



WASH Pledge for Access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene at the Workplace

Communications Brief



What does a signature of the WASH Pledge mean for your company?

It means guaranteeing the *provision of and access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to your employees* at the workplace within three years

- ✓ The WASH Pledge only concerns your **direct operations** (extended value chain, employees' homes and contractor premises are not included within the scope of the Pledge, although signatories may consider these)
- ✓ You will have **three years** to demonstrate **integration** of the Pledge provisions into **existing internal processes** and adherence to these provisions. This can be done via the WBCSD Self-Assessment tool used for each operation/site
- ✓ There is **no formal reporting requirement** given that the Pledge is a non-legally binding commitment. However, companies are encouraged to **communicate** about their achievements through both internal and external channels
- ✓ You will receive **WBCSD support** for implementation (Helpdesk, tools, Pledge community)
- ✓ **Non-WBCSD members** may follow the lead set by members



Why should you sign?

Demonstrate leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join WBCSD members in setting a higher standard for the health and safety of company employees • Sign the first business-led initiative that directly tackles WASH at the workplace • Demonstrate that business can have a direct positive impact • “Walk the talk” by ensuring you are in line with international best practice on WASH
Generate impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the global business momentum toward the achievement of universal access to safe WASH and contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Human Right to Water & Sanitation.
Reap the business benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in a healthier and more productive workforce • Generate reputational benefits from your adherence to internationally recognized standards and demonstrate them to a wide audience • Strengthen your social license to operate and lower your reputational risks



The WASH Pledge community

We put a large emphasis on **learning and sharing** in the WASH Pledge community, through workshops, webinars, and sharing company case studies. Emerging themes for **collective learning** have been:

- 💧 How to drive WASH standards to an **international level** in cases where **national legislation** on water and sanitation is **weak**
- 💧 How to **raise awareness** among your workforce in cultural contexts where there **is little knowledge** on WASH issues
- 💧 How to convince **senior management** that WASH issues can also be of concern in an emerging / developed market context
- 💧 How to implement WASH standards in **leased office space** and among hired janitorial staff
- 💧 What do WASH standards mean in an **agricultural / forestry context**, or in complex, remote operations such as underground mining sites

Additional themes are being identified alongside progress of WASH Pledge implementation experience among the signatory companies.



Selection of frequently asked questions

(Full list can be downloaded from: <http://www.wbcd.org/washatworkplace.aspx>)

We think we are already compliant with Pledge requirements – so why should we sign?

As a leader, signing the Pledge provides an opportunity to show your commitment to action towards WBCSD's Vision 2050. It also provides a platform for you to communicate about your good practices, both internally and externally. If you're already compliant, your signature of the Pledge will generate attention to existing company practices in terms of occupational health and safety (H&S). In addition, by signing the Pledge, you will become part of a strong community of recognized leaders in the WASH field. Together, you will add your voices to the global call to action for accelerating universal access to WASH.

Most of my operations are based in high-income countries where access to safe WASH at the workplace is not an issue, so I don't see the benefit. Why should I sign?

Signing the Pledge will lend your company's voice to the business movement around access to safe WASH. It will also ensure your company actively participates in the implementation of the upcoming *Sustainable Development Goals* and the *Human Right to Water and Sanitation*.

Contrary to common belief, some case studies show that access to safe WASH – especially sanitation and hygiene – can still be an issue in high-income countries: Issues identified from company gap assessments in a high-income context include insufficient provision of toilet facilities either for employees, for disabled people, or both. There can also be limited awareness on hygiene.

Are the Self-Assessment Tool and the Guiding Principles for Implementation mandatory when my company starts implementing the Pledge?

No – both documents provide guidance on how the Pledge can be implemented, but the implementation procedure remains an internal choice for your company.

The Self-Assessment tool or any other tool that your company decides to use internally must be applied at each site level. This is to verify that all necessary measures are taken to ensure access to safe WASH for all employees at an appropriate level. These include points of reference on what represents leading practice for providing an appropriate standard for safe WASH in different workplaces – including specific examples of action items.

How have other companies generally implemented the Pledge?

Different companies approach implementation from different angles, but most often they do so through existing internal Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) guidelines and auditing. We realize that assessing each operation site is an ambitious undertaking (though online survey tools such as SurveyMonkey© are ideal for reaching out to many sites in parallel), and therefore allow companies to run one or several pilots. For example, companies could examine one country's operations or several key sites before rolling out the Pledge to their entire operations. This helps them maximize efficiency and build on first findings/lessons learned.

My company is willing to sign; what is the signature process?

The signature process of the Pledge is straightforward. Please have someone who is in the position to commit your company to the Pledge send an official email to fedotova@wbcd.org. The email must state that he/she confirms that he/she signed the Pledge in the name of your company, and he/she understands this means the company commits to providing appropriate access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene to all employees in all locations under direct company control within three years of signature.

What if my company has not reached compliance within three years?

In principle, the commitment should be achieved within three years of signature. However, depending on your findings, it is acceptable to extend this timeframe if the full assessments have been run and action plans are put in place.

Additional references

- The [WASH Pledge webpage](#) (including links to download the *WASH Pledge Self-Assessment Tool* and the *Guiding Principles*)
- UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation (2014), [Realising the human right to water and sanitation: a handbook](#). (see WASH Pledge reference in Booklet 4, p. 29)
- CEO Water Mandate (2014), [Exploring the Business Case for Corporate Action on Water and Sanitation](#)
- WHO/UNICEF [Joint Monitoring Programme \(JMP\) for Water Supply and Sanitation](#)
- Case study on [access to sanitation for workers in the UK](#)