

A-Z Guide

Hazard Identification and Management



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Use this guide to understand

- What your obligations to manage hazards and risks to health and safety are and how they apply to your business
- Understanding key terms and definitions under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- How to identify hazards and risks to health and safety in your workplace

What is Hazard Identification and Risk Management

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (“the Act”) requires Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (“PCBU”) to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure workers and individuals are free from harm in the workplace.

Health and safety risks must be eliminated or minimised so far as is reasonably practicable in the circumstances. PCBUs will need to develop robust policies, procedures and practices that adequately identify any health and safety risks in their business or undertaking through elimination or minimisation processes to manage those risks, with the view of ensuring that all persons potentially affected by the conduct of a business or undertaking are given the highest level of protection in the circumstances.

The Act also imposes the duty on PCBUs to identify hazards. A PCBU in managing risks to health and safety, must identify hazards that could give rise to reasonably foreseeable risks to health and safety in the workplace.

PCBUs have a primary duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable the health and safety of workers who work for the PCBU while the workers are at work in the business or undertaking; and workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the PCBU, while the workers are carrying out the work.

A PCBU must also ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of other persons (for example, members of the public, visitors and customers) is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.

Hazard identification and risk management is an essential element of health and safety. This **A-Z guide** provides information about the process of hazard identification and risk management under the Health and Safety at Work 2015 and Regulations.

The information in this guide should be understood as a qualification on the information set out in the **A-Z guide on Health and Safety in Employment**.

Additional relevant information may be obtained from the following **A-Z Guides**:

- ACC
- Employee Participation Systems
- Health and Safety in Employment
- OOS
- Stress and Fatigue
- Volunteers
- Young Persons



Definitions

Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU)

This is a key term under the Act and means a person conducting a business or undertaking whether the person conducts a business or undertaking alone or with others; and whether or not the business or undertaking is conducted for profit or gain.

Reasonably practicable

Another important term defined under the Act is reasonably practicable meaning that in relation to health and safety, PCBUs must ensure they do everything they are reasonably able to do taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters including:

- the likelihood of the hazard or risk occurring
- the likely degree of harm involved
- what the person concerned knows, or reasonably ought to know, about –
 - the hazard or risk and
 - ways of eliminating or minimising it
- the availability or suitability of ways of eliminating the hazard or risk, and
- after assessing the extent of the risk and the available ways to eliminate or minimise the risk, the cost associated with those ways including whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the risk.

Worker

Unless the context otherwise requires the Act defines a worker to mean an individual who carries out work in any capacity for a PCBU, including work as: an employee, a contractor or subcontractor, an employee of a contractor or subcontractor, an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the business or undertaking, an outworker (including a homeworker), an apprentice or a trainee, a person gaining work experience or undertaking a work trial, a volunteer worker or a person of a prescribed class.

Workplace

The Act defines a workplace to mean a place where work is carried out, or is customarily carried out, for a business or undertaking, and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work.

Officer

An officer in relation to a PCBU means a person occupying a position in relation to the business or undertaking that allows the person to exercise significant influence over the management of the business or undertaking (for example, a chief executive, director, board member or partner).

Volunteer workers and associations

Volunteer workers are people who regularly work for a PCBU with the knowledge or consent of the PCBU on an ongoing and regular basis and that is an integral part of the business or undertaking. In these circumstances a PCBU will owe a duty to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable the health and safety of volunteer workers as if they were any other worker.

However, the Act also provides for exceptions in situations where casual volunteers are doing certain activities which excludes them from the volunteer worker definition, for example participating in a fund-raising activity, assistance with sports or recreation for an educational institute, sports or recreation club, assistance with activities for an educational institution outside the premises of the educational institution and providing care for another person in the volunteer's home.

Additionally, the Act also excludes volunteer associations from the meaning of PCBU. The Act will not apply to these types of groups. A volunteer association is defined under the Act to mean a group of volunteers working together for community purposes where none of the volunteers, whether alone or jointly with any other volunteers, employs any person to carry out work for the volunteer association.

