Healthier Work.

Simple risk management

April 2025
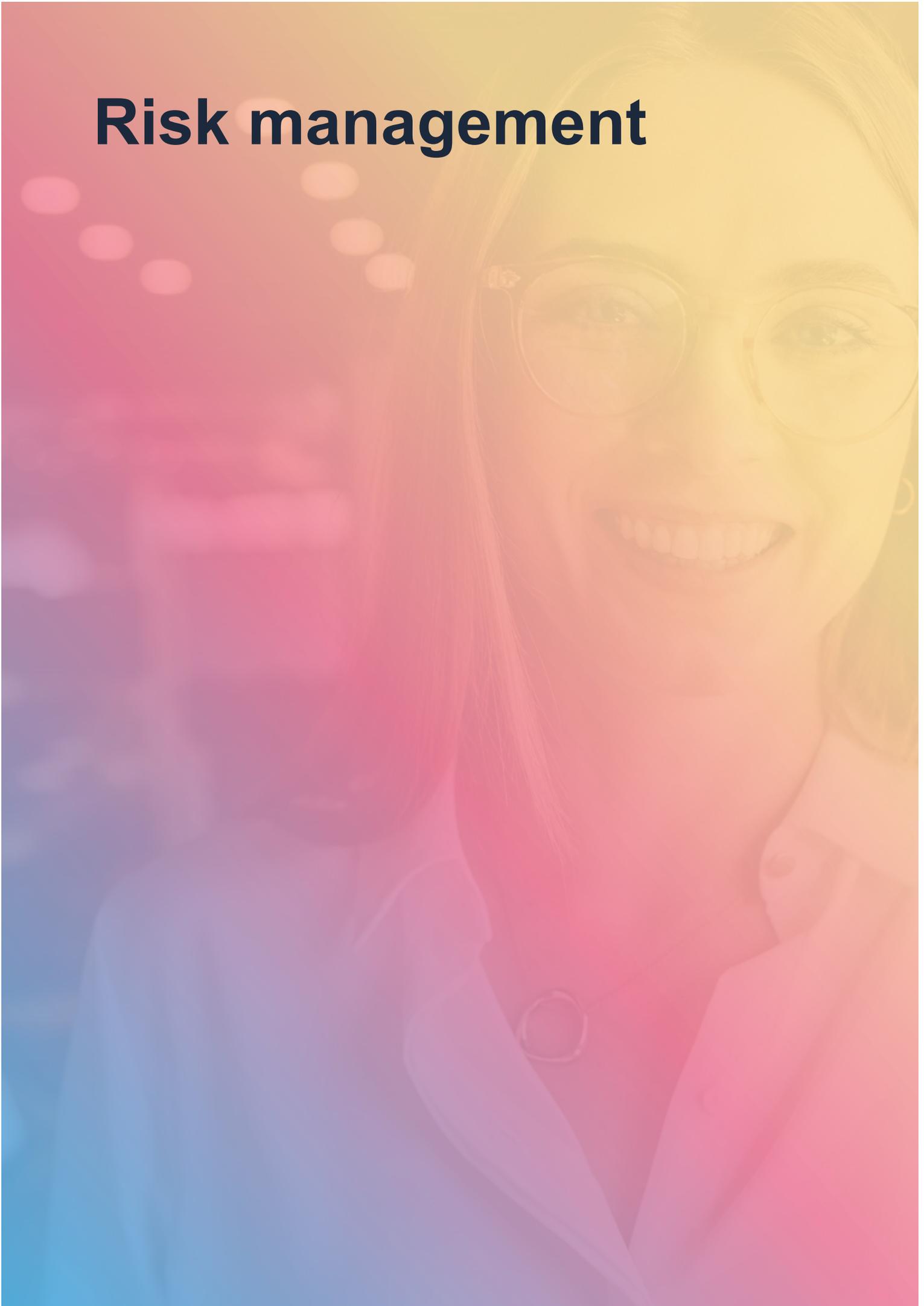
ACT Government

Contents

Risk management

Simple steps to risk management for workplace mental and physical health

> Identifying and responding to workplace risks is essential.

A workplace is required by law to keep workers safe from harm, from both physical and psychological hazards. Understanding your obligations and navigating your way through the legislation and codes of practice can seem overwhelming. However, risk management does not need to be complex. There are simple and easy steps that can be implemented to manage risks, protect your workers and achieve compliance.

What do we mean by a 'safe workplace'?

When we talk about a 'safe workplace' we mean a workplace that is both SAFE and INCLUSIVE.

