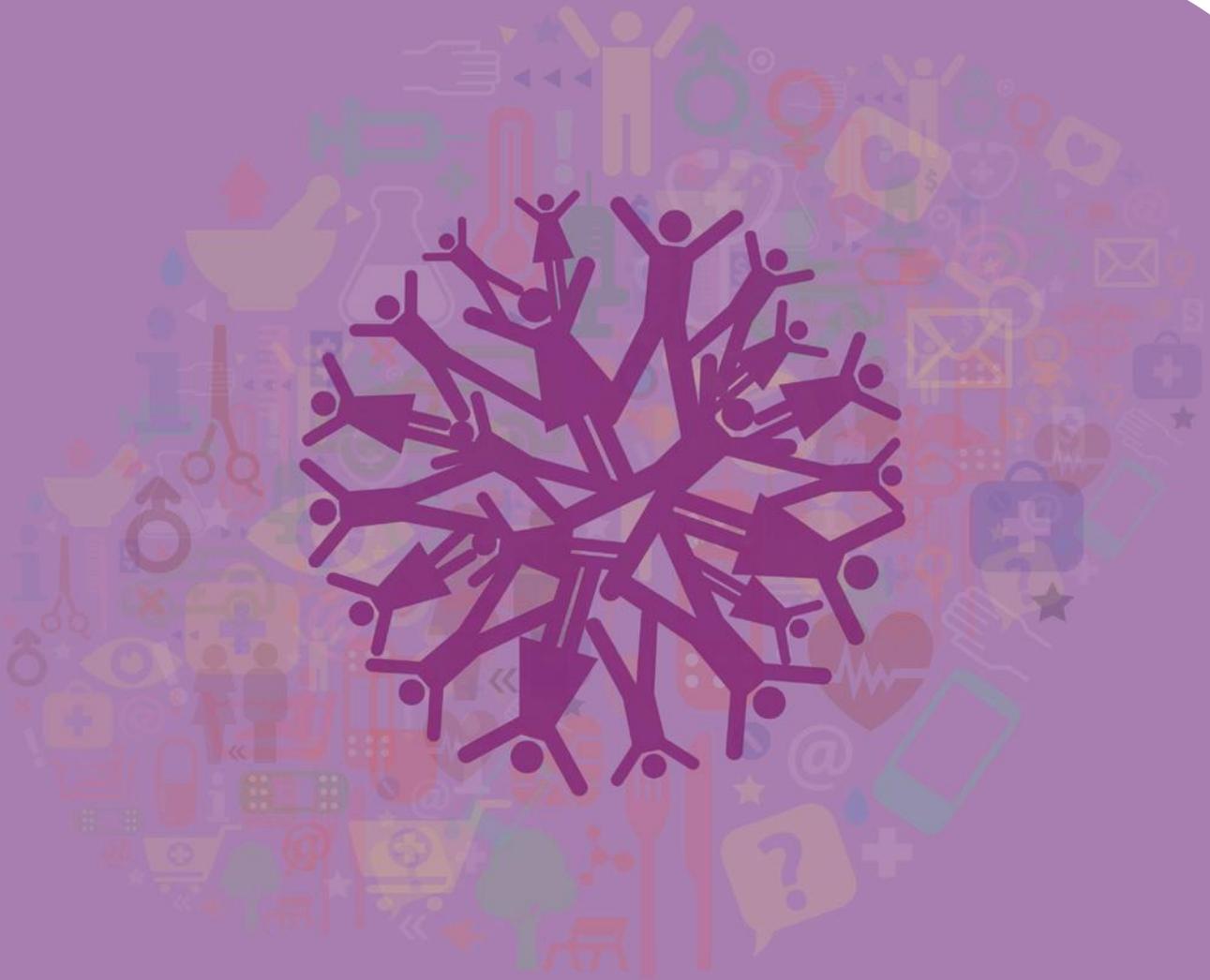


HLTWHS001

Participate in workplace health and safety

Release 3



Learner guide

HLTWHS001

Participate in workplace health and safety

Release 3

Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.3



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| Release 3, version 1.3 | December 2018 | Minor corrections as part of our continuous improvement program |

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Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *HLTWHS001 Participate in workplace health and safety*, Release 3. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

| Feature of the learner guide | How you can use each feature |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Learning content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake. |
| Examples and case studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks, learning checkpoints and the final assessment. ▶ Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations. |
| Practice tasks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete. |
| Video clips | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help <div data-bbox="1161 1328 1353 1608" style="text-align: right;">  <p>V1234</p> </div> |
| Summary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic. |
| Learning checkpoints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt. |

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

| Foundation skill area | Foundation skill description |
|-------------------------|--|
| Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understanding your job role, organisational procedures and legal responsibilities ▶ Managing your work and seeing how well you are going and making goals for yourself at work ▶ Seeking professional development opportunities for continuous improvement |
| Reading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understanding how documents are presented and being able to navigate through documents ▶ Understanding industry- and job-specific terminology ▶ Interpreting key information in relevant documents ▶ Understanding routine workplace checklists and documentation |
| Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Planning, drafting and writing reports and documents ▶ Communicating through written letters, email and online ▶ Recording progress; reporting incidents |
| Oral communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clarifying instructions ▶ Providing information ▶ Supporting others through encouragement, negotiation and conflict resolution ▶ Using body language to model desired behaviour and responding to others' body language |
| Numeracy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Calculating costs, weights, measurements of height and distance ▶ Interpreting measurements |
| Teamwork | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Working well with other people by cooperating, collaborating, encouraging and building rapport |
| Planning and organising | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Planning your workload and commitments ▶ Implementing tasks ▶ Completing work on time ▶ Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks |
| Making decisions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understanding and applying decision-making processes ▶ Reviewing the impact of your decisions |
| Problem-solving | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identifying problems ▶ Working out how to fix a problem using problem-solving processes and reviewing the outcome |
| Innovation and creation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recognising opportunities to develop and apply new ideas ▶ Generating ideas by thinking of new ways to do something ▶ Making suggestions to improve work |

| Foundation skill area | Foundation skill description |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Technology and digital literacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Efficiently using digitally based technologies and systems correctly and safely ▶ Accessing, organising and presenting information ▶ Using equipment correctly and safely |

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

| Topic | Key outcomes | Rate your confidence in each section |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Topic 1 Follow safe work practices | 1A Follow workplace policies and procedures for safe work practices | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| | 1B Identify existing and potential hazards, and report and record them according to workplace procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| | 1C Follow workplace emergency procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| Topic 2 Implement safe work practices | 2A Identify and implement WHS procedures and work instructions | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| | 2B Identify and report incidents and injuries according to workplace procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| | 2C Take actions to maintain safe housekeeping practices in your own work area | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |

| Topic | Key outcomes | Rate your confidence in each section |
|--|--|--|
| Topic 3 Contribute to safe work practices in the workplace | 3A Raise WHS issues with designated persons according to organisational procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| | 3B Participate in workplace safety meetings, inspections and consultative activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| | 3C Contribute to the development and implementation of safe workplace policies and procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| Topic 4 Reflect on your own safe work practices | 4A Identify ways to maintain currency of safe work practices to workplace systems, equipment and processes | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| | 4B Reflect on your own levels of stress and fatigue, and report according to workplace procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |



Topic 1

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Follow workplace policies and procedures for safe work practices**

- 1B Identify existing and potential hazards, and report and record them according to workplace procedures**

- 1C Follow workplace emergency procedures**

Follow safe work practices

In Australia all employers and workers must comply with relevant work health and safety (WHS) legislation and its impacts on regulations, industry standards and codes of practice. Each state and territory has an authority that provides information and enforces the WHS Act. Employers must provide a safe workplace and workers must undertake their work in a manner that does not endanger themselves or others. Workers have a legal obligation to familiarise themselves with WHS law, and their organisation's WHS policies and procedures, which give guidance to workers about their responsibilities, reporting procedures, recording requirements and emergency procedures.

1A Follow workplace policies and procedures for safe work practices

Workers in any work settings have a legal obligation to plan and carry out their work in a manner that provides for the safety of themselves and others. The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) legislation is supported by a further tier of law, commonly referred to as regulations, with a lower tier of non-statutory codes of practice and guidance notes. These regulations, codes of practice and guidance notes assist organisations to meet the requirements of the legally binding legislation. Community sector standards such as for mental health, disability services and home care, include reference to duty of care and the safety of workers and the people they support. In addition, organisational WHS policy and procedures should reflect the legislation and the supporting regulations and codes of practice. The state and territory regulators are responsible for implementing and enforcing the legislation.



Laws across Australia

On 1 January 2012, the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) came into effect, replacing the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* (Cth). This model legislation was developed by the Commonwealth government to harmonise work health and safety laws across Australia.

The object of the harmonisation of work health and safety laws, according to the Explanatory Memorandum – Model Work Health and Safety Bill (Safe Work Australia, 2010), is to:

- ▶ protect the health and safety of workers
- ▶ improve safety outcomes in workplaces
- ▶ reduce compliance costs for business
- ▶ improve efficiency for regulatory agencies.

At this time, all states and territories have implemented harmonised WHS laws based on this new Act except Western Australia and Victoria, which continue to enforce state-based safety laws.

WHS legislation and regulations

Workers have an obligation to keep themselves and others safe at work and must plan their work with these obligations in mind. You need to know and understand your WHS policies and procedures. For their part, employers have a more significant and extensive obligation to provide a safe place of work for their workers. More information is provided below.

WHS legislation

- ▶ The WHS Act regulates work health and safety for the Commonwealth. It specifically aims to protect people in workplaces from risks to their health or safety and to promote safe and healthy work environments. Information about each state or territory and the regulators can be obtained from Safe Work Australia.

WHS regulations

- ▶ Regulations set out mandatory requirements under the Act and may also prescribe minimum standards. In seeking information about WHS legislation and its administration, you should first contact the WorkCover agency in your state or territory. A useful starting point for locating the government agencies responsible for regulating and monitoring work health and safety in each jurisdiction is Safe Work Australia.

WHS codes of practice

- ▶ A code of practice provides practical guidance to organisations to comply with their statutory duties and regulatory requirements. While a code of practice may not be mandatory, they provide guidance to people with duties of care under WHS legislation, and are admissible as evidence in proceedings under the legislation. Compliance codes also provide voluntary standards of protection to employers and workers. The Commonwealth codes of practice are available through Comcare.