To avoid doubt a volunteer organisation which has one or more employees is a PCBU and will have the same duties as a PCBU to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its workers and others.



Hazard

Includes a person's behaviour where that behaviour has the potential to cause death, injury, or illness to a person (whether or not that behaviour results from physical or mental fatigue, drugs, alcohol, traumatic shock), or another temporary condition that affects a person's behaviour.

Notifiable injury or illness

Unless context requires otherwise, a notifiable injury or illness, in relation to a person means any of the following injuries or illnesses that require the person to have immediate treatment (other than first aid).

- The amputation of any part of his or her body
- A serious head injury
- A serious eye injury
- A serious burn
- The separation of his or her skin from underlying tissue (such as degloving or scalping)
- A spinal injury
- The loss of bodily function
- Serious lacerations
- An injury that requires, or would usually require, the person to be admitted to hospital for immediate treatment
- An injury or illness that requires, or would usually require, the person to have medical treatment within 48hrs of exposure to a substance
- Any serious infection (including occupation zoonoses) to which the carrying out of work is a significant contributing factor, including any infection that is attributable to carrying out work
 - With micro-organisms
 - That involves providing treatment or care to a person
 - That involves contact with human blood or bodily substances
 - That involves handling or contact with animals, animal hides, animal skins, animal wool or hair, animal carcasses, or animal waste products
 - That involves handling or contact with fish or marine animals
 - Any other injury or illness declared by regulations to be a notifiable injury or illness.

Notifiable incident

Unless context otherwise requires, a notifiable incident means an unplanned or uncontrolled incident in relation to a workplace that exposes a worker or any other person to a serious risk to that person's health or safety arising from an immediate or imminent exposure to any of the following:

- An escape, a spillage, or leakage of a substance
- An implosion, explosion, or fire
- An escape of gas or steam
- An escape of a pressurised substance
- An electric shock
- The fall or release from a height of any plant, substance, or thing
- The collapse, overturning, failure, or malfunction of, or damage to, any plant that is required to be authorised for use in accordance with regulations
- The collapse or partial collapse of a structure
- The collapse or failure of an excavation or any shoring supporting an excavation
- The inrush of water, mud, or gas in workings in an underground excavation or tunnel
- The interruption of the main system of ventilation in an underground excavation or tunnel
- A collision between 2 vessels, a vessel capsizes, or the inrush of water into a vessel
- Any other incident declared by regulations to be a notifiable incident.

Notifiable event

Unless the context otherwise requires, a notifiable event means any of the following events that arise from work:

- The death of a person
- A notifiable injury or illness
- A notifiable incident.



General Obligations

The Act seeks to ensure that workers and other persons be given the highest level of protection against harm to their health, safety, and welfare from hazards and risks arising from work as is reasonably practicable.

The term reasonably practicable means that in relation to health and safety, PCBUs must ensure they do everything they are reasonably able to do taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters including:

- the likelihood of the hazard or risk occurring
- the likely degree of harm involved
- what the person concerned knows, or reasonably ought to know, about
 - the hazard or risk and
 - ways of eliminating or minimising it
- the availability or suitability of ways of eliminating the hazard or risk, and
- after assessing the extent of the risk and the available ways to eliminate or minimise the risk, the cost associated with those ways including whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the risk.

Additionally, PCBUs have a primary duty of care under the Act ensure so far as reasonably practicable:

- The provision and maintenance of a work environment without risk to health and safety
- The provision and maintenance of safe plant and structures
- The provision and maintenance of safe systems of work
- The safe use, handling, and storage of plant, substances, and structures
- The provision of adequate facilities for the welfare at work of workers in carrying out work for the business or undertaking, including ensuring access to those facilities
- The provision of any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety arising from work carried out as part of the business or undertaking
- That the health of workers and the conditions at the workplace are monitored for the purpose of preventing injury or illness of workers arising from the conduct of the business or undertaking.