SAFE (PROTECTED)

Workers are safe from harm because:

    a. hazards are eliminated or minimised

    b. workers are consulted,

    c. actions are documented, and

    d. outcomes are reviewed.

INCLUSIVE (SECURE)

Workers feel secure because:

    a. they feel respected,

    b. that their welfare is a priority,

    c. they are supported when injured and

    d. that diversity is valued.

Take these four steps

All businesses are different and face unique challenges. However, the steps required to manage workplace risks, both physical and psychosocial, are the same.

1. Understand the rules

2. Implement risk management

3. Consult with your workers

4. Document your approach
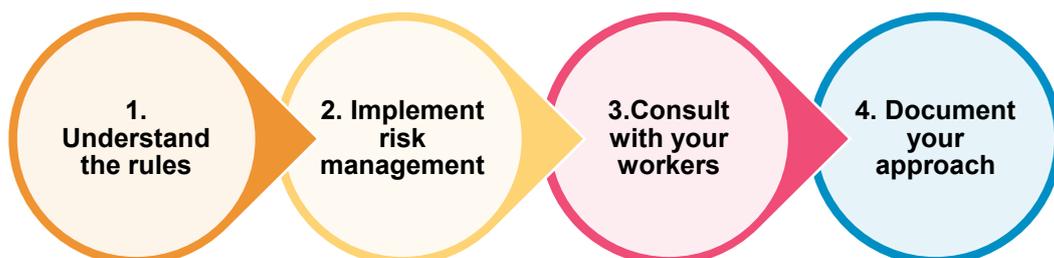
The rules and how they apply to you

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Australia has a harmonised framework for Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws. Safe Work Australia is the national policy agency responsible for the development of WHS laws, and WorkSafe ACT is responsible for providing local information, advice and support as well as compliance and enforcement activities.

» **Safe Work Australia** safeworkaustralia.gov.au

» **Work Safe ACT** worksafe.act.gov.au

What am I responsible for?

It is important to be familiar with current WHS laws and codes of practice so you can understand your workplace obligations:

» **The Work Health and Safety Act –** The primary purpose of this Act is to provide a balanced and nationally consistent framework to secure the health and safety of workers and workplaces.

Download and read The Work Health and Safety Act

» **The Work Health and Safety Regulation -** Provides additional detail on specific WHS obligations, such as workplace arrangements, psychosocial hazards, licensing high risk work, construction, plant safety, electricity safety and performing hazardous manual tasks.

Download and read The Work Health and Safety Regulation

» **Work Health and Safety Codes of Practice -** Codes of practice outline how you can achieve work health and safety standards. Codes do not replace WHS laws but can help you understand what you need to do to comply with specific regulations.

Downland and read Codes of Practice at Safe Work Australia & Work Safe ACT (Select the codes relevant to your business)

I don't think WHS applies to me and my business?

In WHS law, a person or organisation that has obligations is referred to as a PCBU (Person conducting a business or undertaking). WHS laws applies to all PCBU's and responsibilities extend to all workers such as contractors and volunteers, and environments such as offsite, remote or working from home.

For more information on PCBU duties and how to determine if you are considered a PCBU refer to,

» **Safe Work Australia**: Duties under WHS Laws and download this fact sheet.

NOTE: The definition of a 'Worker' under WHS law is different to the definition of a 'Worker' under Workers Compensation law. Be careful to refer to resources and definitions relating to WHS law to understand your obligations correctly.

How does this apply to me when we have had no injuries in our workplace?

WHS law is about workplace harm prevention and minimisation. It is about the processes, procedures and actions you have in place to keep workers safe regardless of whether harm has occurred. An injury does not need to have occurred for a PCBU to be found in breach of their obligations under the WHS Act. Similarly, an injury does not need to have occurred for a workplace to be asked by the regulator to provide evidence that they are meeting their obligations under the Act.

Non-compliance with WHS laws can result in penalties for businesses, organisations and individuals. Learn more about the possible consequences of non-compliance at these links,

» **Safe Work Australia**: Penalties under WHS laws

» **Safe Work Australia**: Maximum monetary penalties comparison table

Physical and psychological safety is equal under WHS law

Understanding and complying to your psychosocial health and safety obligations is as important as creating a physically safe workplace. The Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 now prescribes how employers must identify and manage hazards and risks to workers' psychological health and safety.

The ACT Government's code of practice 'Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work Code of Practice' commenced on 27 November 2023. It provides practical guidance on how to meet WHS duties in relation to the management of psychosocial hazards. It follows the WHS risk management approach, including a requirement for PCBUs to proactively identify psychosocial hazards before injury occurs, by implementing organisational-level change.