Guidance materials and fact sheets

- ▶ Guidance materials and fact sheets are explanatory documents providing detailed information on the requirements of legislation, regulations, standards, codes of practice or matters relating to work health and safety. They are designed to ensure compliance with WHS laws. An example of guidance material is the *Guide for preventing and responding to workplace bullying*.

Australian Standards

- ▶ Some WHS regulations and codes may refer to Australian Standards, which describe particular safety requirements and provide guidance for people working in particular areas or who work with certain equipment. To be legally binding, these Standards must be incorporated into legislation. Information relating to Australian Standards is available at Standards Australia.

State and territory regulators

The following table provides the name of the health and safety legislation and the regulator responsible for its implementation and enforcement in each state and territory.

The Commonwealth regulator, which implements the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth), is Comcare, <http://aspirelr.link/comcare>

| Region | Health and safety legislation | Safety regulator |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Australian Capital Territory | <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (ACT) | WorkSafe ACT http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-act |
| New South Wales | <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (NSW) | SafeWork NSW http://aspirelr.link/safework-nsw |
| Northern Territory | <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (NT) | NT WorkSafe http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-nt |
| Queensland | <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (Qld) | Workplace Health and Safety Queensland http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-qld |
| South Australia | <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012</i> (SA) | SafeWork SA http://aspirelr.link/safework-sa |
| Tasmania | <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012</i> (Tas.) | WorkSafe Tasmania http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-tas |
| Victoria | <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004</i> (Vic.) | WorkSafe Victoria http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-vic |
| Western Australia | <i>Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984</i> (WA) | WorkSafe WA http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-wa |

Duty of care

Duty of care describes the legal obligation that workers and employers have to anticipate and act on possible causes of injury and illness that may exist in their work environment or as a result of their actions. Duty of care is part of common law that requires you to do what is fair and reasonable to prevent harm or injury to another person or their property. While aspects of WHS legislation may vary between states and territories, there are common legislative requirements and obligations under the duty-of-care principle.

A duty of care exists when someone's actions could reasonably be expected to affect another person. Community services employers and workers have a responsibility to provide a duty of care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the people in receipt of their services. Workplace health and safety legislative and regulatory obligations underpin an organisation's policies, which determine the procedures to guide service delivery. These should all include procedures for enhancing the safety and wellbeing of people.

Here is more information about duty of care.

Duty of care

- ▶ Duty of care is the obligation a person has to act in a way that would not cause harm.

Negligence

- ▶ Negligence occurs when duty of care has been breached and harm to either person or property ensues. It is the legal and ethical obligation of any community services worker, supervisor or organisation to ensure that people using services are not exposed to unnecessary or unreasonable risk.

Dignity of risk

- ▶ The rights of people to dignity and choice, upheld in legislation and service standards, also require that duty of care or safety is not used as a reason to limit a person's freedom or personal choice. A support worker's adherence to duty of care and safety must be coupled with the concept of dignity of risk, which means that a person has the right to make their own choices and to take risks.

Rights and responsibilities of workers

In any work setting, workers have a legal obligation to take reasonable steps to keep themselves and other people safe. In a community services or healthcare situation 'other people' includes service users, visitors and co-workers. Safety includes ensuring physical safety and psychological or emotional safety.

When workers commence employment, their induction must include information about the organisation's WHS policies and procedures and their WHS obligations. Specific information regarding particular risks in the community services sector or organisation may include infection control, manual handling, personal safety and risks when working with people in crisis or who display critical behaviours of concern.

Some examples of information included in an induction are listed below.

Policies and procedures for WHS relate to:

- ▶ hazard and incident reporting
- ▶ hazard identification, risk assessment and control
- ▶ representation and participation
- ▶ quality system documentation
- ▶ injury reporting and procedures
- ▶ privacy and confidentiality.



Rights and responsibilities of employers

According to WorkSafe Victoria the employer must provide a safe and healthy workplace for all workers and contractors. Here is a summary of an employer's rights and responsibilities.

An employer's rights and responsibilities include:

- ▶ providing and maintaining safe plant (such as machinery and equipment) and safe systems of work (such as controlling entry to high-risk areas, and controlling work pace and frequency)
- ▶ maintaining the workplace in a safe condition (such as ensuring fire exits are not blocked, emergency equipment is serviceable, and the work site is generally tidy)
- ▶ providing workers and contractors with adequate facilities (such as clean toilets, cool and clean drinking water, and hygienic eating areas)
- ▶ making sure workers have adequate information, instruction, training and supervision to work in a safe and healthy manner
- ▶ keeping information and records relevant to their workers' health and safety (such as first-aid records and relevant medical information)
- ▶ consulting with workers on matters that may directly affect their health, safety or welfare
- ▶ providing your workers with information in the appropriate language about workplace health and safety arrangements, including the names of those to whom the workers can make an inquiry or complaint.

To read about workplace employer rights and responsibilities go to: <http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-rights-and-responsibilities>

Example

Follow workplace policies and procedures for safe work practices

Here is an extract from the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth):

Sec. 28 – Duties of workers

While at work, a worker must:

- a. Take reasonable care for his or her own health and safety; and
- b. Take reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons; and
- c. Comply, so far as the worker is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by the person conducting the business or undertaking to allow the person to comply with this Act; and
- d. Cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure of the person conducting the business or undertaking relating to health or safety at the workplace that has been notified to workers.



Practice task 1

1. What does the harmonisation of work health and safety laws around Australia hope to achieve?

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2. What is a code of practice?

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3. Explain duty of care.

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4. Give two examples of WHS policy and procedure information that should be provided to a new worker during their induction.

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5. What are two examples of the rights and responsibilities of an employer?

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Click to complete Practice task 1

1B Identify existing and potential hazards, and report and record them according to workplace procedures

Workers have a legal obligation to keep themselves and others safe. Identifying and reporting hazards to the appropriate person so the hazards can be addressed forms part of this obligation. A hazard is something with the potential to cause harm; perhaps human injury or ill health; damage to property or the environment; or a combination of these.

When hazards have been identified they must be assessed to determine the risk of harm. Risk means the probability and consequences of injury, illness or damage resulting from exposure to a hazard. The workplace policies and procedures must then be followed for the reporting and recording of the hazards.



Common workplace hazards

A workplace risk is the chance a hazard will cause harm, injury or ill health. A workplace hazard is something in your workplace that poses a risk to you and/or your work colleagues. Hazards can include anything that is a source of potential harm in terms of human injury or ill health, or cause damage to property or to the environment.

All workplaces are different. Hazards present in one workplace may not be present in another. Across all workplace sectors there will be some hazards that are commonly found in each sector.

Here are some examples of hazards.

Manual tasks

Overexertion or repetitive movement, which can cause muscular strain

Gravity

Falling objects, falls, slips and trips can cause fractures, bruises, lacerations, dislocations, concussion, permanent injury or death

Electricity

A potential ignition source; exposure to live electrical wires can cause shock, burns or death from electrocution

Machinery and equipment

Being hit or caught by moving parts can cause fractures, bruises, lacerations, dislocations, permanent injury or death

Hazardous chemicals

Chemicals (acids, heavy metals) and dusts (asbestos and silica) can cause respiratory illnesses, cancers or dermatitis

Extreme temperatures

Heat can cause burns, heat stroke or fatigue; cold can cause hypothermia or frostbite

Radiation

Ultraviolet, welding-arc flashes, microwaves and lasers can cause burns, cancer or blindness

Biological

Microorganisms can cause hepatitis, legionnaires' disease, Q fever, HIV/AIDS or allergies

Psychosocial hazards

Psychological hazards are the effects of work-related stress, bullying, violence and fatigue

Workplace hazards – manual tasks

Manual tasks are a common hazard in community services workplaces, and cause many injuries to workers. Regulations, codes of practice and other organisational and industry guidelines refer to manual handling as a known risk factor, and direct employers and workers to be aware of the issue with procedures for safe manual handling.

The community services sector covers a wide range of services to a variety of people in different workplace settings. These may include in an office, out in the community in a purpose-built facility or in a person's home. According to WorkSafe Victoria, many workplace injuries in community services occur as a result of everyday interactions with people requiring support, and the most common of these is manual-handling injuries. The variety of different workplace environments, along with the fact that workers often work alone, increases the risks to health and safety.

A hazardous manual task is one that requires a worker to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain something. They may also include sustained or awkward postures. Examples that may occur at work include moving or lifting office furniture, assisting a person with a disability, transporting equipment or people in vehicles, or actively participating in an activity with a person as a part of your work. The injuries most commonly sustained are sprains, strains and other musculoskeletal disorders, which account for almost 60 per cent of all injuries in the sector.



Workplace hazards – infection control



One very important responsibility for both workers and employers is to limit contamination and prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Infectious diseases currently affect a relatively low number of workers in Australia; however, they have the potential to be a risk to workers and the community. Infectious diseases are common and cause mild symptoms and illnesses. Some infectious diseases can also cause life-threatening conditions. Infectious diseases are illnesses that can spread between people or from animals to people.

While the most common infectious diseases are viruses that cause mild short-term effects, other infectious diseases have the potential to cause longer term or more serious effects.

The employer has the responsibility to make sure all workers have the training and understanding of how to prevent and control infection. This may be through first-aid or other courses where procedures for dealing with blood, or other bodily fluids that may be potentially infectious, are covered. Applying standard precautions in all aspects of work, means using a set of infection control practices that prevent transmission of diseases that can be acquired by contact with blood, body fluids, non-intact skin (including rashes) and mucous membranes. An employer also has the responsibility to provide equipment, such as a uniform, aprons and disposable gloves, so the worker can implement standard precautions.

Workers must also take actions that limit the potential spread of infection by implementing their training and procedures as outlined by the employer and using the equipment provided correctly.

Other workplace hazards

Work in the community services sector can sometimes be very stressful, especially when observing and supporting people undergoing stressful crisis situations. Work-related stress can impact many aspects of a person's life. It can affect both the mental and physical health of a person and may show itself as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and/or anxiety and increased risk of physical diseases or illness like cardiovascular disease. A person's work performance may be affected, where they have difficulty concentrating and memory loss, and social relationships can suffer both at work and home.

