



Chemicals and ‘hazardous substances’

‘Hazardous substances’ are substances that meet a definition under the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996. They are substances that can have a direct health effect on people and include some dusts, fibres, gases, vapours, smoke, fumes and chemicals. This checklist covers both requirements for hazardous substances under the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996 and general chemical safety.

safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Register of hazardous substances			
Is there a complete list of all hazardous substances?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there up to date MSDSs for each hazardous substance in the workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all MSDSs in the Hazardous Substances Register?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the Hazardous Substances Register readily available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Labels			
Do all original containers have manufacturers' labels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all decanted containers labelled with name, risk and safety phrases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk assessment			
Have the risks from all chemicals and hazardous substances stored and used at the workplace been assessed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the risk assessments been recorded in the Hazardous Substances Register?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are risk assessment reports available where risks are significant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk controls			
Have steps been taken to adequately control risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the 'hierarchy of controls' (preferred order of controls) been considered when selecting controls? That is, firstly consider eliminating the chemical and, if not practicable, choose a safer one or use ventilation near the work where possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have controls been inspected and maintained? For example, has air flow been checked in ventilation systems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there appropriate first aid and emergency facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training			
Have all people who may be exposed to chemicals and hazardous substances been given information and training before starting work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the records of training include health effects, controls, safe work methods and personal protective equipment/clothing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health surveillance			
Have you initiated health surveillance of workers' health where there is a risk? This is a requirement for work with lead, isocyanates, asbestos, organophosphate insecticides and other substances listed in Schedule 5.3 of the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where health surveillance is required, has a medical practitioner been appointed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asbestos Register			
For workplaces with asbestos materials present, is there a current asbestos register for the workplace? See also the Asbestos checklist.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other information

WorkSafe www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Legislation

- The Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996

Codes of practice

- Management and control of asbestos [NOHSC: 2018]
- Control and safe use of inorganic lead at work [NOHSC: 2015]
- Control of workplace hazardous substances [NOHSC: 2007]
- Labelling of workplace substances [NOHSC: 2012]
- Code of practice: Spray painting
- Code of practice: Styrene

Guidance notes

- Assessment of health risks from hazardous substances [NOHSC: 3017]
- Controlling isocyanate hazards at work
- Material safety data sheets (MSDS)
- Occupational safety and health management and contaminated sites
- Prevention of carbon monoxide poisoning
- Safe use of chemicals in the woodworking industry
- Soldering in the workplace – rosin fluxes

Safe Work Australia website www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au

Code of practice

- Safe use of ethylene oxide in sterilisation/fumigation [NOHSC: 2008]

Guides

- Controlling risks associated with electroplating

Database

- Hazardous Substances Information System (a database with information on hazardous substances)

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Electricity

safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Maintenance of electrical installations			
Is there is a maintenance program in place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has electrical equipment been tested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>In addition for construction workplaces:</i>			
Have portable and fixed electrical equipment been tagged?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there is a record of relevant test data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the tester's licence number on the tags?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residual current devices (RCDs)			
Are RCDs installed at switchboards and fixed sockets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are portable electrical equipment protected by RCDs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are RCDs labelled and have they been tested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>In addition for construction workplaces:</i>			
Are all final sub-circuits, socket outlets, portable generators and equipment protected by RCDs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flexible cords (cord extension sets etc)			
Do all connections have either moulded or transparent type plugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are plugs, sockets and extension leads in good condition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all flexible cords protected from damage?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>In addition for construction workplaces:</i>			
Has it been ensured that aerial cables are not fixed or attached to scaffolding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are cords suitable for the length in use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has it been ensured that double adaptors and three-pin plug adaptors are not in use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specific electrical installations			
Are switchboards labelled correctly and protected from damage?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are light fittings suitable for the location and protected from breakage?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are power points suitable for location and positioned safely?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safe work procedures			
Is the work organised for the safety of employees and others at workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other sources of information

WorkSafe www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Legislation

- The Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996

Bulletin

- Electrical switchboards on construction sites

Guide

- A guide to testing and tagging portable electrical equipment and residual current devices at workplaces

