Contribute to health and safety of self and others

Learner Guide

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1. Work safely

1.1 – Follow provided *safety procedures and instructions when working*

Safety procedures

Safe Work Australia have identified that in 2013, 187 Australian workers were killed whilst at work. The cost of work-related injuries and illnesses for the 2008-2009 financial year is an estimate of $60.0 billion dollars.

Safe Work Australia focus of reducing the number of injuries that occur in the workplace, including those due to:

- ➢ Manual handling

- ➢ Falls

- ➢ Being hit by or hitting an object.

Although the safety procedures and instructions may vary between organisations, they may include:

- ➢ As contained in health and safety brochures, magazines and other material

- ➢ Completing required documentation

- ➢ Following procedures for work area housekeeping

- ➢ Following WHS guidelines relevant to workplace procedures for:

    - o Disposing of spilled substances, dangerous products, sharps and waste, and cleaning equipment

    - o Maintaining stocks of cleaning equipment, such as disposable gloves, liquid repellent aprons, and disinfectant

    - o Sterilising cleaning equipment

    - o Using appropriate cleaning equipment to clean spillages and breakages

    - o Wearing personal protective clothing and protective eyewear when in contact with body fluids or chemicals that may splash

- ➢ Handling, using and storing hazardous chemicals according to workplace procedures

- ➢ Labels for hazardous chemicals

- ➢ Safety data sheets (SDS)

- ➢ Specific guidelines and procedures as they apply to own work area

- ➢ Undergoing operator training and instruction when using new equipment or processes.

Although they will not guarantee that an incident may occur, it is important to ensure the safety procedures and instructions that are put into place within your organisation are carefully considered and followed by everyone.

1.2 – Carry out pre start systems and equipment checks according to workplace procedures

Pre start systems and equipment checks

A pre start check should be carried out to:

- ➢ Make sure equipment is not damaged

- ➢ Make sure equipment is working

- ➢ Make sure equipment is suitable

- ➢ Prevent possible injuries

- ➢ Ensure the safety of the worker.

Things to check:

- ➢ Is it plugged in correctly?

- ➢ Is it properly ventilated?

- ➢ Are the electrical cords in good condition?

When you start using the equipment, ensure this is done in accordance with your organisation's guidelines.

When using equipment, remember:

- ➢ Use safety guards

- ➢ Use safety clothing

- ➢ Log on and off equipment

- ➢ Never try to repair anything that is still turned on

- ➢ Turn everything off when not in use.

If equipment is not used in a safe manner, you are putting your own health and safety at risk and those around you. The pre start checking process may differ between organisations. You should be aware of which ones relate to your organisation.

1.3 – Follow workplace procedures for responding to *emergency incidents*

Emergency incidents

It is important that you know how to respond to an emergency incident, if one was to occur. This will ensure you can keep yourself and others safe.

Emergency incidents may include:

> ➢ Accidents

> ➢ Alcohol and other drug intoxication

> ➢ Crime

> ➢ External threats

> ➢ Fire

> ➢ Flood

> ➢ Near misses

> ➢ Sudden illness.

Accidents

If you witness an accident within your organisation, you should follow the relevant procedure that is in place.

This may include:

> ➢ Acting quickly

> ➢ Ringing the emergency services

> ➢ Performing first aid, if you are qualified to do so

> ➢ Staying with the victim until the paramedics arrive

> ➢ Reporting the incident.

Alcohol and other drug intoxication

If you suspect a person within the organisation is under the influence of alcohol or another drug, you will need to react in the appropriate way according to your organisation's policy. As their performance is impaired, they have put themselves and the other workers at risk and increased the chance of an accident occurring. The intoxicated person will need to be approached sensitively by the appropriate person. The way in which they will need to be approached will depend on:

> ➢ The industry

> ➢ The personality of the individual

> ➢ Whether it is a one-off occurrence.

Crime

If you notice anything suspicious within your organisation, you should know what the procedure is for reporting and dealing with this.

For example, if a robbery was to occur, ensure you stay calm and keep everyone else composed. You shouldn't make any sudden movements or try to put up a fight. If you can, ring the emergency services. Make sure when they arrive, you are able to give important information.

External threats

Every organisation will have policies in place to deal with external threats, including:

- ➢ Earthquakes

- ➢ Explosions

- ➢ Weather-related event

- ➢ Hazardous-substance release.

The employees within the organisation should make sure they are aware of the procedures that are in place.

Fire

You should be aware of the fire escape plans of your organisation, including:

- ➢ The best way to exit the building

- ➢ Where the nearest exits are

- ➢ Where the alternative exits are

- ➢ Where everyone should meet when out of the building.

Flood

Although there is no way to stop a flood occurring, there are ways in which to keep yourself safe during and after one. The policies in place to deal with a flood will vary between organisations.