Work-related violence can sometimes occur in the community services sector and involves incidents where a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. Examples of work-related violence include biting, spitting, scratching; verbal threats; sexual assault; or being threatened with a weapon. Other terms may be used for behaviour that fits this definition; for example, terms like acting out, challenging behaviour and behaviours of concern.

In the community services sector, common risks occur in situations like the examples listed here.

Common sources of risk include situations where:

- ▶ individuals are bored, frustrated, anxious, disinterested or are under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- ▶ the physical environment creates a potential for harm (for example, a workplace is poorly maintained or unsecured or there is no access to safe areas)
- ▶ information about individuals' needs and behaviour is not known or available to workers
- ▶ new people requiring support or individuals are introduced into the environment
- ▶ causes of behaviour are not well understood (for example, triggers for behaviours of concern)
- ▶ communicating with people requiring support is difficult or ineffective (for example, people cannot communicate their feelings or the source of discomfort, distress or illness)
- ▶ workers are assigned without adequate support (for example, staffing, supervision, monitoring, information, resources)
- ▶ work is undertaken with people in a range of environments (for example, home visits, transporting people requiring support, and recreational activities).

Hazard identification

Hazards can be categorised according to whether they are obvious and apparent to the senses or concealed and not apparent to the senses; some hazards emerge over time, while others can be intermittent or temporary. In your role, you will encounter various hazards and associated risk factors. It may be part of your job to identify these factors.

Hazard identification is the process of identifying sources of harm, and is the first step in preventing or minimising risk.

Hazard identification may be required:

- ▶ before new forms of work are organised and implemented
- ▶ before changes are made to equipment, work processes or work arrangements
- ▶ as part of planning major tasks or activities, such as equipment shutdowns
- ▶ following an incident report
- ▶ when new knowledge becomes available
- ▶ at regular intervals during usual operations
- ▶ prior to disposal of equipment or materials.

Hazard identification procedures

The community services environment you work in will have procedures for identifying hazards. You may be part of a team involved in identifying hazards. This process may include performing inspections, analysing incident reports and writing reports, as described below.

The hazard identification plan may include:

- ▶ analysing injury and illness records
- ▶ analysing work processes
- ▶ collecting information on trends and developments in work health and safety
- ▶ consulting other community services workers, supervisors, and health and safety committee members

- ▶ investigating workplace incidents and near-miss reports
- ▶ performing inspections or safety audits
- ▶ reviewing new work practices or equipment introduced into the workplace.

Report and record hazards

Your workplace will have procedures for identifying hazards and for recording information about hazard and risk assessment activities. Every hazard needs to be reported to the appropriate person and documented. This may be your supervisor and/or the organisation's designated health and safety representative.

Organisational policies and procedures provide guidance about how to report hazards, giving details of the reporting process, the time frame for reporting and who to report to. All organisations require workers to report identified hazards and risk control measures that are not adequate.

Staff should provide information about identified hazards and contribute to the development of risk control measures to address these hazards. Staff should also provide feedback about the effectiveness and reliability of these measures, and may identify risk control inadequacies. If risk remains after strategies have been tried then this should be reported to the relevant person. 'Residual risk' is the phrase used to define the risk that remains after controls have been implemented.

While reports of safety concerns may be verbal in the first instance, once a hazard or risk is brought to the attention of your supervisor or designated person, the matter should be formally recorded using the appropriate hazard reporting documentation. Designated persons are those within an organisation who have a formalised role to provide WHS support.

Designated persons may include:

- ▶ team leaders
- ▶ supervisors
- ▶ health and safety representatives or committee members
- ▶ organisation WHS personnel such as safety officers
- ▶ managers and supervisors
- ▶ other persons designated by the organisation.

Example

Identify existing and potential hazards, report and record them according to workplace procedures

When cleaning a person's room, Marla notices that a carpet joint has started to separate and is beginning to lift. Over time, the vacuum cleaner head passing over the spot is making it bigger.

Marla decides to report this as a hazard for, even though it is currently quite minor, she is concerned that it would be easy for her or someone else to trip on it.

Marla reports the trouble spot to her supervisor and fills out a hazard report form. Marla also makes a note in the repairs register.



Practice task 2

1. Explain the terms workplace risk and hazards.

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2. When is it appropriate for the hazard identification process to occur?

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3. Give two examples of common workplace hazards found in the community services sector.

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4. Give two examples of people who you would report a WHS hazard to.

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Click to complete Practice task 2

1C Follow workplace emergency procedures

An emergency is a sudden unexpected event or situation that requires immediate action to prevent or limit casualties. Although emergency situations are of an unforeseen nature, organisations can still plan responses in the event a situation does occur. Workers have a duty of care to take reasonable action to manage an emergency situation. They must familiarise themselves with workplace policies and procedures, including any emergency management plans, to ensure they know what to do if an emergency such as a fire or medical event occurs.



Types of emergencies

As emergencies may include any abnormal or sudden event that requires immediate action, it is important that staff members are prepared for such situations. They must be aware of the types of emergency they may face within their workplace and, most importantly, what to do if such an event occurs. Everyone acknowledges the need for a fire evacuation (emergency plan), but there are other emergencies, as listed below, which may require action in the workplace.

Emergencies may include:

- ▶ serious injury events such as a broken arm or leg due to a fall
- ▶ fires and explosions that require evacuation
- ▶ hazardous substance and chemical spills that require evacuation
- ▶ explosions and bomb alerts that require evacuation
- ▶ security emergencies such as a person displaying dangerous or threatening behaviour to themselves or others
- ▶ internal emergencies such as loss of power or water supply and structural collapse
- ▶ external emergencies and natural disasters such as flood, storm and traffic accidents impacting on the organisation.

Identify signals and alarms

In any workplace it is critical for all workers to recognise emergency signals and alarms and understand the response procedures. For this to occur, workers must have access to the written procedures and protocols, and general evacuation information, for emergencies. All workers must understand emergency communications and alarm signals so they can be used in accordance with procedures and regulatory requirements.

On commencement of employment all workers must receive a WHS induction, which includes instruction for how to identify and respond to emergency signals and alarms. The exact type and nature of alarms, signals and emergency announcements will vary according to the workplace.

Emergency signals and alarms may include:

- ▶ fire alarms
- ▶ evacuation alarms or announcements such as a fire nearby or in the same building
- ▶ emergency lock-down alarms required because a person is displaying dangerous behaviour
- ▶ machinery malfunction alarms.

Provide an immediate response

Your immediate response in any emergency situation is to act quickly to protect your personal safety and the health and safety of the people around you. Talk to your supervisor to understand what is expected of you in regard to protecting or safeguarding the property of the organisation. An important part of your response to any emergency is to report the emergency to the appropriate person. Your workplace policies and procedures will advise you on the correct person to contact in specific emergency situations.

Here are examples of appropriate people to contact.

Emergency contacts

- ▶ Emergency services (such as police, ambulance or fire service)
- ▶ Fire warden or floor warden
- ▶ First-aid officers
- ▶ Health and safety representative
- ▶ Manager, supervisor, team leader or coordinator

Emergency procedures

The response to the different emergencies may vary according to the type of situation, the organisation and location of the emergency. Always follow your organisation's procedures, because these prescribe the best course of action by taking these factors into account. All workers need to work to the same procedure to coordinate an effective response. These procedures will also take into account the standards and guidelines related to emergency responses that include specifying the number and locations of exits; location of fire extinguishers and smoke detectors, emergency signage and lighting, assembly points and so on. Consider the information below about equipment procedures and emergency drills.

Equipment procedures

Procedures relating to the use of emergency equipment will not only cover general emergency action, but also the correct use or employment of emergency equipment and/or personal protective equipment. There are procedures for the use of life-saving appliances (such as respirators or automatic defibrillators) that must be followed, along with those related to using fire extinguishers; for example, you should never attempt to fight a fire if you have not been trained to do so and it is unsafe to do so.

Emergency drills

Organisations will regularly test alarms and evacuation procedures. Staff must participate in these drills to be familiar with the sound of the alarms and to be able to respond correctly to the emergency response and evacuation procedure. This will include assisting people requiring support, visitors and other staff when necessary.

Do not enter a building while an alarm is sounding, or re-enter an evacuated building until the 'all clear' has been announced by the designated person or the attending emergency services.

Emergency signage

Most workplaces have signs that provide information or direction when responding to emergency situations. For example, if there is a fire, explosion or other emergency requiring evacuation of a building, green exit signs should remain lit from an emergency power source; fire extinguishers should be clearly identifiable; and first-aid kits should be located in each work area. It may be necessary (for example, if responding to a chemical spill), to wear personal protective equipment (PPE), which includes gloves, goggles, boots, coats, disposable coveralls and mask respirators.

Here are three examples of emergency signage.



Fire extinguisher



Radiation danger



Emergency assembly point

Respond to different types of emergencies

There are many different types of emergencies each one with some individual criteria that need to be understood by all members of the work group, as described below.

Personal emergencies

People requiring support or other staff members may have medical conditions that require a quick and confident response.

A person who has been trained in first aid needs to be notified immediately and commence the appropriate course of action, until an ambulance arrives.

Evacuation

The first priority in an evacuation is to ensure all people who may be in danger are warned and action is taken to guarantee their safety. Warnings are usually given by sounding a siren or alarm, which staff members know signifies the need to begin an evacuation. Procedures are then followed to prevent the spread of the hazard, secure assets or to eliminate the hazard.

Fire

In case of fire, remember the acronym RACE:

- ▶ Rescue – evacuate the area; provide assistance only if it does NOT pose a risk to your own safety
- ▶ Alarm – raise the alarm, warn others of the danger and ensure the designated person contacts 000
- ▶ Contain – close any doors if safe to do so, in order to contain the fire
- ▶ Extinguish – only use a fire extinguisher if you have received training; if you can't put out the fire, proceed to evacuate the building

Behaviours of concern

Avoid confrontations with people who are exhibiting aggressive behaviour. For example, if a person you are supporting shouts aggressively at you or others, withdraw from the situation and report it to your supervisor, coordinator or the police (if necessary).

Gas leak

If gas can be smelt, evacuate people to a safe area and call and notify the gas supplier immediately of the problem. Open doors and windows to try to disperse the gas – in doing so ensure the safety of people is not compromised – then turn the gas off at the meter or bottle.

