

Risk Management Code of Practice 2007

Supplement 2 – Risk assessment

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Department of Justice and Attorney-General



Risk Management Code of Practice 2007

Supplement 2 – Risk assessment

Important information about the code and supplement

- The code replaces the *Risk Management Advisory Standard Code of Practice 2000*.
- The code was made on 3 June 2007.
- The code first commenced on 15 June 2007.
- The code was amended on 5 December 2008.
- The code expires 10 years after it first commenced.

What is this supplement about?

Supplement 2 to the *Risk Management Code of Practice* describes step 2, **how to assess or evaluate risks** created by workplace hazards, in the five step risk management process. The risk management process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Note

There may be additional risks in the workplace, which have not been specifically addressed in this supplement. It is a requirement under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* (the Act) and the *Electrical Safety Act 2002* (the ES Act) to assess these risks and ensure that control measures are implemented and reviewed to prevent or minimise exposure to these risks.

Supplement 2 should be read in conjunction with the *Risk Management Code of Practice* and supplements 1 and 3, as well as the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* and the *Electrical Safety Act 2002* and other relevant codes of practice. Where applicable, codes of practice are referred to in the text.

References to legislation, Australian Standards and other documents in this code of practice are current at the time of printing. It is the responsibility of the user to check whether these documents are current at the time of reading.

Hard copies of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) and Electrical Safety Office (ESO) legislation and codes of practice are available from SDS Publications. To obtain copies, please call (07) 3118 6900.

Further information is available on the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations website www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call Infoline on 1300 369 915.

Contents

1.	Step 1 – Assess the risks	1
1.1	Introduction.....	1
1.2	What is a risk?.....	1
2.	Why assess the risks.....	1
3.	How to assess risks	3
3.1	Likelihood and consequences	3
3.2	Estimating likelihood and consequences	3
3.2.1	Establishing likelihood.....	3
3.2.2	Establishing consequences.....	4
3.3	Risk rating.....	4
3.4	Risk priority chart (risk score and statement)	5
3.5	Risk score and statement.....	5
4.	Summary	6
5.	Applied case study – Risk assessment	7
	References and sources of further information	8
Appendix A:	Factors influencing likelihood	9
Appendix B:	Factors influencing consequences.....	11
Appendix C:	Forms	12

1. Step 1 – Assess the risks

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this supplement is to give detailed and practical advice about how to assess or evaluate the risks after the hazards have been identified. (Supplement 1 - Hazard identification).

1.2 What is a risk?

Risk is the likelihood that a harmful consequence (death, injury or illness) might result when exposed to the hazard.

This is the definition of ‘risk’ for the purpose of the *Risk Management Code of Practice 2007* and its supplements. It is consistent with the expanded definition used in general Australian industry standards, which define risk as:

In relation to any potential injury or harm – Risk is the likelihood and consequence of that injury or harm occurring. The term ‘risk’ is taken to mean ‘occupational health and safety risk’¹.

The degree of risk will depend upon the amount of exposure to the hazard. For example, toxic chemicals are hazardous - they have the potential to harm our health. But the level of risk depends on things such as:

- how much is present
- how easy it is for toxic chemicals to interact with our bodies
- how fast the toxicity depletes and how rapidly their potential for harm decreases
- how long some chemicals are toxic (e.g. arsenic and lead are toxic forever).

Therefore, a drum of toxic waste is hazardous, whether it is in a well-regulated disposal facility, or sitting in the living room. But the level of risk would be very different in these two cases.

2. Why assess the risks

The purpose of a risk assessment is to determine:

- whether there is any likelihood of a potentially hazardous situation causing death, injury, illness or disease to people in the workplace
- how severe that risk is
- whether the risk needs to be controlled and how urgently.