They may include making sure:

- ➢ The sewer system is clean

- ➢ The basic essentials are stocked up

- ➢ The first aid kits are fully stocked

- ➢ Lights and batteries are readily available.

Near misses

A near miss is an incident in which nothing or nobody was damaged or injured. However, if there was a slight shift in position or time, damage or injury could have easily occurred. Near misses should be reported and investigated in order to prevent an injury or fatality in the future. Organisations will have their own policies regarding near misses and employees should be aware of these.

Sudden illness

Sudden illnesses that occur within the workplace include:

➢ Strokes

➢ Heart attacks

➢ Asthma attacks

➢ Allergic reactions.
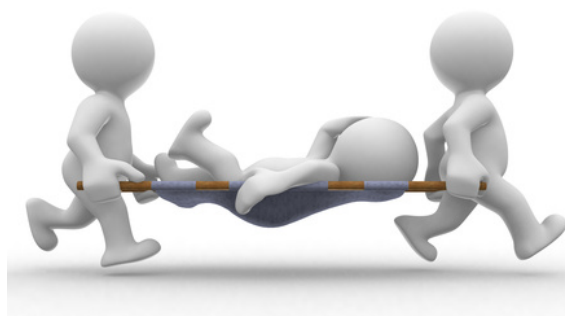
You should be aware of your organisation's policy regarding these emergencies.

2. Implement work safety requirements

2.1 – Identify *designated persons to whom queries and concerns about safety in the workplace should be directed*

Designated persons

Any queries or concerns regarding the safety in the workplace should be reported immediately.

This reporting method will help to:

➢ See potential issues early on

➢ Gain an understanding of why incidents may happen

➢ Look into the prevention of incidents

➢ Evaluate the efficiency of the procedures that are in place.

These queries and concerns should be reported to the designated persons. These may include:

➢ Health and safety officers

➢ Health and safety representatives

➢ Managers and supervisors

➢ Other persons authorised or nominated by the organisation

➢ PCBUs or their officers

➢ Team leaders

➢ Union officers

➢ WHS inspectors

➢ WHS permit entry holders.

Once your concerns have been reported, the designated person is then responsible for acting on this and making sure the workplace is a safe environment. Your employer has a legal responsibility to ensure the workplace is safe and nobody is at risk.

2.2 – Identify existing and potential *hazards* in the workplace, report them to designated persons and record them according to workplace procedures

Identifying hazards

Hazards are things that may cause harm or an injury to people within an organisation. The types of hazards you will come across will be dependent on the type of organisation that you work within.

Hazards are outlined within the WHS Acts, regulations and codes of practice and may include:

- ➢ Blood
- ➢ Breakage and spillage
- ➢ Criminal acts
- ➢ Fatigue
- ➢ Hazardous chemicals
- ➢ Hazardous equipment
- ➢ Hazardous work processes
- ➢ Intoxication
- ➢ Needle sticks
- ➢ Sources of infection
- ➢ Stress
- ➢ Unsafe work tasks or practices.

There are various ways to identify existing or potential hazards within the workplace, including:

- ➢ Talking to people
- ➢ Checking past records
- ➢ Reading publications that list potential hazards
- ➢ Inspecting the workplace.

Reporting hazards

Hazards that have been identified will then need to be reported to the designated persons, as discussed in Chapter 2.1. The designated person will again depend on your organisation.

Recording hazards

The process of identifying and recording the hazards that you have identified is completed within the risk management process. In this, you will need to record what hazards you have found, how they might cause harm or injury and how the risks could be controlled. The key is to keep it simple and review it regularly. If there is any uncertainty as to how a hazard may result in injury or illness, then a risk assessment should be performed.

A risk assessment considers the following:

- ➢ How severe the potential harm is
- ➢ How the hazards could cause harm
- ➢ How likely it is for harm to occur.

The process of recording any hazards that are identified will vary between organisations. Employees should be aware of the system that is in place within their workplace.

2.3 – Identify and implement WHS procedures and work instructions

It is important to know the difference between policies, procedures and work instructions.

Policies

Policies are adopted and used by organisations to ensure their long-term goals and objectives are reached. They are usually guidelines or statements that outline certain principles and rules and are often published in a booklet. An example of a policy that might be used within an organisation is a Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) policy.

Procedures

Procedures are the specific methods that are put in place to ensure the daily operations of the organisation are carried out in a way that expresses the policy that has been adopted. A procedure defines how work should be performed, detailing who should do what and when they should do it.

A procedure may:

- ➢ Have three or more small tasks
- ➢ Involve more than one person
- ➢ Have ten separate actions
- ➢ Be completed within one continuous time frame.

An example of the procedures that should be in place within every organisation is the WHS procedures. Following on from the policy, the WHS procedures ensure that the daily operations of an organisation are done in a safe way.