» **ACT Legislation**: The ACT Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work Code of Practice.

What is my level of responsibility?

Everyone has a duty of care, a responsibility, to make sure that they and other people are safe in the workplace. PCBU's and workers hold WHS responsibility under the law. An individual's role within the organisation will determine their WHS duties and level of accountability.

Find out more about how to meet your duties under work health and safety (WHS) laws,

» **WorkSafe ACT**: Rights and responsibilities of PCBU's, workplaces and workers

» **Safe Work Australia**: Duties under WHS laws

What do I do if something goes wrong?

If a notifiable incident occurs, you need to report it to WorkSafe ACT. However, you don't have to wait for something to go wrong. A person can also submit a report to WorkSafe ACT if they have a concern or complaint about a workplace. Again, remember, you don't have to experience an incident to be in breach of your WHS obligations.

Find out more information about what a notifiable incident is and what steps you need to take when an incident occurs.

» **WorkSafe ACT:** Notify WorkSafe ACT

» **WorkSafe ACT:** Report a workplace concern

Simple risk management

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Risk assessments don't need to be complex, but risk assessments <u>need to be in place</u>.

What you must do!

	Implement risk management.	• Identify workplace hazards • Assess the risk • Define and implement controls • Review for effectiveness
	Consult with your workers.	• Throughout the risk management process • When making changes that affect health and safety • When creating processes and procedures
	Document your approach.	• Provide evidence of risk management processes • Provide evidence that controls have been implemented • Provide evidence of consultation

	Monitor and review	• Schedule a review after:
		  • an incident or near miss in the workplace,
		  • when workers or their representatives say that it is needed,
		  • after significant workplace changes and
		  • at regular intervals.
		• Document your review process and changes made.

Creating a risk profile

All workplaces are different and will experience different workplace hazards. However, the steps you take to identify and manage risks is the same.

	How its described?	What it means?
HAZARD	1. Identify workplace hazards *Things and situations that could harm a person in a workplace.*	What do we do? How do we do it?
RISK	2. Assess the risk, consequence and likelihood of harm occurring. *What could happen if someone is exposed to a hazard and the likelihood of it happening.*	What can go wrong? How bad can it be? How concerned am I?
CONTROL	3. Define and implement controls that eliminate, substitute, isolate, engineer or administer the hazard/risk. *What controls do you need in place to eliminate or minimise the risk?*	What can I do to stop it happening? Can I just get rid of the hazard? Can I replace it with something else? Can I move it away from the workers? Can I introduce a device or process? Can I make workers behave differently? Can I provide protective equipment?
REVIEW	4. Review for effectiveness *Regularly review your control measures to make sure they work as planned.*	Is it still working right? How are we measuring outcomes? What changes do we need to make?

» Use the Healthier Work Risk Management template

» Read more information about how to manage work health and safety risks in the

How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks Code of Practice

Examples of hazards

While we classify different workplace hazards as being physical or psychosocial it is important to understand that hazards can have outcomes that impact both the physical and psychological safety of workers. When creating a risk profile assess each hazard for both outcomes.

PHYSICAL	IMPACT		PSYCHOSOCIAL	IMPACT	
Access and egress	✓	✓	Bullying	✓	✓
Biohazards and chemicals	✓		Complex decision making	✓	
Cash handling	✓	✓	Confined spaces	✓	✓
Electricity	✓		Poor relationships	✓	
Falling objects	✓		Diverse workers	✓	
Heat and cold	✓	✓	Drugs and alcohol	✓	✓
Heights	✓	✓	Fatigue	✓	✓
Hot oil	✓		Highly repetitive tasks	✓	✓
Infectious diseases	✓		Inadequate recognition	✓	
Lifting, pushing and pulling	✓		High workload	✓	✓
Lighting	✓	✓	Insufficient work	✓	
Long commuting times	✓	✓	Long periods of vigilance	✓	✓
Machinery	✓		Long work hours	✓	✓
Noise	✓	✓	Low job control	✓	
Office layout	✓	✓	Low role clarity	✓	
Opening and closing	✓	✓	Emotionally demanding work	✓	
Outdoor work	✓		Poor change management	✓	
Physically demanding work	✓		Poor organisational justice	✓	
Poor air quality	✓		Poor support	✓	
Repetitive movement	✓		Racism	✓	✓
Shift and night work	✓	✓	Remote and isolated work	✓	
Sitting and standing	✓		Sexual harassment	✓	✓
Slips, trips and falls	✓		Traumatic events	✓	✓
Vehicles	✓	✓	Violence and aggression	✓	✓

Physical and psychosocial risk management

All workplaces will experience both physical and psychosocial risks and the steps you take to manage both are the same. Use the same process, tools, documentation and reporting mechanisms to manage all your risks whether they are physical or psychosocial.