Assessing or evaluating the identified risks with the tools provided in this supplement will help:

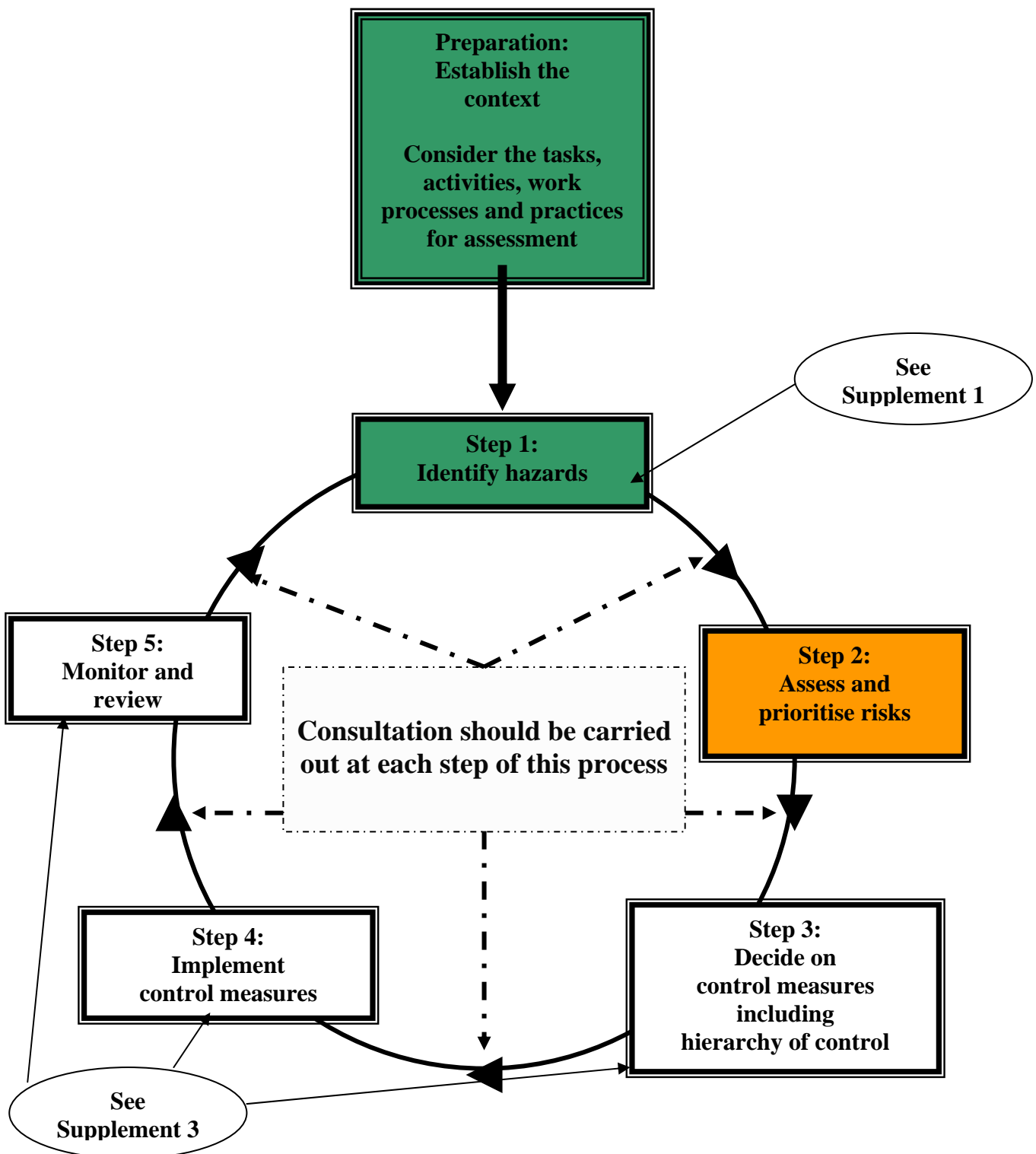
- determine which ones are the most serious (i.e. those with greater likelihood and most severe consequences)
- plan the actions needed to control the risks in order of priority, from most serious to least serious risks to health and safety.

¹ AS 4801 – Occupational Health and Safety Systems – Specifications with guidance for use.

Prioritising risks in this way is similar to triage in a hospital's emergency department. Both are systems of ranking in order of importance and allocating limited resources to treat the most serious first.

