

Toolbox Safety Talks

Hazard identification and risk assessment

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Talk about safety at work

Take ten minutes at 10am, or at any other time of the day, to talk with your team about workplace safety. This training resource is designed to help you deliver short presentations covering a series of work health and safety topics.

READ OUT

Taking safety seriously starts with risk management. This is a **four-step process** used 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.

The second step is to **assess the risks**, in other words, how likely is it that a person could be injured and how severe might that be.

The third step is to **control the risks**. The fourth step is **evaluation and review**.

ASK THE QUESTION

What are some of the hazards in our workplace?

Possible answers:

- *physical hazards, such as falls from height, electricity, noise, heat, cold or ventilation*
- *plant operation, such as machines, equipment, tools or appliances*
- *biological/health hazards, such as infectious diseases, things that cause asthma like flour dust, and other illnesses*
- *hazardous 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.*

ASK THE QUESTION

How can we 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*
- *consider how different tasks or work activities could interact and cause a hazard*
- *look at past incidents 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 SafeWork SA website for information on safety topics.*

ASK THE QUESTION

If we do a walk-through at work, what hazards could we check for?

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*
- *hazardous chemicals – have a look at the personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilation, labels, containers, storage, signs and safety data sheets (SDS)*
- *electrical hazards – check the residual current devices (RCDs), the condition and location of cables, plugs, sockets, 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.*

READ OUT

After identifying all the hazards, we need to write them down. **In the second step we assess the risks** of injury or harm from the hazards and work out which hazard to address first.

- Refer to the Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) procedure for Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment.
- Gather information about each hazard we have identified.
- Work out how likely it is that an incident or injury will happen and think about how many people could be affected. We will need to consider different situations or conditions in our workplace that could increase the risk, such as a change to something.
- Finally, think 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 may need 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 control the risks with the most serious consequences. This means that after doing the risk assessment, the PCBU 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 THE QUESTION

To manage risk, the hierarchy of risk control ranks the best to the least effective control measures. What do you think is the best type of control measure?

Possible answers:

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. This is called a Level 1 control measure.

READ OUT

Where you can't eliminate a hazard, the next best control is one that minimises the risks (Level 2 control measure). This could be coming up with a safer way of doing things, using a safer substance, isolating the hazard or installing engineering controls, for example by putting a guard on a machine.

The next best control is to introduce safe work practices and supply PPE. This is last in the hierarchy (Level 3 control measure) because it relies on human behaviour to work. It is also better to get rid of or minimise the hazard and risk. PPE should always be the last option.

The **fourth step in risk management** is to evaluate and review the control measures to ensure that they are adequate and work as planned. A further risk assessment should be carried out to ensure that the control measures remain effective and have not created any new hazards.

Keeping records of the risk management process demonstrates potential compliance with the WHS Act and Regulations. It also helps us to undertake subsequent risk assessments. The detail and extent of recording will depend on the size of the workplace, and the potential for major work health and safety issues. Everyone should be aware of record-keeping requirements, the location of the reports and what they contain.