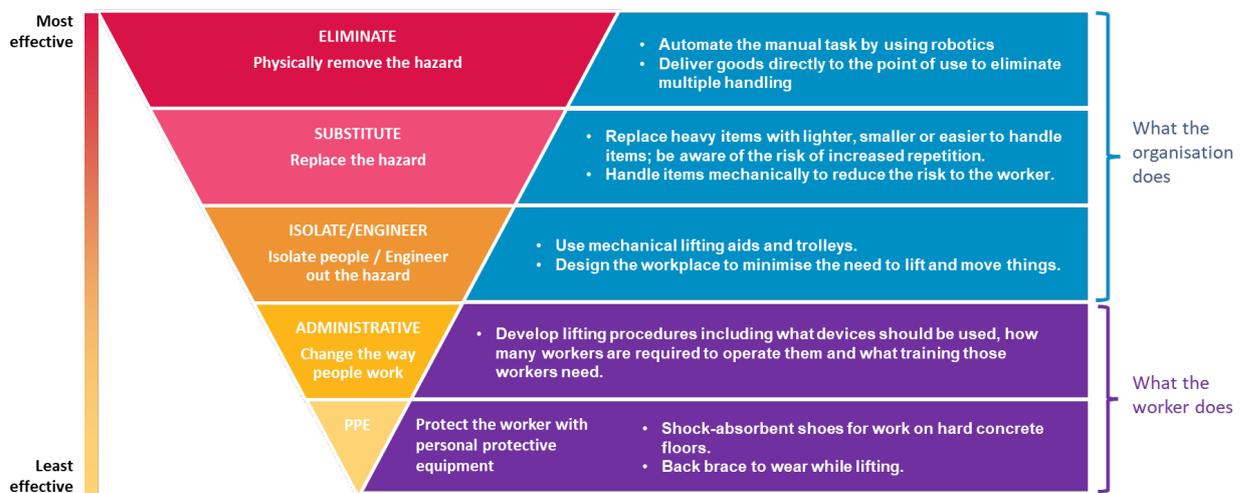| **PHYSICAL**		**PSYCHOSOCIAL**
Hazard: Doughnut mixer not guarded and mixing bowl can be accessed when machine is operating.	**IDENTIFY**	**Hazard:** The role has high mental job demands.
Risk: The person operating the mixer could be injured by the moving parts. Harm could include cuts or crush injuries such as broken bones, potentially resulting in amputation or fatality. **Consequence:** Severe physical injury **Likelihood:** Very likely **Outcome:** High risk	**ASSESS**	**Risk:** The worker is unable to complete tasks, meet deadlines and is exposed to increasing levels of stress and fatigue, that could lead to anxiety and burnout. **Consequence:** Major psychological injury. **Likelihood:** Moderate **Outcome:** High risk
Eliminate: Eliminating the use of the mixer or automating the process. **Substitute:** Use of the mixer could be substituted by hand-mixing the dough or replaced with a new, safer machine with a built-in guard. **Engineer:** Modify mixer by adding an interlocking guard. A mixer could be hired for the period the old mixer is in for repairs. **Administer:** Staff told to keep hands away from the mixing bowl while it is in use. **PPE:** Provide protective clothing to worker.	**CONTROL**	**Eliminate:** Plan your workforce so you have an adequate number of appropriately skilled staff to do the work. **Substitute:** Rotate workers through demanding or repetitive tasks. **Engineer:** Schedule tasks to avoid intense or sustained low or high job demands. Plan shifts to allow adequate rest and recovery, particularly between periods of high demand. **Administer:** Provide time and workload management training. **PPE:** Provide access to resources and advice for stress management
Measures: Number incidents/injuries, compensation claims, WHS reports **Review outcomes:** Were the controls used successful in reducing risk? **Changes:** What adjustments need to be made?	**REVIEW**	**Measures:** Number personal leave days, employee retention, compensation claims, employee feedback. **Review outcomes:** Were the controls used successful in reducing risk? **Changes**: What adjustments need to be made?

Understanding the hierarchy of controls

Physical hazards

WHS legislation requires workplaces to try and eliminate the risk before simply minimising the risk. Eliminating the risk is the most effective way of making your workplace safe. The hierarchy of controls describes the most effective strategies for controlling risks down to the least effective strategies. While all controls are important in making a workplace safe, the most effective controls are those managed by the organisation, by implementing organisational-level change. Prioritising controls that implement organisational-level change will have a greater impact on risk minimisation than individual worker behaviour. Effective risk management plans should involve multiple controls across all levels of the hierarchy of controls.

