Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment Policy

For Australian Small & Medium Enterprises

Template Version 1.0 | December 2024

Important Notice

This template is provided as a general guide only and should be customised to your specific workplace. We recommend having this policy reviewed by a WHS professional or legal advisor before implementation to ensure compliance with your state or territory legislation.

1. Purpose

This policy establishes a systematic approach to identifying hazards and assessing risks in the workplace, enabling [Company Name] to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All workplaces, work activities, and work situations
- All employees, contractors, and visitors
- All plant, equipment, substances, and structures
- Design and planning of work processes

3. Definitions

Hazard: A source or situation with the potential to cause harm in terms of injury, illness, damage to property, or the environment.

Risk: The likelihood of harm occurring from exposure to a hazard, combined with the severity of that harm.

Control: An action or measure taken to eliminate or minimise a risk.

4. Risk Management Process

[Company Name] follows a systematic risk management process:

- Step 1: Identify hazards
- Step 2: Assess risks
- Step 3: Control risks
- Step 4: Review controls

5. Hazard Identification

5.1 When to Identify Hazards

Hazard identification must be undertaken:

- When new plant, equipment, or substances are introduced
- When work processes or procedures change
- When new information about hazards becomes available
- Following incidents, near misses, or illnesses
- When workplace layout or design changes
- As part of regular workplace inspections
- When workers report concerns

5.2 Methods of Hazard Identification

Hazards can be identified through:

- Regular workplace inspections
- Consultation with workers
- Review of incident reports and records
- Analysis of work processes (job safety analysis)
- Review of manufacturer information and safety data sheets
- Review of legislation, codes of practice, and standards
- External audits and assessments

5.3 Types of Hazards

Common workplace hazards include:

- Physical hazards – noise, vibration, temperature, radiation
- Chemical hazards – hazardous substances, dusts, fumes
- Biological hazards – bacteria, viruses, bodily fluids
- Ergonomic hazards – manual handling, repetitive movements, posture
- Psychosocial hazards – stress, bullying, violence, fatigue
- Mechanical hazards – machinery, vehicles, falling objects
- Electrical hazards – electrical equipment, wiring
- Environmental hazards – weather, lighting, ventilation

6. Risk Assessment

6.1 When to Assess Risks

A risk assessment must be conducted:

- When a hazard is identified

- Before introducing new work practices, plant, or substances
- When there is uncertainty about control effectiveness
- Following incidents or near misses
- As part of legislative requirements for specific hazards

6.2 Risk Assessment Process

Risk assessment involves evaluating:

- Likelihood – how likely is it that harm will occur?
- Consequence – how severe could the harm be?
- The risk level is determined by combining likelihood and consequence

6.3 Factors to Consider

When assessing risk, consider:

- How the hazard could cause harm
- Who might be harmed and how
- Frequency and duration of exposure
- Existing controls and their effectiveness
- Whether multiple hazards interact
- Workplace conditions and environment
- Worker characteristics (experience, training, health)

6.4 Risk Matrix

[Company Name] uses a risk matrix to assess and prioritise risks based on likelihood and consequence. Risk levels guide the urgency and type of control measures required.

7. Risk Control

7.1 Hierarchy of Controls

Risks must be controlled following the hierarchy of controls (in order of effectiveness):

- Elimination – remove the hazard completely (most effective)
- Substitution – replace with something less hazardous
- Isolation – physically separate people from the hazard
- Engineering controls – modify equipment, tools, or environment
- Administrative controls – change work procedures, training, signage
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – last resort

Higher-level controls should always be considered before lower-level controls. Often a combination of controls is required.

7.2 Selecting Controls

When selecting controls, consider:

- Effectiveness in eliminating or reducing risk
- Reliability of the control
- Whether the control introduces new hazards
- Practicability of implementation
- Cost versus risk reduction benefit
- Worker input and acceptance

7.3 Implementing Controls

Control measures must be:

- Implemented in a timely manner (based on risk level)
- Communicated to affected workers
- Supported by appropriate training
- Documented and maintained
- Monitored for effectiveness

8. Review of Controls

Control measures must be reviewed:

- When the control is not effective in managing risk
- Before changes to work practices, plant, or substances
- When new hazards or risks are identified
- Following incidents or near misses
- When new information becomes available
- Following consultation with workers
- At regular intervals (e.g., annually)

9. Consultation

[Company Name] will consult with workers on hazard identification and risk management. This includes:

- Involving workers in workplace inspections
- Seeking input on risk assessments
- Discussing proposed control measures
- Providing feedback on reports and suggestions

Workers have valuable knowledge about the hazards in their work and the effectiveness of controls.

10. Documentation

[Company Name] will maintain records of:

- Hazard reports
- Risk assessments
- Control measures implemented
- Workplace inspection reports
- Review and monitoring activities

Records assist in tracking hazards, demonstrating compliance, and supporting continuous improvement.

11. Responsibilities

11.1 Management

- Ensure hazard identification and risk assessment processes are implemented
- Provide resources for risk management activities
- Make decisions on risk controls
- Review risk management effectiveness

11.2 Supervisors

- Conduct regular workplace inspections
- Participate in risk assessments
- Implement and monitor control measures
- Report hazards and risks to management
- Ensure workers are trained in controls

11.3 Employees

- Report hazards and risks
- Participate in hazard identification and risk assessment
- Follow control measures and procedures
- Report control measure failures
- Provide feedback on control effectiveness

12. Reporting Hazards

All employees must report hazards promptly. Hazards can be reported:

- Verbally to a supervisor
- Using the hazard report form
- Through the online reporting system

All reports will be acknowledged and actioned. Employees will not be disadvantaged for reporting hazards.

13. Training

Training will be provided on:

- How to identify hazards
- How to report hazards
- Risk assessment process
- Understanding and using control measures
- Specific hazards relevant to job roles

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- At least annually
- Following significant incidents
- When work activities change significantly
- When legislation or standards change

Employee Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read and understood [Company Name]'s Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment Policy. I understand my responsibility to identify and report hazards and to follow risk control measures.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____