites have now reached top quartile performance.

We want to continue that trend, and across the business are increasingly focused on tracking leading indicators such as near misses and process safety weak signals, including making them a key topic at the three regional SHE conferences that we held this year.

We also track what we call 'sentinel' events – RCRs that could have led to a more serious outcome – and take action to mitigate that risk. And when we do spot a trend, we make sure we share lessons learnt through our SHE network. For example, this year we issued new guidance on how to work safely at height – particularly on a roof – after our tracking identified four height-related near misses that could have led to potentially life-changing incidents.

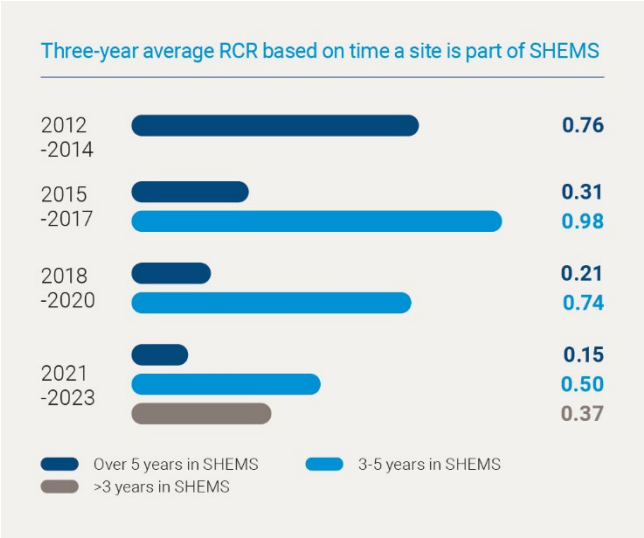
	Unit	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	Variance 2023 vs 2022[4]	Variance 2023 vs 2019[5]
Total recordable injury case rate (RCR)[6]	per 100,000 hrs	0.16	0.34	0.31	0.36	0.2	-53%	-20%
Employees RCR	per 100,000 hrs	0.14	0.35	0.33	0.36	0.19	-60%	-26%
Contractors RCR	per 100,000 hrs	0.26	0.27	0.23	0.35	0.22	-4%	18%
Total fatalities[1]	#	0	0	0	0	0		
Total process safety event rate (PSER)[4]	per 100,000 hrs	0.18	0.22	0.16	0.1	0.11	-18%	64%
Total lost-time injury frequency rate (LTIR)[1]	per 1,000,000 hrs	1.42	2	1.6	2.6	1.4	-29%	1%
Employees LTIR	per 1,000,000 hrs	1.32	2.2					
Contractors LTIR	per 1,000,000 hrs	1.91	1.1					
Total lost-time injury severity rate (LTISR)[4]	per 100,000 hrs	8.3	9.7	5.5	12.1	6.3	-14%	32%
Employees LTISR	per 100,000 hrs	8.1	10.7					
Contractors LTISR	per 100,000 hrs	9.1	4.7					

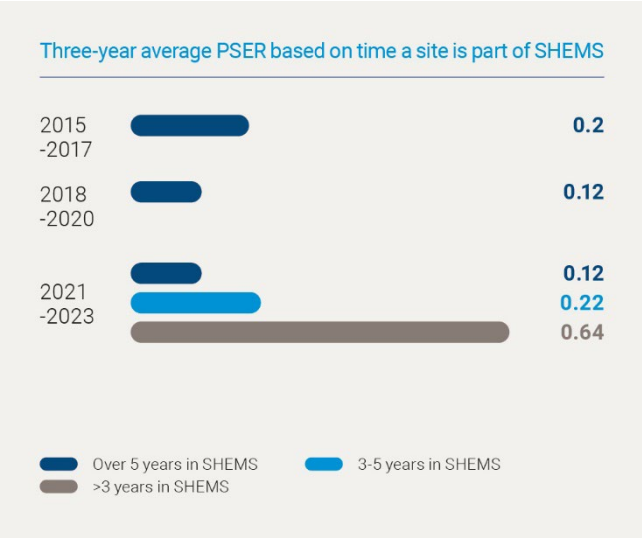
1. Employees and contractors

4 2022 data included the sites of our new adhesives business.

5 2019-2021 data excluded our new adhesives business.

6 Employees and contractors.





Our next steps

The next 12 months will be very much business as usual for our central SHE team. They will continue to work with our sites to keep strengthening the way they track and address leading indicators.

In 2024, we will focus on process safety training for all our operations teams and continue to develop our major accident hazard scenario barrier checks.

Our methodologies

Recordable injury case rate (RCR) – accidents per 100,000 hours of employees and contractors. We track and record our RCR for injuries that need more than first-aid treatment.

Process safety event rate (PSER) – events per 100,000 hours of employees and contractors. We record, rate and track our PSERs using a four-tier scoring system. Tiers 1 and 2 (with Tier 1 being more severe) meet the International Council of Chemical Associations' (ICCA) definition of a 'reportable PSE'.

Lost-time injury (LTI) – Any injury which prevents a person doing their normal job for one or more work periods, not including the work period of the injury.

Lost-time injury severity rate (LTISR) – based on the cumulative reported days away from work – of one person off >200 days.