Most effective	ELIMINATE	Physically remove the hazard	What the organisation does
	SUBSTITUTE	Replace the hazard	
	ISOLATE/ENGINEER	Isolate people from the hazard / Engineer out the hazard	
	ADMINISTRATIVE	Change the way people work	What the worker does
Least effective	PPE	Protect the worker with personal protective equipment	

Physical hazard example: Manual handling

Most effective	ELIMINATE — Physically remove the hazard	• Automate the manual task by using robotics • Deliver goods directly to the point of use to eliminate multiple handling	What the organisation does
	SUBSTITUTE — Replace the hazard	• Replace heavy items with lighter, smaller or easier to handle items; be aware of the risk of increased repetition. • Handle items mechanically to reduce the risk to the worker.	
	ISOLATE/ENGINEER — Isolate people / Engineer out the hazard	• Use mechanical lifting aids and trolleys. • Design the workplace to minimise the need to lift and move things.	
	ADMINISTRATIVE — Change the way people work	• Develop lifting procedures including what devices should be used, how many workers are required to operate them and what training those workers need.	What the worker does
Least effective	PPE — Protect the worker with personal protective equipment	• Shock-absorbent shoes for work on hard concrete floors. • Back brace to wear while lifting.	

Psychosocial hazards

The hierarchy of controls for psychosocial hazards is the same as for physical hazards. The most effective controls are those managed by the organisation implementing organisational-level change and the least effective are those managed by individual worker behaviour. Education, training and the promotion of positive individual behaviour strategies on their own, will be the least effective way of managing a psychosocial hazard such as high job demands, bullying or workplace conflict. A successful risk management plan for psychosocial hazards must include organisational responsibilities that eliminate, substitute or redesign the work environment.

ELIMINATE — Eliminate working conditions that threaten safety, health and wellbeing

SUBSTITUTE — Replace with health enhancing policies, programs and practices

REDESIGN — Redesign the work and environment for safety, health and wellbeing

What the organisation does

EDUCATE — Educate and train for safety and health

ENCOURAGE * — Encourage personal change

What the worker does

Most effective / Least effective

Psychosocial hazard example: High job demands

ELIMINATE — Eliminate working conditions that threaten safety, health and wellbeing
- Design the workplace to eliminate demanding tasks
- Plan your workforce so you have an adequate number of appropriately skilled staff to do the work

SUBSTITUTE — Replace with health enhancing policies, programs and practices
- Rotate workers through demanding or repetitive tasks.
- Regularly review and update work policies and procedures to avoid unnecessary work and set achievable performance targets
- Have systems for escalating problems and getting support

REDESIGN — Redesign the work and environment for safety, health and wellbeing
- Schedule tasks to avoid intense or sustained low or high job demands
- Plan shifts to allow adequate rest and recovery, particularly between periods of high demand.
- Provide quiet spaces for workers doing mentally demanding work.

What the organisation does

EDUCATE — Educate and train for safety and health
- Provide training if required to ensure workers have the skills to meet work demands. Eg, Time and workload management training.
- If emotional demands are an unavoidable part of a worker's role, ensure these are captured in the position description and applicants are informed.

ENCOURAGE * — Encourage personal change
- Provide stress management and resilience training
- Provide access to resources and advice for stress management
- Provide mindfulness and relaxation classes.

What the worker does

Most effective / Least effective

For more information:

» **Safe Work Australia**: Managing risks - Identify, assess and control hazards

» **WorkSafe ACT**: Safety Management – SAFE steps

Consult with your workers

3

Worker representation and consultation is an essential part of the WHS Act that ensures fair and effective workplace representation, consultation, co-operation and issue resolution.

> **Remember**, consulting with your workers about workplace health and safety is a legal requirement and failing to do so may be considered a breach of the WHS regulations.

A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) MUST consult with workers, health and safety representatives and other duty holders when:

» identifying hazards and assessing risks arising from work and making decisions about ways to eliminate or minimise those risks;

» making decisions about the adequacy of facilities for the welfare of workers;

» proposing changes that may affect the health or safety of workers; and,

» making decisions about the procedures, including those for:

  o consultation with workers;

  o resolving work health or safety issues;

  o monitoring the health of workers;

  o monitoring workplace conditions;

  o providing information and training to workers; and,

  o when carrying out any other activity prescribed by the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011.

Regular consultation is better than consulting only as issues arise on a case-by-case basis because it allows you to identify and fix potential problems early.