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Emergency planning checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	Has an emergency plan for the workplace, providing for emergency procedures, testing of the emergency procedures, and information, training and instruction to relevant workers in implementing emergency procedures, including use of emergency equipment, been prepared?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do your emergency procedures cover locating persons in the workplace, evacuation procedures, notifying emergency services, medical treatment and effective communication?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Has an evacuation procedure has been prepared which, where practicable, is clearly and prominently displayed at the workplace?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is a diagram showing the location of exits, and the position of the diagram in relation to the exits, clearly and prominently displayed at the workplace, where practicable?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the evacuation procedure practised at the workplace at reasonable intervals, where practicable?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the workplace is arranged so that people can safely move within it and the passages for the purposes of movement are always kept free of obstructions?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the means of access to and egress from the workplace enable people to move safely to and from the workplace and at all times are kept free of obstructions?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are the emergency exits from a workplace safe in the event of an emergency and clearly marked, for example, the exits are easily accessed and are free from obstruction?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are efficient portable fire extinguishers provided? These should be located and distributed in accordance with Australian Standard, AS 2444-2001: Portable fire extinguishers and fire blankets - Selection and location.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are fire blankets provided where appropriate, for example in kitchens?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are portable fire extinguishers regularly maintained?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is training provided on how to use fire extinguishers and other safety equipment to people who will be required to help control or extinguish a fire at the workplace?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are smoking and naked flames banned from any part of the workplace where there are goods or materials which, in the event of a fire, are likely to burn with extreme rapidity, emit poisonous fumes or cause explosions?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are the quantities of flammable or combustible material at the workplace minimised?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the workplace maintained in a clean condition to avoid hazards to people?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are rubbish, building materials and plant stored away from footpaths and roadways at the workplace?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you addressed specific emergency requirements for regulated hazardous work, such as work in confined spaces, tasks where fall arrest systems are in place, or in mining operations?

First aid

- ☐ Have an adequate number of people been trained in first aid, having regard to the types of hazards and number of people at the workplace?
 - ☐ Is an adequately stocked first aid kit provided at a central location?
 - Have you considered the risk of severe allergic reactions such as from a bee sting, and access to an adrenaline auto-injector (EpiPen® or AnaPen®)?
 - ☐ Is the first aid kit regularly inspected to ensure adequate supplies are present?
 - ☐ Are other first aid facilities provided and maintained if indicated by the hazards at the workplace? For example, provision of a safety shower and eyewash where corrosive liquids are handled.
 - ☐ Have you considered providing an automated external defibrillators at the workplace if there is a risk to workers at your workplace from electrocution, if there would be a delay in ambulance services arriving at the workplace, or where there are large numbers of members of the public?
-

Other sources of information

WorkSafe www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Legislation

- [Work Health and Safety \(General\) Regulations 2022](#)
- [Work Health and Safety \(Mines\) Regulations 2022](#)

Codes of practice

- [Managing the work environment and facilities](#)
- [First aid in the workplace](#)

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Slips, trips and falls

safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Movement of people and access/egress			
Can people move safely around the workplace and are passages kept free of obstructions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the access to and egress from workplace safe and kept free from obstructions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working environment			
Do floors, stairs and ramps have unbroken and slip resistant surfaces and are they free from any obstruction? Is there adequate drainage designed and constructed for areas where there is a risk of liquid coming into contact with the floor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are guard rails or other safeguards provided on ramps and stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are warning signs available and erected near spills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is lighting adequate for the movement of people around the workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there sufficient space in which to work without risk of a slip, trip or fall?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are workplaces maintained in clean condition to avoid hazards to people in the workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do steps have even risers and goings, not too high or low risers and goings, defined nosing or treads, and handrails or guard rails?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are stepladders designed appropriately if in use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedures			
Are safe systems of work procedures in place? For example, a 'clean as you go' policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Footwear			
If footwear PPE is provided, is it slip resistant for the workplace floor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other sources of information

WorkSafe www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Legislation

- The Occupational Safety and Health Regulations

Code of practice

- Prevention of falls

Bulletins

- Safety and health in bakeries
- Slips, trips and falls: café and restaurant industry

Tools

- Slips, trips and falls risk management tool

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Manual tasks

On average, workers with injuries from manual tasks take the longest time to recover and return to work. Jobs involving physical stress or repetitive movements have the highest rates of injuries, with over half the lost time injuries involving nurses, health care workers, cleaners, packers and store persons. While low force, repetitive actions and sustained awkward postures can cause injury to workers, lifting is responsible for a high percentage of injuries.

The weight of an object is only one of many factors to consider in avoiding injuries. Other things to take into account include whether the load needs to be lifted at all, whether equipment can be used to assist, and how often and how quickly a task is performed.

