

# Creating a Key Risk Inventory for Your Workplace

Engaging Your Workers to Help Manage Risks



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# Managing workplace risks

Employers in British Columbia are responsible for **establishing and maintaining a healthy and safe workplace**. This involves finding out what might cause harm to your workers and determining whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm from happening — in other words, **managing risks** in your workplace.

Effectively managing risks in your workplace involves four steps:

1. Understanding the risks by identifying hazards and assessing the risks
2. Implementing risk control measures
3. Communicating your program to managers, supervisors, and workers
4. Monitoring and updating control measures

A key risk inventory (KRI) can help you manage workplace risk. This guide describes what a KRI is and how to create one by collaborating with your workers.

Your workers have first-hand experience and knowledge about many key risks in your workplace. The best way to develop a KRI that's specific to your workplace is to have meaningful conversations with your front-line workers, supervisors, lead hands, managers, joint health and safety committee members (or worker health and safety representative), and trained health and safety personnel about the key risks that they see in the workplace.

# What is a key risk inventory (KRI)?

A key risk inventory (KRI) is an easy-to-read summary of the key risks in each area across your site. A KRI briefly describes each key risk, the current risk controls in place, and whether those controls need to be improved. It can be electronic or paper based, depending on the size and needs of your organization. While it is a tool to help you as an employer, it is not something that you are required to submit to WorkSafeBC.

## What we mean by *key risks*

*Key risks* for any department are risks that have resulted in or might result in a serious injury, fatality, or disease.

You can easily build a KRI for your entire site by focusing on one area at a time and following the steps described in this guide.

Your KRI is a living document that will help you protect your workers. Establishing and maintaining a KRI helps demonstrate that you are being duly diligent by actively managing the risks at your workplace. Creating and using a KRI will help you:

- Understand and manage risks specific to each area
- Identify who is at risk
- Make sure your control measures are appropriate for the risks
- Prioritize risks for control measure improvements
- Keep track of who is accountable
- Orient and train workers
- Prevent injuries and illnesses

You should review and update your KRI periodically, including when conditions or processes change, new equipment is purchased, or control measures are modified.

## A summary specific to your site

A KRI will help you track risks in each area across your workplace. It provides a summary of the key risks in each area, with information about:

- Department
- Location
- Task or activity
- Occupations likely to be exposed

- Risk controls currently in place
- Risk control improvements to be made

## **An inventory that includes everyone’s viewpoint**

Putting together an effective KRI takes collaboration and teamwork. Include a variety of people who are knowledgeable about the activities in the department to ensure that you have enough perspectives to identify the key risks.

You should involve the following people in each department:

- Supervisors and lead hands
- Experienced workers
- New workers
- Management
- Health and safety personnel
- Joint health and safety committee members (or worker health and safety representative)

Listen to what they say about the key risks that they see and their safety concerns in the department. For sample questions that will help you when you meet and collaborate with your employees, see the section “How to create a key risk inventory.”

If you have a joint committee, the two co-chairs could be the ones who gather the information.

You may also want to consult with an external safety advisor from a health and safety association or call WorkSafeBC’s Prevention Information Line.

## **A way to help prioritize improvements**

A KRI will help you understand whether the control measures currently in place are effective enough or whether further improvement is needed. By focusing on key risks, you can prioritize your time to make sure you are preventing serious, potentially life-altering injuries.

## **A way to promote a positive health and safety culture**

Creating a KRI is rooted in open communication and worker participation, two key concepts for [developing a positive safety culture](#) in your workplace. Workplace trust grows stronger with open and transparent communication.

Engaging your workers in conversations about the key risks in your workplace will help you create a KRI and build a stronger health and safety culture for your organization.

# How to create a key risk inventory

This section includes general tips for facilitating discussions with department personnel and sample questions to ask during these discussions. At the end of this section, there is a list of departmental reports and records that you should review.

## Start with one area or department

To get a sense of the key health and safety risks in your workplace, you can start with one area or department. Talk to a variety of people who are familiar with the work that is done in each area.

## Facilitate discussions

When speaking with workers, use these helpful tips:

- Come with a sense of curiosity about their work and be open-minded.
- Listening is key. This is your workers' time to share with you.
- Tap into the knowledge and experiences of the people you speak with. They work in the areas where you're gathering information about the key risks.
- Be aware of your own potential biases. Keep in mind any long-standing workplace culture issues, fears of speaking up, or experiences of not being heard in the past.
- Ask open-ended questions and listen actively.

## Ask specific questions

This list of sample questions is not exhaustive, but it can serve as a starting point for your discussions.

### **Health and safety personnel, worker co-chair for joint health and safety committee, department manager**

1. What are the biggest health and safety risks for workers in this department?
2. What are you most concerned about in this area? Why?

### **Supervisors and workers — general risks**

1. What are the biggest health and safety issues in this department?
2. Are there tasks that you routinely have to stop to think about before completing them safely? Why?
3. What are you most worried about from a safety perspective in this department? What tasks concern you the most?

4. Which tool or machine are you most concerned about? Why?
5. If you're orienting a new worker, what would you teach the worker about in this area and why?
6. Where do you think a serious injury could occur in this department? Why?
7. Have you had a close call where there was nearly an injury? Has someone else had a close call? What was it related to?

### **Supervisors and workers — occupational disease risks**

1. What tasks do you find give you sprains or strains, or are especially demanding?
2. Are there tasks that cause you to work above your shoulder height, bent over, or fully stretched out repeatedly or for long periods of time?
3. Are there loud noises in this area during work?
4. Do you notice any strong smells while working?
5. Do you work with any specific materials or substances that concern you (e.g., chemicals, paints, solvents, silica, asbestos)?
6. Are there any biological substances that you may come into contact with?