A code of practice does not cover all hazards or risks in a workplace. Where there is no regulation or code of practice, or there are gaps that are not covered, a risk assessment must be undertaken to determine suitable control measures to cover the deficiency.

Figure 1: Five step risk management process



3. How to assess risks

3.1 Likelihood and consequences

To assess the level of risk, the likelihood of an event occurring (will it happen or could it happen?) and the extent of the consequences that could result (if it does occur, how serious will the outcome be?) must be considered. Both factors are equally important in establishing the level of risk and it is not important which factor is considered first.

Risk = severity of consequences verses likelihood of occurrence

3.2 Estimating likelihood and consequences

When estimating the likelihood of an event occurring and the severity of the potential consequences, it is important for the person doing the risk assessment to refer to the following information:

- past safety records, such as safety committee information
- incident statistics in the workplace or the whole industry
- practice and relevant experience in the relevant organisation and others in the industry
- manufacturer's data or information on proper use of machinery
- relevant published literature such as trade magazines, research articles, safety organisations and employer and employee organisations' materials
- market research such as industry development of new materials and equipment
- the results of public consultation such as new public projects or institute information
- economic, engineering or other models such as Quality Assurance (QA), Total Quality Management (TQM) or safety culture
- specialist and expert judgements such as safety consultants or case law decisions
- other codes of practice (e.g. Manual Tasks and the ManTRA system).

Complementary or equal processes to this code of practice may be found in

- (1) Australian standards²
- (2) WHSQ's codes of practice (e.g. *Manual Tasks Code of Practice* or *Plant Code of Practice*).

3.2.1 Establishing likelihood

The likelihood of an event occurring will depend on both the probability and frequency of exposure to a hazard.

There may be a number of factors specific to the workplace that will influence the likelihood of an event occurring, such as:

- how, where and when people are exposed to the hazard
- how exposure varies over time or by location

² AS4360 – Risk Management; AS4804 Occupational health and safety systems; or HB 205 – OHS Risk Management Handbook.

To help establish the best estimate of likelihood, there are a number of examples of factors listed in Appendix A that may need to be taken into account. The following descriptive scale can be used to nominate the likelihood of an incident or event occurring at the workplace.

Likelihood	Almost certain	expected in most circumstances
	Likely	will probably occur in most circumstances
	Possible	might occur at some time
	Unlikely	could occur at some time
	Rare	may occur only in exceptional circumstances

3.2.2 Establishing consequences

The severity or range of the potential consequences resulting from an incident can be determined by a number of factors, such as:

- how much harm the hazard could do
- how many people it could affect
- whether the harm would be short or long term.

Some examples of factors that can affect the severity of consequences resulting from an incident are provided in appendix B. The following descriptive scale can be used to nominate the consequences of an incident or event occurring at the workplace.

Consequences	Catastrophic	death; toxic release of chemicals
	Major	extensive injuries; loss of production
	Moderate	medical treatment; spillage contained but with outside help
	Minor	help
	Insignificant	first aid treatment only; spillage contained at site no injuries

3.3 Risk rating

The level of risk, represented by a ‘risk score’ (number) or ‘risk statement’ (letter), is determined by the relationship between likelihood and consequence. To determine the level of risk:

- plot the estimated levels of likelihood and consequences on the following risk priority chart to find the risk score and statement
- refer to the risk score and statement chart to see what actions need to be taken.

3.4 Risk priority chart (risk score and statement)

Likelihood How likely is it to happen?	Consequences: How severely it hurts someone (if it happens)?				
	Insignificant (no injuries)	Minor (first aid treatment only; spillage contained at site)	Moderate (medical treatment; spillage contained but with outside help)	Major (extensive injuries; loss of production)	Catastrophic (death; toxic release of chemicals)
Almost certain - expected in most circumstances	3 H	3 H	4 A	4 A	4 A
Likely – will probably occur in most circumstances	2 M	3 H	3 H	4 A	4 A
Possible – might occur at some time	1 L	2 M	3 H	4 A	4 A
Unlikely – could occur at some time	1 L	1 L	2 M	3 H	4 A
Rare - may occur, only in exceptional circumstances	1 L	1 L	2 M	3 H	3 H

3.5 Risk score and statement

Score and statement	Action
4 A: Acute	ACT NOW – Urgent - do something about the risks immediately. Requires immediate attention.
3 H: High	Highest management decision is required urgently.
2 M: Moderate	Follow management instructions.
1 L: Low	OK for now. Record and review if any equipment/ people/ materials/ work processes or procedures change.