Avoid the use of any naked flames or electrical switches until advised it is safe by the supplier.

Chemical spills

Chemical spills can produce burns (from corrosive chemicals), respiratory distress or breathing difficulties (from noxious fumes or gases) or even fire and explosions when exposed to other chemicals or heat sources.

Clear the area of people. If there are acidic or overpowering smells or people start to feel ill (sometimes the gases emitted may have no smell), evacuate the building and call 000.

Injury or poisoning

If a person is injured or poisoned, call 000 if:

- ▶ they are experiencing severe pain and are unable to sit up, stand or walk
- ▶ you know for sure or suspect a drug overdose or poisoning has occurred.

A person trained in first aid should be in attendance until the ambulance arrives. Call the Poisons Information Line on 13 11 26 for advice.

Bomb or substance threat

In the event of a bomb threat, microbiological agent threat or suspicious device being found, remember to never touch anything. Evacuate the area immediately and call the police on 000.

In case of a bomb threat via telephone, it is recommended to have a phone threat checklist situated next to telephones, to guide staff members how to respond.

Follow workplace emergency procedures

An example of an emergency procedure for a fire.

1. Staff training

All new workers will receive emergency training within one week of commencing work.

2. Follow procedures

All staff must follow procedures when there is an emergency such as fire, bomb threat or incident.

3. Practice drills

Practice emergency evacuations will be conducted every six months.

4. Emergency aids

Have:

- ▶ duress buttons in each room
- ▶ three emergency exits
- ▶ have a fire extinguisher and blanket in each area.

5. Fires

In case of fire:

- ▶ stay calm and activate the nearest fire alarm
- ▶ follow the directions of the team leader/fire warden
- ▶ assist any person in immediate danger, if safe to do so
- ▶ close doors and windows
- ▶ notify other staff and call code red if applicable
- ▶ call 000 and tell them your name and phone number, the exact location of the fire, what is on fire, if there are any chemicals/gases nearby and what they are, if there are any people injured or trapped
- ▶ put out fire if you are trained and it is safe to do so
- ▶ assemble at the designated area
- ▶ wait until you are given the authority to return.

Practice task 3

1. Give two examples of possible emergency situations.

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2. Give two examples of emergency contacts.

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3. What are some actions that can be taken in case of aggressive behaviour?

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Click to complete Practice task 3

Summary

1. In Australia, WHS legislation is the responsibility of federal, state and territory governments. Employers and workers have a legal obligation to comply with relevant WHS legislation, standards, codes of practice and guidelines.
2. Workers have a legal obligation to keep themselves and others safe. They can do this by identifying and reporting hazards to the appropriate person so the hazards can be addressed.
3. If risk remains after strategies have been tried then this should be reported to the relevant person. 'Residual risk' is the phrase used to define the risk that remains after controls have been implemented.
4. Workers have an obligation to report incidents and injuries. All workers should be familiar with the process for reporting, and ensure they report in a timely manner.
5. Workers can experience stress and fatigue as a result of workplace factors. They must take action to manage this; however, employers also have a responsibility to provide an environment where these hazards are minimised.
6. An emergency may include any abnormal or sudden event that requires immediate action.
7. Workers should be properly inducted and trained to respond appropriately to an emergency, including how to identify and respond to alarms and signals.
8. Staff have a duty of care to take reasonable action in response to a workplace emergency.
9. When necessary, staff should assist visitors as they may be unfamiliar with the workplace environment.
10. The purpose of the emergency response is to minimise the risk of harm to people and the risk of damage to property.

Learning checkpoint 1

Follow safe work practices

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in following safe work practices.

Part A

1. Why is it important to follow the organisation's hazard identification and emergency procedures?

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2. Why is it important for workers and employers in the community services sector to be mindful of workplace hazards caused by poor infection control procedures?

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Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Hannah is a support worker at a community mental health service. While most of her time is spent out in the community or visiting people requiring support in their homes, she spends some time in the office interviewing, planning, writing reports, meeting with colleagues and her supervisor and carrying out routine administrative tasks. In the absence of the service coordinator, it is usual for Hannah to relieve in this role.

Currently the agency is short-staffed, so Hannah must see more people than usual. This bothers her as it affects the service she can provide. It also means that she often finishes work later than she should. When in the office, Hannah uses a desk shared by three workers. It is a small crowded space, with several filing cabinets that are awkward to get to, and a number of bookshelves overflowing with books, magazines and periodicals. It is not uncommon to trip over someone's bag or basket, or for magazines to slide off the shelves onto the floor.

There is also no designated health and safety representative at the service. The staff member previously responsible has left and no-one has been trained as a replacement. When WHS information is sent to the workplace, it is circulated at the discretion of the coordinator who, like the rest of the staff, is always busy. As a result of this combination of factors, a lot of the WHS information on the staff noticeboard is outdated. While Hannah does her best to read the information that is circulated, it's just one more thing to do so she only really reads what she considers directly relevant to her immediate job.

One of Hannah's colleagues mentions to her that he needs to report an incident but can't find the current incident report forms. He observes that the sample form on the noticeboard is quite old and he's pretty sure it has been updated.

1. Provide two examples of WHS policies and procedures that should operate in Hannah's workplace.

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2. Briefly outline the various tiers of legislation and regulations underpin the WHS laws for workers like Hannah.

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3. Explain the rights and a responsibility Hannah has at work including her duty of care responsibilities.

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4. What is a hazard and what are two hazards that occur in Hannah’s workplace?

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5. What steps might be taken in a workplace procedure for hazard identification?

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6. Who should Hannah report the hazards in the office to and how should they be recorded?

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Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Identify and implement WHS procedures and work instructions**

- 2B Identify and report incidents and injuries according to workplace procedures**

- 2C Take actions to maintain safe housekeeping practices in your own work area**

Implement safe work practices

Organisational policies and procedures are written and designed to reflect WHS legislation and regulations. They interpret the legislation and underpinning principles of duty of care and everyone's rights and responsibilities to be safe at work. Policies, procedures and work instructions should be useable documents that provide details on how to perform workplace duties in a safe manner, and give instructions on housekeeping and other tasks (such as reporting incidents and injuries) to ensure the implementation of safe work practices.

2A Identify and implement WHS procedures and work instructions

Organisational procedures include the policies and procedures underpinning the management of WHS, such as hazard, incident and injury reporting; hazard identification, risk assessment and control; consultation and participation; and quality system documentation.

You must adhere to the following policies and procedures when you carry out your duties.

WHS policy and procedures

These usually include information regarding:

- ▶ personal protective clothing and equipment
- ▶ standard safety precautions
- ▶ handling hazardous/dangerous materials and goods, including completing safety data sheets (SDSs)
- ▶ emergency procedures
- ▶ standard housekeeping
- ▶ hazard identification and control systems
- ▶ manual handling
- ▶ staff development and training programs
- ▶ waste management
- ▶ WHS personnel.

Personal protective equipment procedures and work instructions

You may be required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to perform some aspects of your work. PPE is clothing and equipment designed to protect workers from direct exposure to blood, body fluids, potentially infectious materials and other harmful agents in the work environment. Your WHS policies and procedures and/or your supervisor will provide information on the use of PPE. Your workplace must provide all essential PPE and ensure it is ready for use at all times.

Workers must use PPE correctly to protect their own health and safety. Your supervisor must be notified immediately if PPE requires repair or replacement.

Using PPE to eliminate or reduce risks to health and safety is a last resort. PPE should only be used when particular risks cannot be eliminated or reduced.

Standard precaution procedures and work instructions

You may be required to follow workplace precautionary procedures; for example, you may adopt standard precautionary work practices for infection control such as correct hand-washing techniques.

Control risks and address hazards

Workers and employers are required to ensure health and safety by controlling risks and addressing hazards. It may not be possible to eliminate hazards completely, but if they are controlled effectively, the risk to workers and others can be minimised.

Dealing with hazards may require direct action by a worker to remove or report the hazard so action can be taken. Prior to starting work or an assigned task, every worker should try to identify and address any hazards.



Contribute to risk assessments

Risk assessment is the process of determining the level of risk associated with a particular hazard. This assessment process assists to determine what should be done to address the hazard and the urgency of the action required. Risk assessment is most effective when it is done in consultation with workers who are familiar with the workspace and aware of the hazards.

The steps involved in assessing risks are outlined below.

Risk assessment

Gather information about each identified hazard.

Consider the level of exposure to the risk; that is, the number of people exposed and the duration of the exposure.

Use the information to assess the likelihood of harm (very likely, likely, unlikely, highly unlikely).

Assess the consequence or impact of the hazard (death, significant injuries, minor injuries, negligible injuries).

Use a risk assessment matrix to work out the risk associated with each hazard.

Assess risk

Here are some examples of questions that are frequently asked during the assessment process.

Categorise risks

- ▶ What is the nature of the hazard? For example:
 - fatigue
 - aggressive behaviour
 - trip hazard, etc.
- ▶ What is the location of the hazard?
- ▶ Does the hazard represent a danger to public safety?

Determine likelihood

- ▶ Consider the expected or actual frequency of exposure to the hazard. How likely is it that a person is exposed to the hazard? For example:
 - Very likely – can be expected to occur in most circumstances
 - Likely – a strong chance of occurring or will probably occur in most circumstances
 - Unlikely – could occur at some time or may only occur in rare circumstances

Determine impact

- ▶ What is the consequence or outcome of the hazard? What is the severity of the harm? Could the hazard:
 - kill, or cause permanent injury (major impact)
 - cause long-term illness or injury
 - cause someone to require first aid?

Estimate risks

- ▶ Risks are usually assessed as being high, medium or low.
 - High risks are unacceptable and may include spills on the floor and incorrect use of equipment.
 - Medium risk is when there is a chance that someone may get hurt; an example is not having breaks when doing repetitious tasks.
 - Low risk is when there is little chance that someone will be hurt.

WHS procedures

Here is a procedure to follow to contribute to safety in the workplace.

Address the likelihood of harm

- ▶ Before undertaking a task, identify hazards and assess their risks. You then need to determine whether it is within the scope of your role to reduce or remove the hazard, or whether this is the responsibility of an appropriately trained person. For example, if there is evidence of sharps being left without proper disposal, a risk assessment will determine that in handling the sharps you should use PPE and clean-up procedures. Part of your hazard/risk assessment will be to report the incident to determine causes.