Read more about your worker representation and consultation obligations,

» **WorkSafe ACT**: Worker representation and consultation

» **Safe Work Australia**: Consultation

Find out more information about how to consult with workers,

» **Safe Work Australia**: How to consult with workers

Download the code of practice for detailed information,

» **ACT Legislation Register**: Work Health and Safety (Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination Code of Practice) Approval 2023

Document your approach

4

Employers are required to keep health and safety records and statistics on file. This doesn't need to be fancy, but it does need to be done. There are various offline and online resources that can provide an outline of how you can structure this, but the main thing is that it is in place. Often, workplaces are undertaking steps to prevent harm, but they fail to document, or fully document, what they are doing.

Remember, without evidence, you cannot demonstrate to the Regulator how you are keeping your employees safe.

Maintain health and safety records and statistics and keep all your written health and safety records organised and available for reference.

Records and statistics that should be maintained include:

» records of consultation on safety matters with your workers;

» health and safety program reviews that can help track the progress of the program;

» worker orientation records that can help ensure that workers are getting the education and training they need;

» inspection reports that can provide historical information about hazards a business has encountered and how they were dealt with;

» monthly meeting records that can help monitor how promptly and how well action items have been carried out;

» incident investigation reports that can clarify which hazards have caused incidents and how they were controlled;

» first aid assessments that can help determine the first aid requirements for the workplace; and

» first aid records that can provide injury statistics that will help prioritise health and safety efforts.

» education and training material, activities and attendance records

Statistics that may be of value include the:

» number of incidents and injuries each year;

» number of workdays lost each year; and,

» cost to the business from workplace injuries each year.

» number of complaints and grievances

» employee engagement and satisfaction survey statistics

to explore suggested documentation templates and checklists.

Simple tips and tricks

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Small things can make a big difference for SAFETY

The small things in workplaces can often have the biggest impact. Think about a job or workplace where you most enjoyed working. Generally, this is likely to be a workplace or job where you liked working with your colleagues, felt supported by your supervisor, and received good support (training, autonomy, supervision) from management. Usually, it's not the job and its tasks, but the small things that made up your daily working life that made this job or workplace most enjoyable.

The small things that your staff experience every day will have an impact. And we know that workplace relationships, if positive, can have a great impact on staff wellbeing, productivity and safety. These relationships can even help buffer against harm.

Think about:

» The types of regular interactions your staff have with one another, and with clients or other stakeholders. Are these supportive, generally productive or professional?

» Do your staff greet one another at the beginning of the shift, and say goodbye at the end?

» How can you convey support, model what you want to see, and set behaviour expectations?

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Get bang for your buck! ELIMINATE first

Remember, the legislation requires you to do all that is reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk BEFORE you consider ways of minimising it (just reducing). Elimination is the most effective way of making your workplace safe.

That means, you must try to do everything you can to eliminate the risk first. Elimination usually means you need to look beyond the individual incident or risk and onto higher level factors that include the whole workplace.

Only when you can't eliminate the risk, can you consider minimising it, such as through training or protective equipment.

ELIMINATE

SUBSTITUTE / ISOLATE / ENGINEER

ADMINISTER

PPE

Most effectiv

Least effective
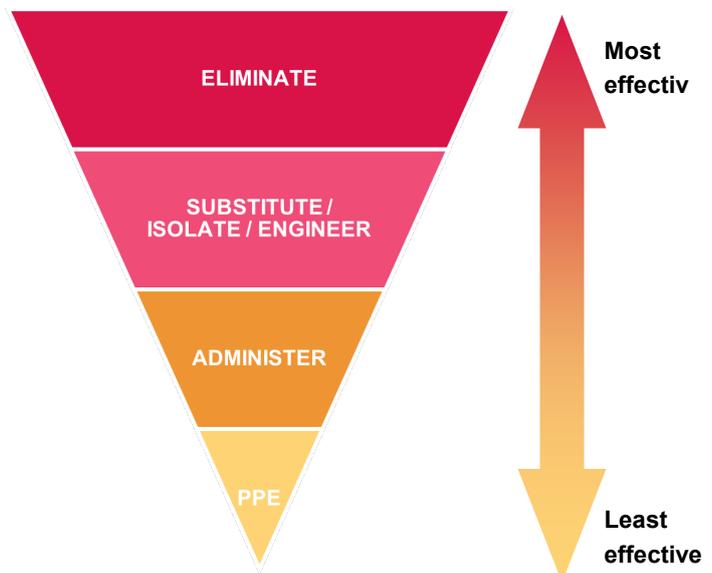
Share problems and find solutions, TALK

While you have a legislative obligation to consult with your workers, it also makes sense to do so. Consulting with your workers means you can ask them what they think, and you can work together to manage health and safety. Your workers will have excellent knowledge and direct experience about what in the workplace could cause them harm, what might eliminate (or reduce) the risk, and what they need to feel safe at work. They might help you find a solution! Not only might your workers have valuable ideas about eliminating the risk, but workers generally like to be consulted. Consultation helps build a sense of working collaboratively to be safe at work, feeling part of the workplace, and feeling that their opinions and perspectives are valued.

