

# General: Three steps to a safer workplace

## 1. Find the Hazards

The first thing you need to do is to find the hazards in your workplace – that is, find anything with the potential to cause harm. Some hazards will be obvious because they'll be common to your industry, but others won't be.

- Start by talking to your staff. It's a legal requirement that you discuss safety with them, and it's also smart management. After all, they're the people doing the job and they'll have a lot to contribute. Ask them about any tasks they find physically difficult or awkward. Find out if they try to avoid problems by 'working around' certain jobs. And listen to their ideas.
- Working closely with your employees, look at every task in your workplace to find potential hazards. And write everything down.
- Don't just look for obvious hazards. The majority of WorkCover claims are for sprain and strain injuries, so make sure you check out any tasks where pushing, pulling, lifting or twisting are involved.
- Remember that not all injuries are immediately obvious. Some are only discovered over time, such as illnesses caused by long-term exposure to certain chemicals.
- Go through any injury records you have. They might show you if problem areas exist, or if any patterns are emerging. If you don't currently keep a written record of workplace injuries – and near misses – start now.
- Look at the history of accidents in your particular industry. You should also talk to other people in your industry and share their experiences.
- If you need extra help finding hazards, you can talk to the WorkSafe Advisory Service. If you're a small or medium-sized business, you might even qualify for a free safety consultancy service. To find out more, call 1800 136 089 or visit [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)

## 2. Assess the risks

After you've made your list of possible hazards, you need to assess the risk – that is, make a judgment about the seriousness of each hazard, and decide which hazard requires the most urgent attention.

- Take a close look at each item on your list. What is the possible outcome if things go wrong? Are we talking about scratches and bruises, or is there potential for someone to be seriously injured or even killed? Is it an everyday thing, or something that only comes up now and then, giving you more time to find a solution? Are there things you can do right now, as a short-term fix, while you work out a permanent solution?
- Once you've worked out which hazards have the greatest potential to cause injury or disease, or are a risk to public safety, mark them as your high-priority hazards. After that, rank them in priority order from highest to lowest priority.
- Your list should be regularly reviewed and updated. You and your employees need to continually monitor every aspect of your workplace and make sure any potential new hazards are immediately identified.

# General: Three steps to a safer workplace

## 3. Fix the problems

When you've prioritised the hazards on your list, you need to start immediately on the most important step of all – fixing the problems.

- Your first aim should be to totally remove the risk. For example, if the risk involves a hazardous chemical, try to find a safe alternative to the chemical. If there is a slipping or tripping hazard in your workplace, see if it can be removed. If a task is intrinsically dangerous, look for alternative ways to complete the task.
- If it's not possible to totally remove a risk, you need to find ways to control it. You might have to alter the way certain jobs are done, change work procedures, or perhaps provide protective equipment.

When you've prioritised the hazards on your list, you need to start immediately on the most important step of all – fixing the problems.

- Your first aim should be to totally remove the risk. For example, if the risk involves a hazardous chemical, try to find a safe alternative to the chemical. If there is a slipping or tripping hazard in your workplace, see if it can be removed. If a task is intrinsically dangerous, look for alternative ways to complete the task.
- If it's not possible to totally remove a risk, you need to find ways to control it. You might have to alter the way certain jobs are done, change work procedures, or perhaps provide protective equipment.

[extracted from "WorkSafe Victoria - Managing Safety in your Workplace - Sept 2005"](#)

Unique solution ID: #1010

Author:

Last update: 2012-04-18 20:16