Control measures to reduce the risk or hazard

- ▶ The best way to control hazards and risks is to identify them before they cause harm. As a way of minimising risk you, your colleagues and anyone under your supervision should only undertake tasks for which you are trained. This also applies to addressing hazards you identify; do not undertake a task that you deem to be unsafe – report, record and seek assistance where necessary.

Evaluate and monitor control measures

- ▶ You can then evaluate whether the steps you have taken adequately control the hazard. Continue to monitor the hazard as necessary to ensure it remains controlled. If you determine that the sharps are being disposed of incorrectly because a worker is unsure of the location of a proper disposal unit, you could take steps to put a receptacle in an appropriate location in the area and brief relevant staff.

Example

Identify and implement WHS procedures and work instructions

Eli is employed as a mental health support worker. He is currently working with Brian, an ex- serviceman diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Brian suffers mood swings, anxiety and depression as a result of his illness. In recent months Brian’s behaviour towards Eli is increasingly unpredictable and he is becoming more verbally abusive. Brian sometimes makes derogatory and threatening remarks that Eli finds offensive and stressful.



In the most recent incident, Brian stands over Eli in an intimidating way after Eli attempts to discuss the situation with Brian. When Eli suggests they discuss the situation with his supervisor, Brian becomes angry and aggressive.

Eli reports Brian’s behaviour to his supervisor, together with a concern for his personal safety and the stress Brian’s abuse is causing him. Counselling for Brian is arranged and an incident report prepared. Eli’s supervisor follows up with Eli on several occasions and monitors his stress at work. Together they prepare a risk assessment report based on the incident. They record the controls they have put in place to reduce the risk to Eli and confirm they will continue to monitor the management and behaviour of Brian by discussing his case at the team meeting the following day.

Practice task 4

1. What information is covered in an organisational WHS policy or procedure?

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2. What does PPE stand for? Give two examples of PPE.

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3. What are the steps in assessing risk?

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4. Name one part of a WHS procedure.

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Click to complete Practice task 4

2B Identify and report incidents and injuries according to workplace procedures

Organisations should have in place a policy and procedures for reporting incidents and injuries. Reporting incidents and near misses ensures that the organisation is aware of the hazard that contributed to the event, so strategies can be put in place to ensure the event is not repeated.

An incident includes any event that has caused or has the potential for injury, ill-health or damage, and can be an event that causes observable injury, such as a sprain or abrasion. It can also be a less-obvious outcome, such as a worker being subjected to aggressive behaviour from a person requiring support. Near misses should also be reported. A near miss occurs when something almost happens; for example, a person almost walks into a glass sliding door but someone stops them.



Report incidents and injuries

Incidents and injuries should be reported in the prescribed time frame and in the manner your organisation requires. Often you will need to make a report within 24 hours of an incident taking place. Notifying the relevant person of any risks, incidents and near could alert the organisation to a potential hazard that should be addressed to prevent injuries, and provides feedback on the effectiveness of responses to an incident – possibly identifying training needs or amendments to policy. Designated persons are those within an organisation who have a formalised role to provide WHS support.

When reporting, provide all available details, including:

- ▶ a concise description of what happened
- ▶ the precise location of where the incident occurred
- ▶ when the incident took place
- ▶ who was involved, including witnesses
- ▶ the first aid provided and/or medical treatment sought.

Report to statutory agencies

It is a legal obligation for employers or self-employed persons to report to the state or territory's WHS regulator any work-related injury, illness or dangerous incident as soon as possible. Under the WHS Act, immediate notification of a 'notifiable incident' to the regulator is required and the incident site must be preserved until an inspector arrives for investigation, or directs otherwise.

A 'notifiable incident' as outlined in the WHS Act is any of the following:

- ▶ the death of a person
- ▶ a 'serious injury or illness'
- ▶ a 'dangerous incident'.

To learn more about incident notifications and notifiable incidents, read Safe Work Australia's Incident Notification Information Sheet at: <http://aspirelr.link/incident-notification-fact-sheet-swa>

Example

Identify and report incidents and injuries according to workplace procedures

Here is an example of an incident reporting process.

Incident reporting process

1. Complete an incident report form

The worker, witnesses or person involved in an incident must complete an incident report and make an entry in the injury register (if injured). Documents must be completed and the incident reported to management within 24 hours.

2. Report the injury

The responsible manager will report any injury to the insurer and WorkCover authority (if applicable) within the statutory reporting time frames.

3. Take action to eliminate the hazard

Management, in consultation with the responsible health and safety representative, health and safety committee and workers, will ensure immediate interim action is taken to either eliminate the hazard or to minimise risk within the workplace.

4. Investigate the incident

The responsible manager will form an investigation team, investigate the incident and review concerns raised.

5. Review the incident

The responsible manager will carry out the necessary interviews and review any documentation.

6. Finalise documentation

The responsible manager will complete the final section of the incident report.

7. Complete risk management documents

The responsible manager will complete the necessary risk management documentation; that is, the risk register and action plan.

8. Take corrective actions

Corrective actions will be implemented according to the risk action plan.

9. File documents

All documentation must be kept on file for easy access and retrieval.

10. Review the organisational response

All incidents and organisational responses will be reviewed by management and health and safety representatives.

Practice task 5

1. What is the definition of an incident that should be reported?

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2. What information should be collected when reporting an incident or injury?

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3. What is a notifiable incident?

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Click to complete Practice task 5

2C Take actions to maintain safe housekeeping practices in your own work area

Good housekeeping involves establishing workplace and personal routines designed to improve health and safety. Housekeeping for WHS purposes includes a number of activities that staff should build into their work routines. Responsibility for this aspect of WHS falls as much on workers as it does employers. Housekeeping standards assist in maintaining a clean and organised working space, which reduces the likelihood of harm from risks and hazards.



Housekeeping

Workers and their supervisors need to ensure that their obligations regarding WHS and providing a safe workplace are met through good housekeeping practices that minimise risks and eliminate hazards as far as possible. Housekeeping for WHS means consistently monitoring safety procedures in the day-to-day work activities required by the job role.

Remember also that as part of a support worker's role is to visit a person's home to provide a service, the home is a workplace requiring the same attention to WHS and correct housekeeping.

Routines to improve health and safety include:

- ▶ cleaning up spills
- ▶ keeping walkways, exits and traffic areas clear
- ▶ maintaining general workplace cleanliness and tidiness
- ▶ ensuring emergency exits are unobstructed
- ▶ maintaining safe underfoot conditions
- ▶ allowing adequate work space around equipment and machinery
- ▶ ensuring fully functioning services such as lighting, air flow and ventilation, and emergency lighting
- ▶ ensuring safe storage areas
- ▶ employing correct manual-handling techniques and wearing proper PPE when necessary
- ▶ displaying adequate and appropriate signage such as for radiation like ultraviolet radiation from sun exposure or the location of sharps containers.

Safety signs

Signs are used to provide information or direction when there is a hazard or an emergency situation. For example in an emergency situation, the green exit signs should remain lit from an emergency power source; fire extinguishers should be clearly identifiable and their location known; and first-aid kits should be located in a known work area. In some cases in community services sector work roles there may be cases where PPE is required, which includes disposable gloves, goggles or an apron. Other PPE may include boots, coats and disposable coveralls and mask respirators (used in case of gas leak or chemical hazards).

Signs should be clear to read and training as to their uses and meanings should occur during staff induction. Here are examples of some signs and their meanings. In most cases they mean that certain equipment must be worn, or where something is located.



Protective or disposable gloves must be worn



Ear protection must be worn



Eye protection must be worn



Hard hats must be worn



Hairnets must be worn



Aprons must be worn



Exit locations



Fire extinguisher locations



Fire exit locations



First-aid kit location



Emergency assembly point location



Fire blanket location



Location of a sharps disposal container



There is a biohazard present



Caution when lifting heavy objects



Radiation may be present



Liquid chemicals may be present



Flammable liquids may be present



Toxic substances may be present



Wash your hands

Hazardous substances and dangerous goods

Hazardous substances and dangerous goods are often the same thing. Exposure to a hazardous substance can result in being poisoned or skin irritations and burns. A substance is deemed to be hazardous if it meets certain classification criteria. There are databases that list them and they are included in the Hazardous Substances Information System (HSIS).

According to Safe Work Australia, dangerous goods are substances, mixtures or articles that, because of their physical, chemical (physicochemical) or acute toxicity properties, present an immediate hazard to people, property or the environment. These types of substances include explosives, flammable liquids and gases, corrosives, chemically reactive or acutely (highly) toxic substances. Organisations that store and use these substances are required to keep a list in a central location, and comply with several storage and signage requirements to assist emergency services in case of an incident.

The classification requires that certain substances should not be stored together and there is a database of information on their location in case of emergency. This classification code and a list of those substances are contained in the Australian Code for the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail (ADG Code).



You can read more about hazardous substances and dangerous goods and their classifications at: <http://aspirelr.link/hazardous-substances-swa>

Example

Take actions to maintain safe housekeeping practices in your own work area

Tony, a support worker, notices that the common room floor in the residential care facility is quite slippery as a result of humidity, recent rain and residents not wiping their feet properly before coming inside.



Tony decides that it would be dangerous to wait for one of the cleaning staff to deal with the floor so, after reporting the hazard, he deals with it himself. He gets a mop from the cleaners store to dry off the floor and puts a wet floor sign up at either end of the room. Tony also asks one of the administration staff if she can prepare a large sign to go on the outside doors to ask residents and guests to carefully wipe their feet. He also puts up a sign to indicate 'Wet Floor' in the area. Tony then makes a note in the support worker's daily record book for other staff to see.