It is important to note that these risk scores have no absolute value and should only be used for comparison.

This stage of the risk assessment provides the basis for ranking or prioritising risks in order of importance from 1 to 4 (4 being the highest risk score and the most important). When the risk scores for all the risks in the workplace have been compared, the resulting ranking will be a guide to the order in which these risks should be addressed. When more than one risk has the same ranking and not all can be dealt with at once, the risks may need to be reassessed to determine which is the most important to deal with first.

To get the best results from a risk assessment, consult with as many people as possible in the workplace including the WHS committee, WHSRs, WHSOs, supervisors, managers and others with knowledge and experience.

Simplified advice

No or low risk - continue activity

If it is not at all likely that anyone will be exposed to a hazardous situation or event, then there is no risk, and no risk control measures are required.

High risk – stop activity now

If there is a high or immediate risk to health or safety, the process/activity in question must be ceased until measures are taken to remove the high or immediate risk.

4. Summary

A risk is the likelihood that a harmful consequence (death, injury or illness) might result when a person is exposed to a hazard. Assessing the risks will help determine how serious each hazard is, and which ones must be dealt with first to ensure workers' safety.

To assess the potential risks associated with a hazard, the likelihood of an event happening, and the severity of the potential consequences of the event, must be estimated. There are a number of factors that influence likelihood and consequences, which are listed in appendix A and B.

When a risk is assessed, a risk score and statement can be allocated and used to rank the risks in order of importance. **Acute** risks with a score of 4 are of the highest importance and must be dealt with immediately, and **Low** risks with a score of 1 can be dealt with last.

5. Applied case study – Risk assessment

From the hazard register, risks are now identified and assessed to determine their severity. This example uses form A2, and focuses on one of the hazards identified in the example in supplement 1. A separate form should be used for each hazard.

Workplace area or grouping: _____ Reference : _____ Form completed by: _____(print) _____ (sign) Date form completed: .../.../...						
Hazard identification Hazard: Id 2: Mixer is not guarded – access to mixing bowl and mixer blade when machine is operating. Associated risk: The person operating the mixer could be injured by the moving parts if their hand slipped in while machine was operating. Hand could be cut or could even lose a finger. Specific circumstances relating to the risk: This machine is used several times a day. Two of the workers are not very experienced in using this equipment. Persons at risk: All three workers in the bakery who operate the machine.						
Risk assessment Existing control measures (if any): Staff follow policy and operating instructions to use the mixer safely. Likelihood: (<i>tick</i>) Almost certain <input type="checkbox"/> Likely <input type="checkbox"/> Possible <input type="checkbox"/> Unlikely <input type="checkbox"/> Rare <input type="checkbox"/> Consequences: (<i>tick</i>) Catastrophic <input type="checkbox"/> Major <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Minor <input type="checkbox"/> Insignificant <input type="checkbox"/> Risk rating Likely x Major = A						
Risk control Possible control options: Elimination Substitution, Isolation or Engineering Administrative or personal protective equipment Preferred control options (and why):						
Implementation plan						
Control option	Associated activities	Resources required	Person(s) responsible	Proposed implementation date	Sign off and date	Scheduled review date
Review Are control measures in place? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No, comment (why not): Are controls preventing or minimising the risk? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No, comment (why not): Are there any new problems with the risk? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes, comment (what are they) 						

References and sources of further information

- ANSI/AIHA Z10-2005, American National Standard - Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems. Released September 5, 2005 through the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA).
- AS 3806:2006 – Compliance programs. Standards Australia.
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- AS/NZS 4836:2001 – Safe working on low voltage electrical installations. Australian/New Zealand Standard.
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Appendix A: Factors influencing likelihood