Injuries can be the result of gradual wear and tear from frequent or prolonged tasks, or sudden damage from a single lift of something very heavy or awkward.

safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Hazard identification and risk assessment			
Have you identified manual tasks that may cause injury?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have manual task risk assessments been adequately conducted? The assessments need to consider all the relevant risk factors ¹ .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Investigation of incidents, injuries and hazards			
Have all reported manual tasks incidents, injuries and hazards been adequately investigated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have outcomes of investigations (if any) been reported to the person who raised the hazard within a reasonable timeframe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are control measures to reduce the risk of injuries reviewed after accidents have occurred?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementation of risk controls			
Have control measures been put in place and maintained to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with hazardous manual tasks as far as possible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the implemented controls taken into account 'sources of risk' ² and relevant 'risk factors'?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹**Risk factors** are factors that may make a manual task more hazardous, particularly for the development of musculoskeletal disorders. There are **'direct risk factors'** ie those that have a direct effect on the body (eg actions and postures) and **'indirect risk factors'** (ie those that make a task more difficult to perform (eg the working environment and systems of work)).

² Hazardous manual task risk factors may stem from various sources. Addressing the **'sources of risk'** is the most effective way of controlling the risks. These can be varied and include things like 'work area design and layout' and the 'nature of the load' (eg a heavy load).

For more information on **'risk factors'** and **'sources of risk'** and the risk management approach for manual tasks, see the *Code of practice: Manual tasks* at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Information, instruction and training			
Have people involved in organising, implementing and performing manual tasks been provided with adequate instruction and training? The training program needs to cover relevant risk factors and the risk management approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have workers who perform hazardous manual tasks received task-specific training during induction, and when their work tasks change?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are workers aware of procedures for reporting hazardous manual tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have workers been asked for suggestions on safer ways to complete manual tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safe work procedures			
Have equipment, layout and work organisation been considered to minimise the risk of injury from performing manual tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have lifting or carrying heavy loads been eliminated or minimised by changing systems (eg mechanisation) or using different equipment (eg mechanical lifts and trolleys)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has it been ensured that items that are heavy or frequently accessed are not placed above shoulder height or below mid-thigh height?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is adequate space provided for areas where manual tasks are performed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are jobs and tasks organised so that workers have adequate breaks from sustained postures, repetitive movement and manual handling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other sources of information

WorkSafe www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Legislation

- The Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996

Code of practice

- Manual tasks

Video

- Manual tasks

Training package

- Manual tasks training package – presenter's guide
- Power point presentation

Worksheets

- Manual tasks incident investigation
- Manual tasks risk management tool

Bulletins

- Manual handling in the tyre industry
- Manual tasks in the liquor retail industry
- Manual handling: café and retail industry

Publication

- Manual tasks guide for carers

Information

- Manual handling – cafes and restaurants
- Manual handling – building and construction industry
- Manual handling in the meat industry
- Manual handling moving trolleys
- Manual handling stacking shelves
- Manual handling stacking cartons on pallets
- Manual handling drum handling
- Manual tasks: guide for carers
- Manual tasks in supermarkets
- Manual tasks in supermarkets project
- Manual handling in the retail industry
- Manual handling in the tyre industry

Information and checklists

- Manual tasks in supermarkets

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New and young workers' safety induction

safety checklist
Induction
Position
Date of commencement
Location
Name of person providing the induction:

Check	yes	no	n/a
1. Explain work tasks (roles, responsibilities and duties)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Tour of workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to key people including supervisor/manager, first aid officer, safety and health staff (if any) and safety and health representative (if any) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide locker and personal protective clothing and equipment and tools, as required 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Explain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSH policy 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty of care: employer and employees 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation: OSH committee and safety and health representative (if any) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe work procedures and instructions for each task 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any hazards and the control measures 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operation of equipment and machinery 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safe way to lift and handle things 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chemical safety 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working from height procedures 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permit to work 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slips, trips and falls prevention 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical safety 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicle safety 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety procedures for working on the side of the road 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety signage 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures for good housekeeping 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures for working outside such as skin protection 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use, maintenance and storage of personal protective clothing and equipment including, where required, eye, hand, foot and hearing protection 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance requirements and who has responsibility 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue resolution procedures 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Injury/incident reporting procedure 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