Practice task 6

1. What does WHS housekeeping involve?

2. What is the main purpose of signs used for WHS? Provide an example.

3. What may happen with exposure to a hazardous substance?

4. What are dangerous goods? Give an example.

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Click to complete Practice task 6

Summary

1. Organisational procedures include the policies and procedures underpinning the management of WHS.
2. Workers and employers are required to ensure health and safety by controlling risks and addressing hazards.
3. Risk assessment is the process of determining the level of risk associated with a particular hazard. This assessment process assists in determining what should be done to address the hazard and the urgency of the action required.
4. Workers have an obligation to report incidents and injuries. All workers should be familiar with the organisational process for reporting and ensure they report in a timely manner.
5. Good housekeeping standards assist in maintaining a safe, well-organised working space, which reduces the likelihood of harm. Routines designed to improve health and safety includes cleaning up spills, and keeping walkways, exits and traffic areas clear.
6. Signs are used to provide information or direction when there is a hazard or an emergency situation. Signs should be clear to read and training as to their uses and meanings should occur during staff induction.
7. According to Safe Work Australia, dangerous goods are substances, mixtures or articles that, because of their physical, chemical (physicochemical) or acute toxicity properties, present an immediate hazard to people, property or the environment. These types of substances include explosives, flammable liquids and gases, corrosives, chemically reactive or acutely (highly) toxic substances.

Learning checkpoint 2

Implement safe work practices

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in implementing safe work practices.

Part A

1. What are two examples of parts of WHS policies and procedures that exist at an organisation and need to be implemented as a worker?

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2. What is the purpose of a risk assessment process and what is involved?

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Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A** Raise WHS issues with designated persons according to organisational procedures

- 3B** Participate in workplace safety meetings, inspections and consultative activities

- 3C** Contribute to the development and implementation of safe workplace policies and procedures

Contribute to safe work practices in the workplace

Organisational WHS policies and procedures provide guidance to workers about how to raise WHS issues. It is a legislative requirement that employers consult with staff about WHS matters. Workers can enhance workplace safety by participating in the consultative process, sharing their knowledge of the workplace and its hazards, and their suggestions for improvements on WHS. They can participate in workplace safety meetings, inspections and other consultative opportunities. Workers can assist each other by monitoring work practices and providing support to help others work safely. They can also contribute to the development and improvement of workplace policies and procedures regarding WHS.

3A Raise WHS issues with designated persons according to organisational procedures

Each workplace is different, so it is important when starting work to note the process to raise WHS issues. Organisations must have procedures in place to deal with safety issues quickly and effectively as they are raised. There may be serious consequences if issues are left to continue. The issue may be resolved through the designated health and safety representative (HSR) or through management action, discussion with the group or person involved, or referral to a health and safety committee (HSC). If a matter is not resolved workers have the option of making a complaint to their state or territory WHS regulator.

Consider the information below regarding the raising of WHS issues.

Management actions in response to issues

- ▶ When health and safety issues arise, management must take all concerns seriously and act on them quickly. This demonstrates to workers their opinions are valued and their health and safety is a high priority. Under WHS legislation, an employer cannot dismiss a worker or change their work function or role to their detriment simply because they have raised safety issues or are part of a WHS group. There are significant penalties for breaching this WHS legislation.

Encouraging workers to deal with issues

- ▶ Employers should encourage staff and HSRs to deal with everyday problems as they occur; for example, replacing broken furniture and cleaning up non-toxic spills. It is the responsibility of WHS committees and representatives to follow up any further action required to resolve issues that are more serious. If there are no representatives or committees, a coordinator or supervisor is responsible for dealing with the safety issue that has been identified.

Raising WHS issues

When raising WHS concerns, you must follow workplace procedures. Generally there will be a formal reporting procedure supplemented by an informal process of alerting designated or relevant staff. Workers, when raising WHS issues, must determine the urgency of the matter. If there is an immediate risk of harm, workers should contact their supervisor or HSR who have the authority to stop work if necessary. Workers have a right, according to WHS legislation, to refuse to perform unsafe work.

WHS issues can relate to:

- ▶ hazard identification
- ▶ assessment of hazards and risk assessment
- ▶ development, implementation and evaluation of risk-control measures
- ▶ training needs analysis and provision of and access to training on WHS matters
- ▶ WHS induction processes for new workers.

The process for raising issues

If there is no immediate risk, workers should raise WHS issues as directed by workplace policies and procedures. Every staff member should have been shown the procedure during induction. Generally, accepted practice holds that if the matter does not represent an immediate safety concern, you should advise your supervisor or HSR and then complete the appropriate documentation; for example, a WHS feedback form.

The process may follow these steps.

How to raise WHS issues

Raise the WHS issue with your supervisor.

If you are unable to resolve the issue with your supervisor, raise the issue with your HSR.

If you are unable to resolve the issue with your HSR, raise the issue with the coordinator of the HSRs (usually only available in larger organisations with several HSRs).

If you are unable to resolve the issue with the coordinator of the HSRs, raise the issue with the HSC; for example, at a WHS meeting.

If the WHS issue is still not resolved, contact your state or territory WHS regulator.

Health and safety representatives

Health and safety representatives (HSRs) are a key link between workers and employers. A HSR can be elected to their role or there can be more than one representative, depending on the size of the organisation. The role of the HSR is to represent the health and safety interests of the workers. They perform jobs such as consulting, negotiating and arranging agreements between workers and the organisation managers; that is, persons responsible for conducting a business or undertaking.

Once a person has been given the role, it is the responsibility of the managers to make sure a current list of all HSRs is displayed in a location for workers to see. A list of names must also be provided to the state or territory regulator for WHS. Training must be provided to HSRs by the organisation as paid time off from regular work duties.

Functions and responsibilities of HSRs include to:

- ▶ represent their work group members in matters relating to WHS at the workplace
- ▶ monitor risk control measures put into place at the workplace to protect their work group members
- ▶ investigate complaints from their work group members relating to WHS
- ▶ inquire into anything that appears to be a risk to the health or safety of work group members
- ▶ be informed by the employer about dangerous situations or accidents, or when an inspector visits the workplace
- ▶ be notified of any changes in the workplace that may affect workers' health and safety
- ▶ attend any health and safety discussions between an employer and a worker if the worker asks them to be there

- ▶ expect space to help them carry out their duties; for example, they will need storage space to keep records
- ▶ keep up with information provided by the employer on hazards in the workplace, and liaise with the government and other bodies.

Health and safety committees

Some workplaces may have a health and safety committee (HSC), which is responsible for discussing WHS issues and identifying how they can be resolved. They will then share their ideas with the managers or your employer. The HSC may include support workers, maintenance staff, other health professionals, supervisors or managers. It is a good idea for a committee to have people from all different parts of the organisation. For example, if you did not include maintenance staff, you may miss out on important ideas about how to keep equipment operating safely. The functions of health and safety committees are generally spelled out in WHS legislation.

Functions of HSCs

- ▶ To foster cooperation between management and workers to develop, implement and monitor measures that ensure the health and safety of workers
- ▶ To assist in resolving workplace health, safety and welfare issues
- ▶ To assist in the development and review of workplace health, safety and welfare policies, practices and procedures
- ▶ To consult on any proposed changes to workplace health, safety and welfare policies, practices or procedures

Example

Raise WHS issues with designated persons according to organisational procedures

WHS feedback form

Name:

Area:

Date:

WHS issue type (please tick):

- Audit
- Complaint
- Compliment
- Hazard
- Improvement
- Outcome

Briefly describe the issue:

What are the potential risks if the issue is not addressed?

Suggested solution/change/improvement:

Reported to:

Signed:

Practice task 7

1. What are two examples of the types of WHS issues that may be raised in a workplace?

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2. Describe the process required to raise a WHS issue in the workplace.

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3. List two responsibilities or functions of a HSR.

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[Click to complete Practice task 7](#)

3B Participate in workplace safety meetings, inspections and consultative activities

Your employer is required by legislation and regulations to consult with you and your work colleagues about any WHS matters that affect you. Consultation is the process of gathering information, sharing ideas and giving feedback. Participating in consultation processes in your organisation enables you to contribute to decisions that affect health and safety. Workers can make a valuable contribution to workplace safety because they are familiar with the work environment and its hazards. They may have suggestions for addressing hazards and can provide feedback about the effectiveness of risk controls in workplace safety meetings and inspections.



Consultation

According to WHS legislation, employers have a legal obligation to consult with workers about hazard identification and risk control under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) (Section 47). Consultation can be particularly effective in managing WHS. Workers have first-hand information and experience of the various things that may give rise to hazards in the workplace. Consultation enables organisations to use this important information as part of their WHS strategy.

The WHS issues that you and your colleagues will be consulted about, and methods of consultation, are outlined below.

Issues

- ▶ Changes to policies, work practices and procedures
- ▶ Changes to premises, plant or substances used at work
- ▶ Conducting workplace risk assessments
- ▶ Incorporating new health and safety requirements imposed by legislation, regulations and codes of practice
- ▶ Making decisions about the adequacy of facilities for the health and safety of workers
- ▶ Making decisions about the organisation's consultative procedures
- ▶ Reviews of policies, procedures and work practices
- ▶ Risk control

Methods

- ▶ Appoint HSRs and provide them with reasonable access to staff during working hours.
- ▶ Involve workers in workplace inspections and/or asking for their feedback during workplace inspections to assess hazards and risks and strategies to fix the problems
- ▶ Involve workers in risk assessments and/or ask for their feedback during risk assessments.
- ▶ Encourage WHS discussion at regular team meetings.
- ▶ Form a health and safety committee (HSC), and providing HSC members with reasonable access to workers during working hours.
- ▶ Ask workers for their feedback during informal conversations.

Participate in WHS consultation

Team meetings are a particularly useful way to consult with team members about safety issues. You may find that time is provided for discussion of WHS at each team meeting. If you wish to raise an issue, you should clearly explain it, refer to any evidence you have, and if possible, make a suggestion for how to solve the issue raised. Your supervisor may use this information to investigate further. Any issues that cannot be resolved or that may impact on other areas of the organisation will be referred to relevant staff (such the HSC or the HSR).

During team meetings, your supervisor may:

- ▶ report on recent workplace incidents
- ▶ report on production time lost to workplace injuries
- ▶ report on new practices to improve WHS
- ▶ ask team members to raise WHS issues
- ▶ ask team members to describe any hazards that have been identified
- ▶ provide you with a copy of the minutes of recent HSC meetings.

Work safety inspections

Work safety inspections can be conducted from within the organisation or when a state or territory regulatory authority conducts an inspection. Inspections are another good way to consult with team members about safety issues. Workers have valuable first-hand information and experience of the various things that may give rise to hazards in the workplace. It is therefore important that managers allow workers to participate in safety inspections.

By participating in safety inspections, the workers will also gain valuable insight into workplace hazards, assessing risk and use of controls to effectively manage WHS issues.

A work inspection may observe and record the following information.

