Objective
To provide advice on the potential hazards associated with height adjustable treatment tables or beds with power-assisted lifting mechanisms.

Background
There have been two separate fatal crush injuries as a result of a person accessing the mechanical linkages underneath an electrically powered, height adjustable treatment table or bed while the height was being intentionally lowered.

Most adjustable treatment tables and beds incorporate scissor-type linkages that introduce potential trapping, crush and shear points.

These are more evident at the lower table or bed height positions, where movement of the linkages towards other adjacent stationary components is usually the fastest.

Visibility beyond and below the top of the device is, in most cases, restricted due to the physical size of the top frame and covering material.

Risk control measures
Treatment table/bed manufacturers and suppliers, as well as employers, workers and owners who operate these appliances, must assess all foreseeable hazards and implement appropriate control measures to eliminate or minimise the risks arising from these hazards.

Persons with management or control of these appliances must ensure training is given to workers on safe use of the appliance, load limits and all designer or manufacturer built-in safety features. This includes power source isolation, thermal overload protection and reset procedures.

Any moving parts of tables or beds that have the potential to injure should be positioned or enclosed to prevent access by any person, or any part of a person.

Where guards or enclosures are provided, they should have adequate mechanical strength and only be detachable using a special tool.

Where the table or bed is provided to a patient undergoing some form of medical treatment, height adjustment of the appliance should be restricted to a trained worker, wherever possible.

Prior to performing any table or bed height adjustment, the operator must check the area around and underneath the device to ensure that no person (other than those being treated at the time) is in the vicinity of the device.

Operating controls should be positioned such that the opportunity for unintentional activation is avoided.

Where an adjustable bed is provided to an aged care or nursing home resident, they may have unrestricted access to the control pendant (which may therefore also be used by the resident’s visitors). In this situation, consider specific risk controls such as:

• locking out certain motions of the device when the resident is unsupervised
• mechanically limiting the lowest safe height setting (this should be done after consultation with, and approval from, the equipment supplier).

With a pendant control, consider restricting cable-free length or securing the pendant to the device, provided no new hazards are introduced.