### **Document the information**

You will need paper and a pen or pencil to write down the information that your workers provide about the key risks around different areas of your worksite. Alternatively, you can use our [customizable Word template](#) to record the information you gather as you interview workers, either electronically or by printing and completing by hand. You may also want to have a camera or smartphone to take photos — for example, to identify a piece of equipment, tool, work process, environment, or work area.

Many employers use software to manage their health and safety documents, workplace inspections, and incident investigations. Use the method that works for you to capture and document your key risk inventory. There's a sample template on page 9 for doing a key risk inventory using a spreadsheet application like Microsoft Excel.

### **Read existing reports and records**

Your organization likely already has health and safety reports and records that can help you understand some of the key risks in your workplace. Review the past two years of the following workplace reports and records to help prepare for your discussions:

- First aid records
- Incident investigation reports, including near misses

- Joint health and safety committee meeting minutes
- Workplace inspection records
- Work-related claims
- Any past worker surveys about health and safety

## Use WorkSafeBC resources

When preparing for discussions to create a KRI, consider common hazards and risks within your industry.

WorkSafeBC has tools that can help you identify the types of [serious injuries](#) and [deaths](#) that may occur in your workplace. We also have an interactive tool related to [industry risks](#) that shows the common types of health and safety issues that are seen across the province in your industry.

You can also find helpful information in the following WorkSafeBC resources:

- [Basics of risk management: Four steps to a healthy and safe workplace](#) (information sheet)
- [Industry](#) webpages
- [Hazard alerts and safety bulletins](#)
- [Industry statistics](#)
- [Risk advisories](#)

Some activities in your workplace that you are evaluating from a key risk perspective likely have parallels in other industries, so you may also want to review information from outside of your industry.

# Frequently asked questions

## **How long does it typically take to complete a KRI for each area or department?**

The time will vary depending on the size and complexity of your operation. On average, for a department of approximately 10 people in a manufacturing plant, you might spend:

- Up to 90 minutes having conversations with workers and taking notes
- About 60 minutes reviewing reports, records, and industry risk information
- About 75 minutes documenting the collected information in the template

## **Do I need to speak with everyone in each area or department?**

No, but to understand the key risks, you should be sure to speak with a representative cross-section of individuals who have a variety of experiences. For example, you could talk to an experienced worker, a new worker, a lead hand or supervisor, a health and safety representative, and a department manager (or health and safety coordinator or manager, if there is one).

## **Should the joint health and safety committee have access to the site's KRI?**

Yes. The compiled KRI is an invaluable summary of the key risks in each department and the improvements being planned. The joint committee should regularly review the KRI and the progress being made. The review could be a standing item at monthly joint committee meetings.

## **How often should I review the KRI for each department?**

At least annually, but you may need to review more frequently if your department is undergoing changes. Ask the department staff about any new equipment or processes that have been implemented recently. It's also good to review the KRI after an incident or near miss.

Your review should alert you to gaps in the department's KRI. A KRI is a living document, so you need to continue having conversations to identify new risks.

# Sample template for a key risk inventory

The sample table on the next page shows the kinds of information you might collect when interviewing workers and observing their activities. You can record your key risk inventory in whatever application works for you — for example, Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets. Using a spreadsheet or other database application for your KRI is a great way to track what you need to do to eliminate or further minimize the risks.

In the sample table, the top (blue) row describes the purpose of each column and the second (grey) row provides some guidance on how to collect information for that column. If necessary, add a column to list other risk assessment documents or safe work procedures for the key risks you have identified.

A [customizable Microsoft Word template](#) is available to help you collect information for your KRI. It includes fillable boxes for all of the questions that are in the sample table.

Risk ID#	What is the task or activity?	What is unsafe and who can get hurt?	What is in place now to prevent you or others from getting hurt?	How could it be made safer? What should be done?	What are the interim and permanent control measures?	Who is responsible for the control measures?	Action completion date (yyyy/mm/dd)
Provide a unique identifier for future tracking.	Be specific. You can describe separate parts of a task or activity.	Describe the hazard and list the occupations affected.	List the current risk controls. Indicate if there are none.	Are existing precautions working? Are they sufficient?	Which option is the best at this time? It can be an interim option. What is the plan going forward?	Identify the person and title responsible or accountable for the action.	Completion means the control measure is in place and operational.
DF-001-EntA.	Walking toward deep freezer 1	People struck by material handling or mobile equipment. All occupations, including pedestrians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signage</li> <li>• Mirrors</li> <li>• Mobile equipment program</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• High-visibility vests</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce blind spots created by machinery</li> <li>2. Separate mobile equipment and people so they don't share the same space.</li> </ol>	<p>Interim: Use delineators to mark pedestrian lane.</p> <p>Permanent: New layout for area around deep freezers 1 and 2 with bollards.</p>	Mo S., maintenance planner	

### 1. Identifying risks — department discussions

Use the first five columns during your discussions with workers and observations of your workplace.

The information you collect during discussions with the various department representatives will help you create a list that identifies the key risks. You may get duplicate information during your interviews, which you can combine into a single entry in your document.

### 2. Eliminating or minimizing risks — control measures

Fill out the last three columns when you are working on the control measures to eliminate or minimize risks.

These columns focus on choosing a course of action and deciding whether there is a need to make improvements in your control measures. You should also assign responsibilities and timelines for completion.

When deciding on control measures to eliminate or minimize risks to workers, always follow the [hierarchy of controls](#).