A work safety inspection may include:

- ▶ concerns of workers and their representatives
- ▶ the number of workplace hazard and incident reports
- ▶ environmental factors contributing to risk

- ▶ equipment-related factors contributing to risk
- ▶ task-related factors contributing to risk
- ▶ routine checks of noise, vibration, lighting, temperature and ventilation
- ▶ signs of stress, wear, impact, vibration, heat, corrosion, chemical reaction or misuse of plant and equipment
- ▶ deviations from workplace policies, procedures and practices.

Current knowledge of WHS issues

People can only contribute to a healthy and safe work environment if they have the skills and knowledge to do so. All workers should have the WHS policies and procedures of their workplace carefully explained to them and receive adequate training for their job. Individually, staff should take steps to maintain and update their knowledge of WHS issues in the workplace to ensure they keep themselves and others safe.

The requirements for maintaining and updating knowledge of WHS issues are described below.

Employer requirements

- ▶ Legislation places a significant responsibility on employers to ensure workers are adequately trained for the tasks they are required to undertake. Training in WHS issues ensures that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and is crucial for enabling everyone to work safely in a particular workplace. For HSRs, WHS legislation requires that they attend relevant training programs to enable them to effectively carry out their responsibilities.
- ▶ Currency of knowledge of WHS issues and practices may also extend to ensuring that workers and supervisors are aware of any changes to systems, procedures or equipment that may affect the way a task is carried out. Ongoing training should be provided as circumstances change.

Worker requirements

- ▶ You must make sure you know about and follow your organisation's procedures as they relate to your work role. This includes identifying and reporting hazards, incidents, injuries and near misses; using correct PPE; following emergency response procedures; and participating in issue resolution and consultation as required. In some circumstances ensuring currency of skills and knowledge may be a mandatory part of a person's job requirements. For example, in community and health services, all support workers may be required to maintain currency of first-aid credentials.
- ▶ Workers can maintain and update their knowledge of WHS issues by attending any required training, reading and applying information in WHS documentation or workplace bulletins, and discussing WHS issues with their supervisor or with HSRs.

Example

Participate in workplace safety meetings, inspections and consultative activities

As required by WHS legislation, the organisation will consult with its workers when any of the following are undertaken:

- ▶ Risk assessment and review
- ▶ When decisions are undertaken to eliminate or control risks
- ▶ When implementing risk control measures
- ▶ When there are proposed changes to the work premises, systems or work methods, and/or equipment used at work
- ▶ When making decisions about the procedures for resolving health or safety issues, consulting with workers, and/or monitoring the health of workers
- ▶ Before changes are made to the procedures for WHS consultation, and other WHS policy and procedures
- ▶ When information and training that may affect health and safety is provided to workers



Practice task 8

1. Why is it important that workers are involved in WHS consultations?

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2. List two different methods or ways of consulting in the workplace.

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3. What type of WHS information should workers keep up to date on?

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Click to complete Practice task 8

3C Contribute to the development and implementation of safe workplace policies and procedures

All workers share common responsibilities and all should be able to provide advice and feedback in a constructive and supportive manner. Organisational policies and procedures should be reviewed and updated regularly according to feedback and consultation with workers. This is best done including the people from particular work areas because they are familiar with the workspace and aware of the hazards that may exist in their work role and environment.



Workplace documents and procedures

There is a range of WHS information that organisations use or require. While the specific kind of information varies according to the workplace, there are documents that most workers need to be aware of. These can be reviewed, new documents developed, trialled and implemented as many times as required to find suitable and best practice procedures and policies to suit the workplace environment. Workers who are involved in particular work areas should be asked to provide input into this process.

Here is a list of some of the common WHS documents and procedures in an organisation.

WHS documents

- ▶ Hazard and incident reports
- ▶ Workplace inspection reports
- ▶ Incident investigation reports
- ▶ Minutes of meetings and reports from the health and safety committee
- ▶ Job safety analyses (JSAs), safe method work statements (SMWS) and risk assessments
- ▶ Safety data sheets (SDSs) and registers
- ▶ Worker handbooks
- ▶ Manufacturers' manuals and specifications
- ▶ Information from health and safety representatives (HSRs)
- ▶ Information from external sources on hazards and risks relevant to the work group

2. List two examples of common workplace procedures.

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3. How can workers keep up to date with WHS knowledge and information?

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Click to complete Practice task 9

Summary

1. Workers must comply with organisational policies and procedures when raising WHS issues. If the matter cannot be resolved within their workplace they have the option of making a complaint to the government agency responsible for worker safety in their state or territory.
2. Workers can make a valuable contribution to workplace safety by participating in meetings, taking on WHS responsibilities and by contributing to consultative efforts to improve workplace safety.
3. A health and safety representative (HSR) is a person from your workplace who has been elected by the workers to represent them on WHS issues.
4. Health and safety committees (HSCs) consist of management and workers who meet regularly to discuss WHS issues.
5. Your employer is required by legislation, regulations, codes of practice and workplace procedures to consult with you and your work colleagues about any WHS matters that affect you
6. Participating in consultation processes in your organisation enables you to contribute to decisions that affect health and safety.
7. Workers can make a valuable contribution to workplace safety because they are familiar with the work environment and its hazards.
8. By participating in work safety inspections the workers will also gain valuable insight into workplace hazards, assessing risk and use of controls to effectively manage workplace health and safety issues.
9. Risk assessment is most effective when it is done in consultation with workers who are familiar with the workspace and aware of the hazards.

Learning checkpoint 3

Contribute to safe work practices in the workplace

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in contributing to safe work practices in the workplace.

Part A

1. What type of WHS issues can be raised with an HSR or other designated persons?

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2. Explain the function and responsibility of an HSR?

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Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Sherrie is a HSR who currently works in a small team of people who are developing a procedure for equipment handling and storage in their workplace. The team decided that involving the workers in the procedure's development is the best way to ensure the procedure will accurately reflect and support current work practices.

The team seeks permission from management and then schedule a whole team meeting for each work area. From these consultative meetings they gain some useful information and request that one representative from each area assists them in the development and implementation of future policy and procedural changes. This also includes participation in area inspections.

The reports they submit to management recommend some changes be made equipment handling and storage. These updated procedures better reflect the current practices of workers in their particular work areas.

1. What are the benefits of involving workers in the development and implementation of WHS policies and procedures according to this case study?

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2. How did Sherrie and her team encourage others to contribute to development and implementation of equipment handling and storage?

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Topic 4

In this topic you will learn how to:

4A Identify ways to maintain currency of safe work practices in regard to workplace systems, equipment and processes

4B Reflect on your own levels of stress and fatigue, and report according to workplace procedures

Reflect on your own safe work practices

WHS legislation, policies, procedures and practices are part of an ongoing continuous improvement process. For this reason, WHS matters are always being updated and it is important that you are able to reflect on your own safe work practices and ensure they are best-practice and in compliance with current legislation, standards and codes of practice.

Reflecting on your practice includes checking the currency of your workplace practices and also being able to reflect on your own levels of workplace stress and fatigue. If you feel that you are not coping with stress and fatigue then you should seek assistance by reporting this to your supervisor and considering stress management solutions.

4A Identify ways to maintain currency of safe work practices in regard to workplace systems, equipment and processes

In any workplace, it is critical for all workers to work safely at all times and to maintain the currency of their work practices. For this to occur, workers must have knowledge of procedures and protocols, including general evacuation information for emergencies.

Safety and emergency procedures may change and be updated over time, so everyone needs to know about these changes as soon as they happen. In addition, new equipment and processes are continually being developed and used within the community services industry. You need to ensure you know how to use all new and unfamiliar equipment correctly by reading the instructions before use, or being shown how to do so.

Here are some ways a worker can ensure they maintain the currency of safe work practices in their work area.

Maintain currency in safe work practices:

- ▶ Take part in emergency drills and process training.
- ▶ Keep first-aid training up to date.
- ▶ Know how to access and use emergency equipment
- ▶ Know how and when to use PPE and practice regularly.
- ▶ Ask questions of the team and the supervisor if you need clarity.
- ▶ Refer to workplace policies and procedures.
- ▶ Do daily housekeeping activities to ensure standards are upheld.
- ▶ Address any deficiencies and report them as required.
- ▶ Participate in workplace inspections and in WHS meetings.

Maintain equipment and currency of emergency drills

The response to the different emergencies may vary according to the type of situation, the organisation and location of the emergency. Drills are important to refresh workers' memories and ensure the response is immediate to guarantee the safety of everyone. All workers should know where safety equipment is situated within their workplace. This saves valuable time in an emergency, and also serves to decrease anxiety in a crisis event.

Equipment such as emergency and safety equipment also needs to be checked and maintained as well as easily accessible, identifiable and comply with relevant standards, guidelines and codes of practice. All safety and emergency equipment should be routinely checked to ensure it is working correctly. Sometimes this requires that specialists with the appropriate skills are contracted to carry out the checks (for example when checking fire extinguishers).

PPE must also be checked and maintained. Ensuring PPE is available means that all workers must know where and how to access it, and when to use it. The following outlines how to ensure the required PPE is kept in good working order.

Equipment functionality

Some PPE, such as disposable gloves, may carry service-by or expiry dates, similar to the use-by dates on food. For other forms of PPE it may simply be a case of checking that the equipment is in good working order by ensuring it can still fulfil its intended function; for example, checking that oven mitts and aprons used in food preparation areas are not worn or torn. Always check with the HSR or an HSC member in the first instance, as the organisation will probably have a safety register, or a PPE maintenance schedule, for testing and checking PPE in the workplace. If not, they may be able to arrange any required servicing or purchases where there is found to be a deficiency.

Servicing equipment

There may be occasions when PPE is not in a serviceable state, or when you are unable to determine if it is. If so, you can seek expert advice from a service provider; for example:

- ▶ fire departments and professional fire equipment providers
- ▶ safety equipment providers
- ▶ pharmacies
- ▶ work clothing retailers and manufacturers
- ▶ helmet manufacturers
- ▶ hospitals and medical services providers.

Maintain currency with WHS housekeeping

Housekeeping is the practice of maintaining order and adhering to standards of presentation and performance in the workplace and workplace systems, to ensure a safe and healthy environment. This relates to how WHS is managed and implemented within the workplace.

WHS housekeeping practices address items such as those outlined below.