The following factors can affect the likelihood of an event or situation occurring:

- **How often the task occurs:** Generally, when the same critical task demands are repeated, the more likely an incident will occur. This includes the same or similar tasks occurring during the shift. For example, consider how often in a shift a worker carries a load; pushes a trolley; or uses a vibrating hand tool.
- **How many people are exposed:** Generally, the greater the number of people exposed to the hazard, the more likely an incident will occur. For example, three shifts of workers in a 24-hour distribution centre, operating morning, evening and night shifts, carrying out wholesale order make ups, could be exposed to manual tasks, noise and shiftwork hazards.
- **The duration of exposure:** Generally, the longer a person is exposed to the hazard, the more likely an incident will occur. For example, consider a manufacturing worker who is exposed to an accumulative total of eight hours of industrial noise over a 10 hour shift.
- **Quantities of materials or multiple exposure points involved:** For example, an incident (such as an explosion) is more likely to occur as a result of a small amount of flammable liquid, such as petrol, in a container which allows room for expanding gases than from a full container of the liquid with no room for expanding gases; an item of plant may have a number of places with exposed moving parts that could injure a worker.
- **The position of the hazard relative to workers and to other hazards:** For example, workers working close to a noisy machine are more likely to suffer hearing loss than those working further away; certain chemicals, such as methylated spirits, may only represent a risk if they are located near a heat source.
- **The skills and competence of persons exposed:** Workers who are not trained in safe and efficient methods of work are more likely to be injured. For example, a worker who has not been trained in using a trolley may manually lift and carry loads over long distances; a worker who has not been trained in the safe operation of plant could increase the chance of human error leading to dangerous events and injury.
- **Experience of persons exposed:** For example, a worker with 20 years experience is less likely to make the same mistake and cause an incident than a worker with only two months experience. Adequate training and reasonable competence to do a task will reduce the likelihood of an incident.
- **Any special characteristics of the people involved:** For example, young workers have a lower level of maturity, which can increase the likelihood of them behaving in a way that is dangerous and risky. Further, young workers³ are still developing and are more likely to be injured when handling heavy loads due to their reduced capacities. Additionally, a pregnant woman and the developing foetus may be affected if exposed to chemicals, heavy loads or noise.

³ Young workers – mainly persons between 15 and 24 years of age. Risk factors for young workers are: immaturity factors, lack of experience, eagerness to perform well, and failure to see potential danger.

- **Distractions:** It is more likely that an incident will occur when a worker is not paying full attention to the task or their surroundings. For example, a worker listening to music through headphones increases the chance of being hit by vehicles at a construction site.
- **Environmental conditions:** For example, water in the vicinity of an electrical hazard.
- **Repetition:** When workers are consistently required to replicate tasks or components of tasks. For example, when a process task cycle is less than 30 seconds and is completed for more than one hour; or the process task cycle comprises more than 50 per cent of the total task time and is completed for more than one hour.
- **Condition of equipment:** The use of defective equipment is more likely to cause an incident. For example, when the tool rest of a bench grinder is not adjusted for the wear of the abrasive wheel rather than using one that is correctly adjusted.
- **The effectiveness of existing control measures:**
 - Do the existing control measures represent good practice?
 - Are the existing control measures preventing or minimising exposure to the risk?
 - Do workers know about the existing control measures?
 - Are the existing control measures being used or followed?
 - Are there adequate systems or procedures in place in relation to the existing control measures?
 - Is there adequate training and supervision in relation to the existing control measures?
 - Is there adequate maintenance in relation to the existing control measures?
 - Are the existing control measures easy to use and follow?