Work instructions

Work instructions provide workers with a detailed description of how to accomplish a specific job. They include a set of step-by-step instructions to help workers to complete a specific task. They often include visual aids and assembly instructions.

Work instructions may:

➢ Have fewer than ten separate actions

➢ Be completed in a short amount of time

➢ Only need one person to be involved.

Examples of work instructions in relation to health and safety within the **workplace include:**

➢ User instructions

➢ Labels

➢ Assembly instructions

➢ Equipment maintenance

➢ Work standards.

Although these three things have different purposes, in order to guarantee the smooth running of an organisation, they should all be used together.

WHS procedures and work instructions

The WHS procedures and work instructions that are in place within your organisation should be identified and implemented by every worker. They should comply with the relevant legislation, regulations and codes of practice.

The WHS Act 2011 sets out a consistent framework that must be complied with in order to secure the health and safety of workers. The WHS Act 2011:

➢ Protects workers from harm by eliminating or minimising risks

➢ Provides effective workplace representation

➢ Encourages organisations to help achieve a safe workplace

➢ Promotes the use of health and safety advice, information, education and training

➢ Uses compliance and enforcement measures effectively and appropriately

➢ Monitors and reviews people with duties and power

➢ Ensures continuous improvement and higher standards.

The topics discussed within the WHS Act 2011 include:

➢ Health and safety duties

- ➤ Incident notification

- ➤ Authorisations

- ➤ Consultation, representation and participation

- ➤ Enforcement measures.

The WHS Act 2011 can be found in more detail at www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au.

When designing and implementing WHS procedures and work instructions, the organisation should involve workers. This will help to promote awareness, increase understanding and improve compliance. Once procedures and work instructions are in place, they should be reviewed and assessed regularly.

Having excellent WHS policies, procedures and work instructions allows an organisation to:

- ➤ Operate efficiently

- ➤ Control any risks or hazards

- ➤ Save time when problems arise

- ➤ Assess the performance of the organisation.

It is important that workers can identify and implement the WHS procedures and work instructions that are relevant to their organisation.

2.4 – Identify and report emergency incidents and injuries to designated persons according to workplace procedures

Identifying and reporting emergency incidents

As discussed in Chapter 1.3, emergency incidents may include:

- ➤ Accidents

- ➤ Alcohol and other drug intoxication

- ➤ Crime

- ➤ External threats

- ➤ Fire

- ➤ Flood

- ➤ Near misses

- ➤ Sudden illness.

Within an organisation, there should be a process in place to report incidents and near misses. The organisation should have a written procedure in place that identifies:

> What needs to be reported

> Who you should report it to

> How you should report it.

What needs to be reported?

> The personal details of the people involved

> A description of the event

> The date, time and place of the event

> The method of reporting

> The date the report was made.

Who should it be reported to?

Once an emergency incident has been identified, it will need to be reported to the designated person within your organisation. As discussed in Chapter 2.1, the designated person could be:

> Health and safety officers

> Health and safety representatives

> Managers and supervisors

> Other persons authorised or nominated by the organisation

> PCBUs or their officers

> Team leaders

> Union officers

> WHS inspectors

> WHS permit entry holders.

How should it be reported?

Usually, an incident should be reported using a written report or form. When writing an incident form, remember to:

> Be factual

> Determine the sequence of events

> Analyse the possible causes

> Recommend corrective actions.

2.5 – Identify WHS *duty holders and their duties for own work area*

WHS duty holders

It is important to be able to identify who the WHS duty holders are within your organisation.

Duty holders, as specified in WHS Acts, may include:

- ➢ PCBUs or their officers
- ➢ Workers
- ➢ Other persons at a workplace.

A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)

A PCBU is the individual person or organisation that is legally operating a business or undertaking.

A PCBU can include:

- ➢ Employers
- ➢ Corporations
- ➢ Associations
- ➢ Partnerships
- ➢ Sole traders
- ➢ Certain volunteer organisations.

The primary duty of care for workplace health and safety is held by a PCBU. They must eliminate or minimise the risks at the workplace in order to ensure the health and safety of workers, customers and visitors. If a person is exposed to a risk to their health and safety as a result of the work carried out as part of the conduct of the business of undertaking, the PCBU will be held liable.

Workers

Someone who carries out work for a PCBU is known as a worker. Whilst they are at work, workers are responsible for taking reasonable care in regards to the own safety. They must also consider the safety of other people that may be affected by their actions. In order to comply with the WHS Act, workers must also cooperate with any actions taken by their PCBU.

Workers may include:

- ➢ Employees

- ➢ Labour hire staff

- ➢ Volunteers

- ➢ Apprentices

- ➢ Work experience students

- ➢ Contractors or subcontractors

- ➢ An employee of a contractor or subcontractor.