General workplace cleanliness and tidiness

Keeping the workplace free from debris, spills and mess decreases the chance of fire hazards, blocked exit ways and the chance of pest infestation, cross-contamination and the associated health risks. Having adequate storage protocols prevents items or objects being stacked or placed in walkways or near exists, which could hinder an evacuation process.

Flooring

Flooring refers to underfoot conditions. Ensure floors are free from spills or slip and trip hazards (such as uneven surfaces or loose tiles or carpet); this also extends to the provision of anti-slip or anti-skid floor coverings. All indoor and outdoor surfaces, including footpaths, must be safe and in good repair.

Work space

Work space refers to area around equipment and machinery. Clutter is the cause of many workplace incidents, especially around machinery or equipment. Clutter can prevent adequate access to equipment, or encroach too closely onto moving machinery parts. Several hazards may be present in a work space including fire, electrical and mechanical hazards.

Functioning services

Functioning services include lighting, air flow, ventilation and emergency lighting. When adequate and fully functional, all these elements provide a safe workplace. Stuffy work spaces, without adequate lighting or ventilation, present a number of health and wellbeing risks to workers, including asthma and allergy-related illnesses.

Storage areas

Storage includes access to and availability of PPE. If PPE is not available, or is not stored correctly, its effectiveness can deteriorate, or performance can degrade. Storage areas can also become hazards themselves, if they are neglected or items are not stored adequately. There may be manual-handling issues such as a heavy box that requires two people to lift and carry it, being stored on a top shelf.

Signage

Signs are everywhere in workplaces today – they mark emergency exits, first-aid points or fire extinguishers, or simply provide guidance for the safe use of the photocopier. At a minimum, there is a legal requirement for a workplace to adequately sign emergency exits, evacuation procedures and emergency contact numbers.

Accessibility

An additional housekeeping issue may relate to ensuring adequately documented procedures are in place and displayed clearly in the workplace; for example, next to a piece of equipment that is not used very often to ensure staff follow the correct operating procedures. As mentioned previously, inadequate, incomplete or out-dated procedures can be a hazard.

Monitor and address deficiencies

It may be your responsibility to monitor housekeeping practices on a daily basis, as a matter of routine, to help ensure the safety of the work group. This can be done by walking around and observing your workplace when you begin work, which does not necessarily require any specialist knowledge. If a worker does this routinely, it is easy to identify when things are out of place, which may prevent an incident or injury.

Here is how to ensure you effectively monitor practices and address deficiencies.

Monitor practices

Monitoring may involve seeing a person undertaking a task incorrectly, or neglecting to do a task. In such a case, you may need to explain and/or demonstrate the correct housekeeping procedure to the person. In your explanation, you should also outline why a procedure is undertaken in a specific way (that is, to ensure their health and safety and that this has been determined as the safest and most efficient way), to help the person understand the importance of following the procedures.

Address deficiencies

When someone identifies an issue, whether it is inside or outside their work area, they need to report it to an appropriate person in that work area, such as the supervisor or group leader, or the HSR. This also applies when the workplace is offsite, such as during an excursion. Once the issue or deficiency has been reported and steps taken to address it, there should be a process of follow-up to ensure the issue has been totally resolved and standards are maintained.

Example

Identify ways to maintain currency of safe work practices to workplace systems, equipment and processes

In the kitchen of a large aged care facility, a WHS review is conducted to determine the availability and functionality of the kitchen's PPE. The kitchen supervisor, Jill, who is also in charge of all the volunteers who help prepare the meals, inspects all the safety equipment, including several types of safety gloves and oven mitts, aprons and even goggles. Each person's footwear is also inspected as staff and lunch volunteers come in, to ensure they are wearing adequate foot protection that is enclosed, non-slip and isn't worn or ill-fitting.



The review is conducted on a regular basis because there are always new volunteers working in the kitchen, and Jill uses the review to make sure all workers have the required training and WHS currency for working in the kitchen.

Jill understands exactly what is required in the kitchen, so she quickly realises that the food preparation areas don't all have access to oven mitts (for hot food) or disposable gloves for food handling, so she reports this deficiency to the manager.

Practice task 10

1. Why is it important to maintain currency of your own work practices?

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2. Why is it important to maintain PPE, equipment and currency of emergency drills?

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3. How can daily WHS housekeeping assist a worker reflect on their own safe work practices?

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Click to complete Practice task 10

4B Reflect on your own levels of stress and fatigue, and report according to workplace procedures

Workers in the community services sector may be exposed to ongoing stress as a part of their job, or experience fatigue as a result of stress. Unless properly managed, stress or fatigue can represent unnecessary risk factors to workers and people requiring support alike. Stress and fatigue are often hidden but nevertheless very real hazards. If you feel yourself becoming stressed or fatigued, raise this with your supervisor or health and safety representative so strategies can be developed and implemented to address this issue.



Workers in community and health sectors can manage stress and fatigue by firstly being aware of their limitations and identifying the causes. To reflect on your own health is to consider honestly what stress and fatigue you can deal with and anything above that level needs to be discussed with colleagues and your supervisor.

Stressors in the workplace

While there are no specific requirements in WHS legislation that deal with work-related stress, general duty-of-care principles apply to the employer and the worker. Some causes, symptoms and effects of stress are outlined here.

Causes

- ▶ Excessive or demanding workload
- ▶ Insufficient organisational support or resourcing
- ▶ Behaviour of the person requiring support
- ▶ Conflict with co-workers or management
- ▶ Constant change
- ▶ Job insecurity
- ▶ Harassment, bullying or discrimination
- ▶ Inadequate job training

Symptoms

- ▶ Anxiety or feelings of being unable to cope
- ▶ Decrease in work performance
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Absenteeism
- ▶ Sleeping difficulties, such as insomnia
- ▶ Cognitive difficulties, such as a reduced ability to concentrate or make decisions
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Increased aggression

Effects

- ▶ Susceptibility to workplace or other incidents
- ▶ Deterioration of work and personal relationships
- ▶ Illness
- ▶ Risk of health problems including increased risk of cardiovascular disease or mental illness
- ▶ Difficulty managing workplace relationships
- ▶ Withdrawal or aggression
- ▶ Burnout and inability to continue working

Levels of fatigue

Working long hours with intense mental or physical effort, or during some or all of the natural time for sleep, can cause fatigue. Fatigue affects a person's health, increases the chance of workplace injuries occurring and reduces performance and productivity within the workplace. Workplace and personal factors can equally contribute to fatigue.

Factors contributing to fatigue include:

- ▶ roster patterns and length of shifts
- ▶ insufficient recovery time between shifts
- ▶ inadequate rest breaks
- ▶ a challenging, physically demanding or difficult work environment
- ▶ sleep disorders, poor quality of sleep or sleep loss
- ▶ social life
- ▶ family needs
- ▶ travel time.

Recognise your own stress and fatigue

Self-care involves taking positive steps to ensure your physical and psychological wellbeing is maintained. Workers in community and health sectors have stressful jobs. You can manage stress and fatigue by firstly being aware of the symptoms and their causes; by being assertive about what you can realistically deal with; and by communicating boundaries and limitations to your employer or supervisor.

You must also take action to maximise your physical and emotional wellbeing so you are in optimum health to manage the demands of your job. Some workplaces have assistance programs that provide counselling and support for workers suffering workplace stress.

Report stress and fatigue levels

All workers have a legal obligation to identify risks and hazards – stress and fatigue are hazards. Likewise, a supervisor or senior staff member has an equal obligation to recognise and address the signs of stress and fatigue in workers.

If an employer is unaware of the stress or fatigue being experienced they are unable to act to address it. Early intervention increases the chance of successfully managing these hazards and ensuring work processes are safe and sustainable. This is particularly important as the stresses of working in the community services environment can place support workers at risk of psychological harm.

Debriefing can assist to reduce stress by building a workplace culture of support and teamwork and decreasing feelings of isolation by providing an opportunity for individuals to express their concerns and have them discussed as issues that are relevant to the whole group.

If you are feeling stressed and/or fatigued, let your supervisor or HSR know so they can help you address these issues with the appropriate stress management strategy. Workplace procedures may require that risk assessment documentation be completed as stress and fatigue are hazards that also need to be eliminated as much as is possible.

Example

Reflect on your own levels of stress and fatigue, and report according to workplace procedures

Lauren is a worker at a supported accommodation facility in an outer suburb of Adelaide that is staffed 24 hours per day. She lives in an expanding commuter town about 100 kilometres away and travels 55 minutes by car to get to work.

Lauren works a rotating roster so, over a month, she works day, afternoon and night shifts. During the night, workers can sleep on the premises; however, Lauren finds that she has trouble getting a sound sleep.

Lauren has worked four consecutive night shifts and is feeling quite tired. From previous experience she knows the dangers of over-extending herself: twice before she has nearly gone to sleep at the wheel when driving home. Both Lauren and her husband worry that she may have an accident on the drive home after her shift, so Lauren decides to report her concerns to her team leader.



Practice task 11

1. Give two examples of the possible effects of too much stress at work.

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2. Give two examples of some factors that may contribute to fatigue levels increasing.

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3. Why is it important to reflect on your own stress and fatigue levels at work?

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4. Why report stress and fatigue levels to your supervisor or HSR?

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Click to complete Practice task 11

Summary

1. Workplace legislation, policies, procedures and practices are part of an ongoing continuous improvement process and are always being updated.
2. It is important that you are able to reflect on your own safe work practices and ensure they are best-practice and in compliance with current legislation, national standards and codes of practice.
3. In any workplace it is critical for all workers to work safely at all times and maintain the currency of their work practices.
4. Reflecting on your own practice includes checking the currency of your workplace practices and being able to reflect on your own levels of stress and fatigue.
5. Self-care involves taking positive steps to ensure that physical and psychological wellbeing is maintained.
6. Workers in community and health sectors can manage stress and fatigue by firstly being aware of the symptoms and their causes; by being assertive about what you can realistically deal with; and by communicating boundaries and limitations to your employer or supervisor.
7. If you are not coping with stress and fatigue, you should report it to your supervisor and participate in a debriefing session or other stress-management solutions.
8. The stresses of working in the community services environment can place support workers at risk of psychological harm.

2. Why should Cassie reflect on her own levels of stress and fatigue, and report this to her supervisor?

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