

Basics of risk management

Four steps to a healthy and safe workplace

Managing risk in your workplace involves thinking about what might cause harm to your workers and determining whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm from happening. To manage risks, follow these basic four steps: Understand the level of risk in the workplace, implement appropriate measures, communicate policies and protocols to all workers, and monitor and update measures regularly.

Step 1: Understand the risks

Identify hazards

Begin by accurately identifying hazards in your workplace. A *hazard* is anything that can cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, or equipment.

Ideas to get started:

- Ask your workers and supervisors what health and safety concerns they have in the workplace. They should have first-hand experience and knowledge about the day-to-day operations.
- Walk around the site to see for yourself what's going on. Observe how workers are carrying out their tasks. Assess the equipment workers are using. Analyze the design and layout of the work areas.
- Check manufacturer instructions and safety data sheets for equipment and products that are used in your workplace.
- Review incident, near miss, and first aid records.
- Review hazard reports and joint health and safety committee meeting minutes.

Assess risks

After you determine what hazards exist in your workplace, assess the risk these hazards pose to workers so you can dedicate the appropriate attention and level of control to each one. The risk is the chance that somebody could be harmed by these hazards, as well as the potential severity of the harm.

Hazards with a higher chance of harm and potential severity have a higher risk level. One method to display risk level based on these factors is shown below.

		Potential severity			
		Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
Chance	Rare	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
	Unlikely	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Moderate	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
	Likely	Medium	Medium	High	High
	Very likely	Medium	High	High	High

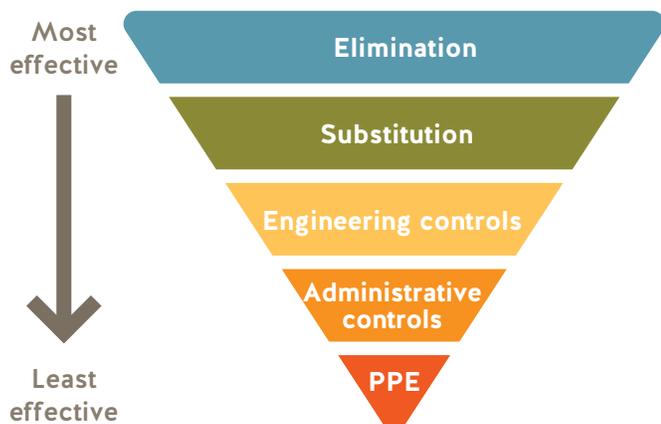
Ideas to get started:

- If your organization is small and you understand what's involved, you can likely do the risk assessment yourself. If your organization is larger, involve the joint committee or worker health and safety representative.
- If you have multiple work locations, do a complete site assessment for each location. Consider work activities for each shift.
- Consider whether your work activities could put workers of other employers, or members of the public, at risk.
- Consider who might be harmed and the frequency and duration of worker exposure to the hazard.

Step 2: Implement measures to control risk

The next step is to control the risks. The greatest risk should be addressed first. If you cannot eliminate a risk, you'll need to implement control measures to minimize it.

The hierarchy of controls can help you select and implement more effective measures to mitigate risks.



Ideas to get started:

- Follow the hierarchy of controls: elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls, and, finally, personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Eliminate or replace the hazard, if possible. Is there a safer way to perform the task? Can workers use a less-harmful product?
- Engineering — Is there any equipment or other physical changes to the workplace that will make the task safer?
- Administrative — Are there safe work procedures or practices that will reduce the risk?
- PPE — Is protective clothing or equipment necessary to protect workers, by itself or in combination with another type of risk control?

Step 3: Communicate

Your risk management program won't be effective if no one knows about it.

Ideas to get started:

- Provide managers, supervisors, and workers with orientation and training on how to identify hazards and what to do to control the risks.
- Document and share your safe work procedures and policies with workers.

Step 4: Monitor and update

Monitor risks

Managing your workplace risks is an ongoing process, not a "one and done." You'll need to monitor the effectiveness of the control measures in place and improve those that are not working as intended.

Ideas to get started:

- Conduct regular workplace safety inspections so you can identify new or changing hazards and risks. Activities that support your monthly inspection may include daily checks, supervisory walk-throughs, and a regular ongoing program of maintenance inspections.
- Observe and supervise work activities that have a higher level of risk. Confirm your controls are being used properly and procedures are being followed.
- Organize a joint committee and hold monthly meetings to discuss health and safety issues.
- Review your risk assessments at least once a year and whenever you introduce new equipment, materials, or work processes.
- Conduct incident investigations to identify new risks or improvements needed to more effectively manage previously identified risks.
- Create a master list that summarizes your workplace risks and helps you track your risk controls.

Learn more about the basics of workplace health and safety

Visit worksafebc.com/create-manage for additional information and resources, including managing risk, health and safety programs, supervising for safety, and meeting other basic requirements.