

## Hazard identification and risk management

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Taking safety seriously starts with risk management. For those who don't know, this is a three step process, which we can use to think about how safe our work is.

The first step is to identify hazards. These are things that could cause us to get injured or harmed at work.

'ask'

**Q. What are different hazards we should look out for at work?**

**Possible answers:**

- *Physical hazards, such as falls from heights, electricity, noise, heat, cold or ventilation.*
- *Plant operation, like machines, equipment, tools or appliances*
- *Biological/health hazards like infectious diseases, things that cause asthma like flour dust and other illnesses.*
- *Chemical hazards, like working with dangerous chemicals*
- *Radiation hazards, such as welding flash.*
- *Psychological hazards, such as fatigue or stress.*
- *Ergonomic and manual task hazards, such as carrying or moving heavy things, or the height and position of work benches or work stations.*

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**Q. What are ways we could spot hazards at our workplace?**

**Possible answers:**

- *Do a walk through inspection.*
- *List all the tasks and work activities carried out and look at each step.*
- *Also look at the ways different tasks or work activities could interact and cause a hazard.*
- *Look at past accidents and injuries that have happened.*

- *Look at any information from manufacturers or suppliers and see if they have safety instructions.*
- *Talk to people who do similar work.*
- *Check the WorkSafe website to see if there is information on relevant safety topics.*

'ask'

### **Q. If we do a walkthrough at work, what are hazards we could check?**

#### **Possible answers:**

- *Housekeeping – have a look at the state of the workplace and things like floors, work benches, ladders and walkways.*
- *First aid and amenities – look at first aid equipment, supply of drinking water, washrooms and toilets.*
- *Fire and emergency safety – check the access and exits, fire fighting equipment and alarms.*
- *Plant, equipment, tools and appliances – have a look for cutting, crushing or trapping hazards and unsafe conditions due to things like flying particles, noise and hot and cold parts.*
- *Chemical hazards – have a look at the PPE, ventilation, labels, containers, storage, signs and material safety data sheets.*
- *Electrical hazards – check the residual current devices (RCDs), the condition and location of cables, plugs, sockets and switches and tag lock outs.*
- *Ergonomic and manual task hazards – have a look at the design of work stations, height of bench tops and desks, seating and tasks that involve lifting, carrying, reaching, stretching and repetition.*
- *Machinery guarding – have a look at whether there are barriers, guards or fences to protect against moving parts.*

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After identifying all the hazards, we need to write them down. The second step is assessing the risks of injury or harm from the hazards and working out which hazard to address first. This involves:

- Gathering information about each hazard we have identified.
- Working out how likely it is that an accident or injury will happen and thinking about how many people could be affected. We will need to take into account different situations or conditions that may exist in our workplace that could increase the risk, such as a change to something.
- Finally, thinking about the consequences of each hazard – in particular, could someone die, suffer major injuries with bad long term effects, suffer minor injuries requiring several days off work or get minor injuries, which maybe need some first aid.

After a risk assessment is conducted, action should be taken to control the risks, which is the third step in risk management. Obviously, it is best to work out a list of priorities and first control the risks with the most serious consequences. This means that our employer, after doing the risk assessment, might talk to us about addressing the most serious risks first and taking more time to address the minor risks, as time and budget allow.

'ask'

**Q. There is something called a hierarchy of control measures, from the best to the least effective, to control risks. What do you think is the best type of control measure?**

**Answer:**

- *The best type of control measure is one that eliminates the hazard so that the hazard is no longer there, such as making a change to a work practice or changing the equipment.*

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Where you can't eliminate a hazard, the next best control is one that minimises the risks from the hazard, such as coming up with a safer way of doing things, using a safer substance, isolating the hazard or installing engineering controls, such as put a guard on a machine.

The next best control is to introduce safe work practices and supply PPE. These are last in the hierarchy because they rely on human behaviour to work and it is better to get rid of or minimise the hazard and risk. PPE should always be the last option.

**Workplace safety and health is everyone's responsibility**

We all need to make some effort to identify hazards and risks in the workplace and to report them to our employer. Our employer has a duty of care to provide a safe workplace and systems of work, but if they don't know a hazard exists they can't take steps to fix it before someone gets hurt.

'ask'

**Q. Before I finish, are there any hazards or risks you think need reviewing at our workplace?**

*Take notes about suggestions... don't panic if there aren't any takers!*

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OK, unless anyone has any questions, thanks for listening to me.

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