Appendix B: Factors influencing consequences

The following factors can affect the severity of consequences when an event or situation happens:

- **Potential for ‘chain reaction’:** Where a hazard, if not eliminated, may evolve and compound into an even more dangerous situation.
- **Concentrations of substances:** For example, a minor injury might result because of a diluted chemical, while a fatality might result from a concentrated form of the same chemical.
- **Volumes of materials:** For example, the potential consequences of a leak of a small amount of a particular chemical, such as ammonia, into the workplace may be relatively minor, compared with the potential consequences of the release of a large amount of the same chemical.
- **Speeds of projectiles and moving parts:** Generally, the greater the speed a projectile or part is moving, the more severe the consequences of injury.
- **Heights:** The force with which a falling object hits a person (and hence the potential injury), will generally increase the greater the distance it falls. Similarly, a person will generally sustain greater injuries if falling from a great height.
- **Position of the worker relative to the hazard:** For example, workers working close to a noisy machine are likely to incur greater hearing damage than those working further away.
- **Weights:** For example, a worker will generally sustain a more severe injury from lifting material in 50 kg packages than from lifting the same material packaged in 30 kg lots.
- **Forces and energy levels:** For example, the higher the voltage of electricity and the possibility of a high current flowing through a person, the more severe the consequences are likely to be.

Appendix C: Forms

The following forms are provided as suggestions on how to record details of the risk management process being carried out.

The forms are provided as **samples only**.

These forms may be modified to meet the organisation's requirements.

It may be useful to enlarge the forms to allow more space for writing.

Two alternate sets of forms are provided.

Select one set only.

Set A: forms A1 to A3

OR

Set B: forms B1 to B6

Form A1: Hazard identification and register

Workplace area or grouping: _____ Reference no: _____
 Form completed by: _____ (print) _____ (sign)
 Date form completed: .../.../...

Ref. no.	Identified hazards	Date	Initials
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Form A2: Risk assessment and control

Fill in one form for each hazard identified at the workplace.

Workplace area or grouping: _____ Reference : _____ Form completed by: _____ (print) _____ (sign) Date form completed: .../.../...						
Hazard identification Hazard: Associated risk: Specific circumstances relating to the risk: Persons at risk:						
Risk assessment Existing control measures (if any): Likelihood: <i>(tick)</i> Almost certain <input type="checkbox"/> Likely <input type="checkbox"/> Possible <input type="checkbox"/> Unlikely <input type="checkbox"/> Rare <input type="checkbox"/> Consequences: <i>(tick)</i> Catastrophic <input type="checkbox"/> Major <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Minor <input type="checkbox"/> Insignificant <input type="checkbox"/>						
Risk control Possible control options: Elimination: Substitution, Isolation or Engineering: Administrative or personal protective equipment: Preferred control options (and why):						
Implementation plan						
Control option	Associated activities	Resources required	Person(s) responsible	Proposed implementation date	Sign off and date	Scheduled review date
Review Are control measures in place? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No, comment (why not): Are controls preventing or minimising the risk? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No, comment (why not): Are there any new problems with the risk? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes, comment (what are they): 						

Form A3: Hazard and associated risk register

Fill in this form for each workplace.

Form completed by:(print name)					Date form completed: .../.../...		
.....(sign)							
Ref. no.	Hazard	Associated risk	Risk rating	Control measures	Control measure implemented?		Review date
					Yes	No	
Comments: (Are controls preventing or minimising the risks? Are there any new problems introduced?) Ref. no. 1 Ref. no. 2 Ref. no. 3 Ref. no. 4 Ref. no. 5 Ref. no. 6							

Risk priority chart (risk score and statement)

Likelihood How likely is it to happen?	Consequences: How severely it hurts someone (if it happens)?				
	Insignificant (no injuries)	Minor (first aid treatment only; spillage contained at site)	Moderate (medical treatment; spillage contained but with outside help)	Major (extensive injuries; loss of production)	Catastrophic (death; toxic release of chemicals)
Almost certain - expected in most circumstances	3 H	3 H	4 A	4 A	4 A
Likely – will probably occur in most circumstances	2 M	3 H	3 H	4 A	4 A
Possible – might occur at some time	1 L	2 M	3 H	4 A	4 A
Unlikely – could occur at some time	1 L	1 L	2 M	3 H	4 A
Rare - may occur, only in exceptional circumstances	1 L	1 L	2 M	3 H	3 H

Risk score and statement

Score and statement	Action
4 A: Acute	ACT NOW – Urgent - do something about the risks immediately. Requires immediate attention.
3 H: High	Highest management decision is required urgently.
2 M: Moderate	Follow management instructions.
1 L: Low	OK for now. Record and review if any equipment/ people/ materials/ work methods or procedures change.