A PCBU who manages or controls a workplace must also ensure so far as reasonably practicable, that the workplace, the means of entering and existing the workplace, and anything arising from the workplace are without risks to the health and safety of any person.

A successful process for the identification and management of hazards will include:

- Identification – processes for how and when hazards shall be identified
- Documentation – processes that assist the recording of hazard identification and assessment
- Classification – category of hazard and whether serious or not
- Notification – how does anyone know the hazard has been identified and managed
- Action planning – how hazards shall be managed
- Reassessment – how and when identified hazards shall be reassessed
- Accountabilities – who is accountable for what and to whom and when in respect of hazard identification and management
- Responsibilities – who is responsible for what and to whom and when in respect of hazard identification and management
- Training and supervision – in relation to safe working procedures and hazards
- Emergency planning – when hazards are not managed and/or harm occurs



Identifying Hazards and Risks

Identification

There are many different models and systems available that can assist your organisation with the process of identifying hazards in your workplace. You need to select, or develop, a system that best suits your organisation. In doing that, you need to consider:

- Your organisation's employee participation system;
- The type of work environment(s) and the work done there;
- The work processes;
- The plant and equipment used in those processes; and
- The workplace itself, including office space and facilities for rest and recreation;
- The people who work or visit;
- The location(s) of the workplace in relation to external services;
- Statutory and regulatory requirements.

Any process for the identification of hazards needs to be adaptable and practical. This is because the workplace is generally an ever changing reality and, if the process for identifying hazards is not practical, then it is less likely to be understood, appreciated, or used.

Tools that assist identification

Information that can assist you to identify hazards may be obtained from the following types of documents / records:

- Job / task descriptions
- Accident investigation reports
- Accident / incident records
- Sickness / attendance records
- Complaints
- Plant specifications
- Performance appraisals
- Product information



Categories of hazards

Hazards generally fall into five main categories:

Physical	Ergonomic	Psychological	Chemical	Biological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise Temperature Atmosphere Lighting Ventilation Vibration Space Lifting Machinery Tools Obstacles People / animals Surfaces Drowning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition Weight Mass Posture Speed Movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harassment Work pressure Fatigue Substance use Substance abuse Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaseous Aqueous Airborne Corrosive Flammable Poisonous / toxic Explosive Carcinogenic Burning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacterial Viral Fungal Parasitic

Regular assessment and review

Having identified that a particular hazard exists, then it is important to ensure that it is reassessed on a regular basis so that if the significance of a hazard changes then that can be considered.

The Health and Safety at Work (General Risk and Workplace Management) Regulations 2016 imposes the duty on PCBUs to maintain effective control measures in terms of eliminating and minimising risks to health and safety. This duty means a PCBU must ensure that a control measure is effective, and is maintained so that it remains effective, including by ensuring that the control measure is and continues to be: fit for purpose, and suitable for the nature and duration of the work, and installed, set up, and used correctly. The Regulations also require that a PCBU review and as necessary, revise control measures, so far as is reasonably practicable, so as to maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, a work environment that is without risks to health and safety.

The Health and Safety at Work (General Risk and Workplace Management Regulations) 2016 is available [here](#).

Depending on the nature of your workplace and the type of work undertaken in it, and perhaps the risk that each hazard poses, you may be able to determine a basis for the regular assessment of hazards in the workplace after they have been identified. Your process for the regular assessment of known hazards should incorporate all newly identified hazards.



Conclusion

This guide has set out your obligations in respect of hazard identification and management. The information contained in this guide should be applied to any category of hazard.

The process your organisation develops and implement for the identification and management of hazards should take into account the environment, the work that is done there, and the expertise of you and your employees in preventing accidents, incidents or harm.

Remember

- Always call AdviceLine to check you have the latest guide
- Never hesitate to ask AdviceLine for help in interpreting and applying this guide to your fact situation.
- Use our AdviceLine employment advisors as a sounding board to test your views.
- Get one of our consultants to draft an agreement template that's tailor-made for your business.

This guide is not comprehensive and should not be used as a substitute for professional advice.

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