Consultation doesn't have to be extremely formal, but it does need to occur (and be documented). Think about your workforce and workers, and how they might like to be consulted and how you can ensure they all get a chance to contribute if they want to. Depending on the nature of the work and the workplace, this could be:

- » Sending an email asking for feedback.
- » Including health and safety in your 1-1 catch ups with staff.
- » Having a 5-minute team talk (or toolbox talk) about safety, risks and potential ways of managing the risks.
- » Including health and safety as a standing agenda item in your existing meetings.

Just keep an EYE on things…

WHS requires you not just to identify and assess risks, but to make sure you monitor and review your approaches to make sure that the things you have in place to eliminate or minimise the risk are still working, and that any new or changed risks are identified and managed.

How and when you monitor and review will depend on your workplace, but you need to ensure you have a method in place and that this is recorded. Some ways you might do this include:

- » Setting a reminder in the work calendar or schedule to review
- » Selecting a regular date for review (e.g. the first Monday of the month)
- » Ad-hoc reviews and monitoring are required in the event of a new risk, a change in the workplace, or other trigger (e.g. a legislative change)
- » A worker or workers give you feedback that indicates things are not working, have changed, or need review
- » An incident occurs

Resources
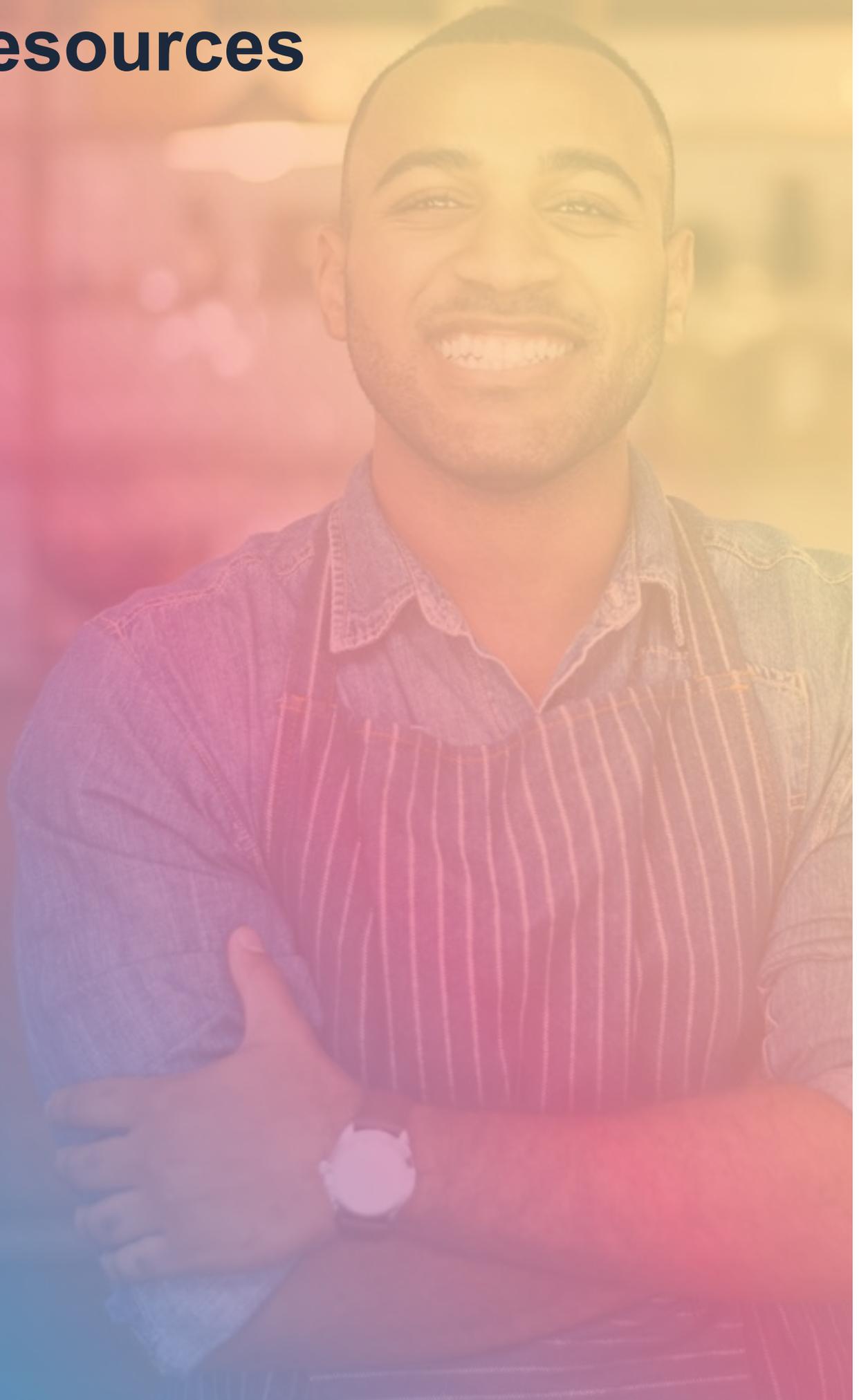
These are only suggested resources. Organisations should consider their own needs when selecting resources to use.