Form B1: Hazard identification

Fill in one form for each workplace area or grouping.

Workplace area or grouping:	Form completed by: _____ (print name) _____ (sign)	Date form completed: / /
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Identify the task or activity	What are the hazards for each activity? (and Ref. no.)	Date	Initials

Form B2: Risk identification

Fill in one form for each workplace area or grouping.

Workplace area or grouping:	Form completed by: _____ (print name) _____ (sign)	Date form completed: / /

What are the hazards for each activity? (and Ref. no.)	What are the associated risks? * (and Ref. no.)	Who is at risk?	Specific circumstances relating to the risk	Description of risk

* Note: There may be more than one risk associated with each hazard.

Form B3: Risk assessment

Fill in one form for each workplace area or grouping.

Workplace area or grouping:	Form completed by: <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> (print name) (sign) </div>	Date form completed: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%; margin-bottom: 2px;"> </div>
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Task/Activity	Hazard Ref. no.	Associated risk Ref. no.	Existing controls (if any)	Estimated likelihood	Estimated severity of consequences	Risk rating

Comments:

Risk priority chart (risk score and statement)

Likelihood How likely is it to happen?	Consequences: How severely it hurts someone (if it happens)?				
	Insignificant (no injuries)	Minor (first aid treatment only; spillage contained at site)	Moderate (medical treatment; spillage contained but with outside help)	Major (extensive injuries; loss of production)	Catastrophic (death; toxic release of chemicals)
Almost certain - expected in most circumstances	3 H	3 H	4 A	4 A	4 A
Likely – will probably occur in most circumstances	2 M	3 H	3 H	4 A	4 A
Possible – might occur at some time	1 L	2 M	3 H	4 A	4 A
Unlikely – could occur at some time	1 L	1 L	2 M	3 H	4 A
Rare - may occur, only in exceptional circumstances	1 L	1 L	2 M	3 H	3 H

Risk score and statement

Score and statement	Action
4 A: Acute	ACT NOW – Urgent - do something about the risks immediately. Requires immediate attention.
3 H: High	Highest management decision is required urgently.
2 M: Moderate	Follow management instructions.
1 L: Low	OK for now. Record and review if any equipment/ people/ materials/ work methods or procedures change.

Form B4: Risk control measures

Fill in one form for each risk.

Workplace area or grouping: Hazard: (Ref. no.) Risk: (Ref. no.)	Form completed by: _____ _____ (print name) _____ (sign)	Date form completed: / /
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Risk Ref. no.	Risk rating <i>(from Form B3)</i>	Possible control option(s) and how it will control the risk	Preferred control option(s) and comments
		Elimination:	
		Substitution:	
		Isolation:	
		Engineering:	
		Administrative:	
		Personal protective equipment:	
Comments:			

Form B5: Risk control implementation plan

Fill in one form for each risk.

Workplace area or grouping: Hazard: (Ref. no) Risk: (Ref. no)	Form completed by: _____ _____ (print name) _____ (sign)	Date form completed: / /
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Preferred control option(s)	What needs to be done?	What resources are needed?	Person(s) responsible	Implementation due date	Implementation completed		Date for review
					Signature	Date	

Form B6: Review of risk controls

Fill in one form for each risk.

Workplace area or grouping: Hazard: (Ref. no.) Risk: (Ref. no.)	Form completed by: _____ _____ (print name) _____ (sign)	Date form completed: _____ / ____ / ____
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Control measure(s)	Scheduled review date	Current date	Comment (if necessary)	Are control measures in place?			Are controls preventing or minimising exposure to the risk?		Are there any new problems?	
				Yes	Date control implemented	No, comment	Yes	No, comment	No	Yes, comment

Next review of whole workplace health and safety risk management process due: / /