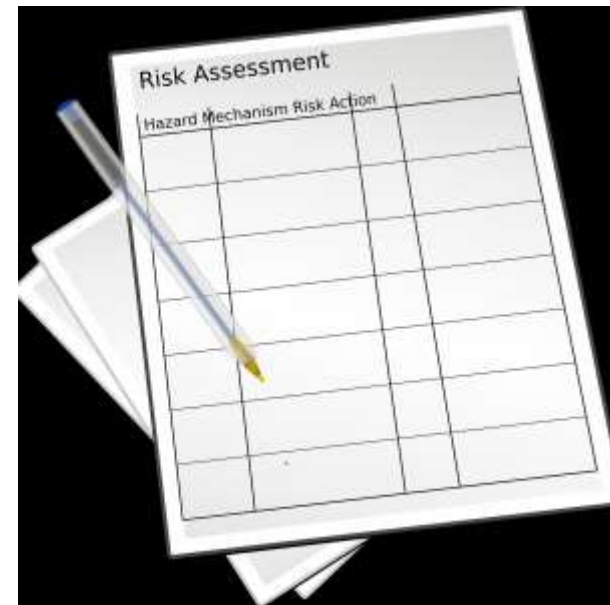


# HEALTH & SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENTS

**What risk assessment is;**

- **Why we do risk assessments;**
- **How to do a risk assessment.**



Risk assessments are an easy way to ensure that you have contributed to the prevention of risk to yourself or others.

Risk assessments are not difficult and can help to create a better work environment for everyone.

# WHAT IS A RISK ASSESSMENT?



**A risk assessment is the formal tool for systematically identifying:**

- What can physically or psychologically injure or damage a person (harm);
- The level of possible harm;
- What is currently being done to avoid the harm (the Control);
- Whether that control will be effective to avoid the harm;
- Whether or not additional controls need to be put in place to better avoid the harm.

## **WHAT IS A RISK ASSESSMENT?**



**A Health and Safety Risk Assessment is a process where you identify, assess and control hazards that may affect people at the place of work. The larger and more intense the project, the task, or the space being assessed, the greater the effort needed to complete the Risk Assessment.**

**Effective Risk Assessment in turn helps us to successfully undertake Risk Management**

# WHAT IS RISK MANAGEMENT?

The four main steps of Risk Management:

- Identify hazards
- Assess the risks of the hazard
- Select appropriate risk controls, or decide not to continue with an activity
- Periodically review the process and the risk controls to ensure they are working and preventing harm.

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The risk management process is used for assessing the risk of many organizational activities not just health and safety e.g. finance and credit, third party accidents and insurances, disasters and security risks.

This Risk Management process uses Health and Safety Risk Assessments to identify practical steps to protect all people from real harm and injury.

## **WHY DO IT?**

It is not always possible to remove all the hazards in a workplace for example:

- Stairs
- Uneven paths outdoors
- Handling chemicals as part of the job
- Using tools and machinery
- Lifting objects

However, these hazards do not necessarily cause harm if there are appropriate controls in place to prevent the harm. Risk assessment helps with selecting the controls and prioritizing action for implementation.

## WHY DO IT (CONTINUED)?

There are three main reasons for undertaking risk assessments:

- Ethical: Any employer is obliged to send its staff home in the same condition they came to work.
- Financial: Injury and illness costs (monetary and through loss of skills and knowledge) can be a large financial burden on both the organisation and the individual;
- Legal: Employers are legally bound by a "duty of care". The WorkCover Authority of New South Wales administers Health and Safety laws and an inspector may ask to be shown a risk assessment while investigating any safety incidents or near misses.



## **WHY DO IT (CONTINUED)?**

The Work Health and Safety Legislation requires that all hazards must be eliminated unless it is not reasonable to do so. In cases where hazards cannot be eliminated, they must be managed according to a set formula called the "Hierarchy of Controls".

There are substantial fines for both organisations and individuals for non-compliance with legislative requirements.

The University manages its responsibilities in regards to Health and Safety through a number of procedures. Risk Assessment is a fundamental part of these procedures as it helps to identify and quantify possible health risks. Risk assessment also helps to prioritise action to reduce the possibility of injuries to staff, students and visitors.

## WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

Supervisors and managers are legally responsible for their area of control. This includes:

- Academic Supervisors
  - Chief investigators
  - Laboratory Managers
  - Teaching staff
  - Professional staff who have control over activities and team members
- Other people will get involved in the risk management process and will undertake risk assessments

when required e.g.:

- Professional staff members
  - Students
  - Health and Safety Committee members
- All these people need to have an understanding of risk management and how to conduct a risk assessment of the tasks within their work area.

## **WHEN SHOULD A RISK ASSESSMENT BE DONE?**

**Guidelines list a range of circumstances where risk assessments are required including:**

- Before setting up and using a workplace;
- When planning work processes;
- Before installing, commissioning or erecting plant or equipment;
- Whenever changes are made to the: o Workplace; o System or method of work; o Plant or equipment used; o Materials used;
- Whenever new information regarding work processes becomes available.