Other persons at a workplace

Any other people within a workplace also have their own duties, including:

- ➢ Taking reasonable care for their own health and safety

- ➢ Taking reasonable care to ensure that their actions do not affect the health and safety of anybody else

- ➢ Complying with instructions given by the PCBU.

3. Participate in WHS consultative processes

3.1 – Contribute to workplace meetings, inspections and other WHS consultative activities

Workplace meetings

Workplace meetings are an important element of business management and can be formal or informal. They can help to:

- ➢ Solve problems

- ➢ Improve performance

- ➢ Encourage employers and employees to communicate

- ➢ Share information

- ➢ Resolve disputes

- ➢ Move things forward

- ➢ Build teamwork.

An effective meeting should take the least amount of time to successfully achieve the objectives and all participants should leave feeling satisfied.

Workplace inspections

Workplace inspections are vital to the safety management of an organisation. It allows the working environment and procedures to be checked to see if the standards are met.

Workplace inspections can allow you to:

> ➢ Identify existing and potential hazards
>
> ➢ Determine the underlying causes of hazards
>
> ➢ Monitor the hazard controls
>
> ➢ Listen to the workers' concerns
>
> ➢ Gain a further understanding of tasks
>
> ➢ Recommend corrective action.

Workplace inspections can also help to identify any problems with the:

> ➢ Equipment
>
> ➢ Workplace environment
>
> ➢ Building
>
> ➢ Work practices.

Consultative activities

In relation to health and safety within the workplace, it is very important to consult with employees and anybody else who may have an impact on the health and safety of an organisation. It allows for a discussion on WHS matters and gives everyone within the organisation a chance to share their opinions. By combining the knowledge and experience of everyone, a safer and healthier workplace can be achieved. One way of reducing the amount of workplace injuries is through meaningful consultation. This is because risks and hazards can be easily identified and practical solutions can be found and implemented.

3.2 – Raise WHS issues with designated persons according to organisational procedures

Raising WHS issues

A WHS issue is any concern a person has regarding the health and safety within the workplace. Everybody within an organisation should know how to raise and resolve a WHS issue if they identify one. This will ensure the appropriate action can be completed quickly in order to minimise the risks. It is likely that the PCBU is the person you should report to and resolve the issue with. However, if it is necessary, sometimes a Health and Safety Representative (HSR) may be involved.

If you identify a WHS issue and are uncertain how to handle it then the appropriate actions may include raising the issue with your supervisor. Between yourself and your supervisor, you may be able to develop and implement a process that will resolve the issue. This may require a consultation with any affected workers. If the issue cannot be resolved, the assistance of a HSR may be required. If this is the case, the worker, the HSR and the supervisor will attempt to solve the WHS issue.

You should be aware of your organisational procedures in regards to raising WHS issues.

3.3 – Take actions to eliminate workplace hazards and reduce risks

Identifying hazards and risks

The process of identifying existing or potential hazards and risks is crucial in making sure that the tasks that are carried out within an organisation are done so in a safe manner. This process should be done continuously as organisations are always changing.

Ways to identify hazards and risks may include:

- Walking around the workplace

- Talking with workers

- Examining all aspects of work

- Considering long-term hazards and risks to health

- Using your previous experience

- Looking at past records

- Gaining information from other documents, including:

  - Instruction manuals

  - Data sheets

  - Websites

  - National bodies or trade unions

  - Legal regulations.

When trying to identify hazards and risks, you should try and understand those that may be associated with the specific tasks you supervise. Where possible, you should have risk controls in place before any work starts.

When identifying hazards and risks, it is important to be aware of who could be harmed. This will help when trying to identify the best way to eliminate potential hazards or risks.

Common hazards and risks that are found within the workplace include:

> ➢ Manual handling
>
> ➢ Using equipment and tools
>
> ➢ Excessive noise
>
> ➢ Hazardous substances.

Eliminating hazards and reducing risks

Once a hazard or risk has been identified, the appropriate action should be taken as soon as possible. Wherever possible, the problem should be eliminated from the workplace. This can be done by using a different process and changing the way in which a job is done. If it is not possible to completely eliminate the hazard from the workplace, the most effective ways to minimise the hazards and risks can be determined by the Hierarchy of Risk Control.

The Hierarchy of Risk Control includes six possible controls:

> ➢ Designing or reorganising in order to eliminate hazard or risk
>
> ➢ Removing or substituting the hazard or risk
>
> ➢ Enclosing or isolating the hazard or risk
>
> ➢ Minimising the hazard or risk through engineering controls
>
> ➢ Minimising the hazard or risk using administrative controls
>
> ➢ Using Personal Protective Equipment.

If it is not appropriate to use only one of the controls, then consider the best combination in order to reach the lowest possible level of risk.

References

These suggested references are for further reading and do not necessarily represent the contents of this Learner Guide.

Work-related fatalities: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/statistics/work-related-fatalities/pages/work-related-fatalities (Accessed on 03/12/14)