Websites

- » **Safe Work Australia** safeworkaustralia.gov.au
- » **Work Safe ACT** worksafe.act.gov.au
- » **Comcare** comcare.gov.au
- » **Fair Work Ombudsman** fairwork.gov.au
- » **Fair Work Commission** fwc.gov.au

Legislation and code of practice

- » **ACT Legislation Register:** The Work Health and Safety Act
- » **ACT Legislation Register:** The Work Health and Safety Regulation
- » **SafeWork Australia**: Work Health and Safety Codes of Practice (Select the Codes relevant to your business)
- » **Work Safe ACT**: Work Health and Safety Codes of Practice (Select the Codes relevant to your business)
- » **Links to other State and Territory regulators:** Safe Work Australia contact page

Templates

- » **Healthier Work:** Risk Management template
- » **SafeWork ACT:** Safety Checklists – Downloadable check lists for hazards, risk management and inductions
- » **SafeWork SA:** Psychosocial risk assessment tool - identify the hazards, assess and prioritise risk, control risk and review effectiveness of controls.
- » **WorkSafe QLD**: Managing risks tools and templates - tools and templates to help improve health and safety in your business
- » **Victorian Government:** Risk register and treatment plan template - identify risks that could affect your business, the likelihood of it happening and the possible consequences
- » **SafeWork NSW**: Easy WHS template - Simple checklists, registers, plans and report templates.

General resources

Risk management

» **WorkSafe ACT**: Risk management - Details how the risk management process applies to all hazards and risks and can be used for physical hazards and psychosocial hazards alike.

» **WorkSafe ACT**: Safety Management – SAFE steps

» **Comcare**: Office Safety Tool - A tool to help you identify health and safety risks in your home or office space.

» **Safe Work Australia**: Managing risks - Identify, assess and control hazards - Resources on how to identify, assess and control hazards.

Psychosocial hazards

» **ACT Government**: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work Code of Practice and infographic - The Code of Practice and the WHS Regulation Amendments set out clear duties for persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) when managing psychosocial hazards at work.

» **Safe Work Australia**: Psychosocial hazards - Details common psychosocial hazards, how they cause harm and how to manage them.

» **Black Dog Institute**: Psychosocial hazards - Details how to manage psychosocial hazards in your workplace

» **Comcare**: Psychosocial hazards - Identifies 14 psychosocial hazards and provides information on what they are, the risks they pose and how to eliminate or minimise them in your workplace.

Physical hazards

» **Safe Work Australia**: Hazards - Details how you to manage hazards and keep yourself and your workers safe from harm.

» **Comcare**: Physical hazards - Details types of physical hazards, types of work and industries, and provides suggested training.

Industry specific information

» **WorkSafe ACT**: Safety by industry - Choose the industry you work in, to find out more about work health and safety, that's relevant to you.

» **Safe Work Australia**: Industry and business – Industry specific hazards and risk management requirements.

Representation and consultation

» **WorkSafe ACT**: Worker representation and consultation – Details how a person in control of a business or undertaking must consult, so far as is reasonably practicable, with workers.

» **Safe Work Australia**: Consultation - If you're a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), you must consult with workers and other duty holders in managing work health and safety risks.

» **Safe Work Australia:** How to consult with workers - Consultation with workers can be done in different ways depending on what suits the size and complexity of the workplace and your workers.

» **ACT Legislation Register:** Work Health and Safety (Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination Code of Practice) Approval 2023

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Healthier People.
Healthier Work.