

All you wanted know about doing risk assessments but were afraid to ask?

Objectives of doing a risk assessment:

- To identify anything that may have an impact on an activity and prevent things not going the way you planned (resulting in an injury for you or your colleagues, financial loss, etc)
- To rate the risk of this occurring by evaluating it's likelihood and consequences
- To develop a treatment or action plan so that after treatment the remaining risk level is acceptable (Low/Moderate)¹.

Step 1 - Identify all risks to the planned activity

- a) Identify all the ways that this activity could go wrong and write these into the risk assessment
- b) Use checklists and/or previous similar risk assessments/the WHS Hazard list to help you identify any risks
- c) Involve the staff who are going to be doing the task or those who've done it before – can they think of anything else that might happen?

Step 2 - Identify the likelihood and consequences of each risk

- a) Use the Risk Matrix for all risks
- b) Decide what is the most credible consequence first – what could happen?
- c) Decide the most credible likelihood – how likely is it that this consequence can happen?
- d) Determine the risk level where the consequence and likelihood rows meet up
- e) Refer to the Risk Response table to identify what you should do for that risk rating

Step 3 – Treat the risk

- a) Develop a risk treatment plan (a.k.a action plan), where this is required (High/Extreme risks), to reduce the risk as far as is reasonably practicable
- b) Use the Hierarchy of Controls as a reference (can you eliminate the risk; substitute activity/equipment; isolate the risk; engineer it out of the process; use administrative controls like training/rosters/signage; is personal protective equipment required?). Begin at Elimination and work down the list
- c) Re-assess the risk level after the treatment plan is identified – will this plan reduce the risk to a low or medium risk? Check the Risk Response table for what to do if this isn't the case
- d) Ensure you allocate responsibilities to actual people for the treatment plan and what timeframe they must complete it in. Make sure these people know they have a task and when it is due

Step 4 – Review the risk

- a) Review the risk assessment after you have completed the activity – how did it go? Did the risk controls work?
- b) Is there anything that we need to do differently next time? Write this down and attach it to the risk assessment
- c) Use the risk assessment when you are planning the next similar activity

¹ The same hazard may need to be assessed for a number of different consequences.