• Injury management policy and guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Compensation claims process and rehabilitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• First aid facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Emergency procedures including fire safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Policy on smoke free workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Policy on alcohol and other drugs at the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Workplace bullying policy and procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Violence and aggression policy and procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check that workers' understanding is assessed before commencing tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule of follow-up training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supervision			
• Regular checks to ensure workers are following safety instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of manager/supervisor:		signed:		date:	
Name of new employee:		signed:		date:	

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Workplace bullying

safety checklist

Check	Yes	no	n/a
Policies and procedures			
Is there a policy applicable to bullying prevention?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a code of conduct for all workers that outlines the basic rules for respect at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you have a code of conduct, have you considered linking it to the performance management system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are systems in place to respond to claims of bullying or unresolved conflict in a timely manner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are procedures in place to assist in conflict resolution and grievance resolution?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a contact person, grievance officer or mediator been appointed as a first contact person for enquiries, concerns and complaints?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk assessment			
Are systems in place to identify bullying hazards and assess their risks early? This should include gathering information on trends on sick leave, turnover and workers' compensation. Conducting a workplace culture survey may also provide useful information for a risk assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information, instruction and training			
Have workers received information, instruction and training on the policies and how to respond to unresolved conflict or unreasonable behaviour, including how to report incidents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have managers received sufficient training to enable them to resolve conflicts promptly and effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have new managers also received training in management skills? For example, people management skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other sources of information

WorkSafe

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Code of practice

- Violence, aggression and bullying at work

Guidance note

- Dealing with bullying at work
- Web information
- Frequently asked questions

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Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety**



CODE OF PRACTICE

Psychosocial hazards in the workplace





Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety**



WorkSafe
Western Australia

CODE OF PRACTICE

Psychosocial hazards in the workplace



WHSC
WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

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Reference

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Safety Regulation Group – Regulatory Support
Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
303 Sevenoaks Street
CANNINGTON WA 6107

Telephone: 1300 307 877

NRS: 13 36 77

Email: Safety@dmirs.wa.gov.au

Foreword

This code of practice is issued by the Work Health and Safety Commission (the Commission), under provisions of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* (WHS Act). The Commission comprises representatives of employers, unions and government, as well as experts, and has the function of developing the work health and safety legislation and supporting guidance material, and making recommendations to the Minister for their implementation. To fulfil its functions, the Commission is empowered to establish advisory committees, hold public inquiries and publish and disseminate information.

The Commission's objective is to promote comprehensive and practical preventive strategies that improve the working environment of Western Australians. This code of practice has been developed through a tripartite consultative process and the views of employers and unions, along with those of government and experts have been considered.

Legislative framework for work health and safety

Work Health and Safety Act 2020

The WHS Act provides for the promotion, co-ordination, administration and enforcement of work health and safety in Western Australia. It applies to all workplaces. With the objective of preventing work-related injuries and diseases, the WHS Act places certain duties on PCBUs, workers, manufacturers, designers, importers and suppliers. These broad duties are supported by further legislation, commonly referred to as regulations, together with non-statutory codes of practice and guides.

Codes of practice published under the WHS Act

Codes of practice published under the WHS Act provide practical guidance on how to comply with a general duty or specific duties under the legislation. Codes of practice may contain explanatory information. However, the preventive strategies outlined do not represent the only acceptable means of achieving a certain standard.

A code of practice does not have the same legal force as a regulation and is not sufficient reason, of itself, for prosecution under the legislation, but it may be used by courts as a standard when assessing other methods or practices used.

If there is a code of practice about a risk, either:

- do what the code of practice says, or
- adopt and follow another way that gives the same level of protection against the risk.

If there is no regulation or code of practice about a risk, choose an appropriate way and take reasonable precautions and exercise proper diligence to ensure obligations are met.

Note: There may be additional risks at the workplace not specifically addressed in this code of practice. The WHS Act requires identification and assessment of them and implementation of control measures to prevent or minimise risk.

Scope and application

The code focuses on the general principles applied to the prevention and management of psychosocial hazards in the workplace. The intent of this code of practice is to provide practical guidance for workplaces where people may be exposed to psychosocial hazards such as stress, fatigue and burnout, as well as bullying, harassment, violence and aggression, discrimination and misconduct.

The guidance in this code of practice is not exhaustive and should be considered in conjunction with the general duties in the WHS Act. For specific information about managing violence and aggression from external parties such as customers, clients, patients and students, see the Code of practice: *Violence and aggression at work*. For specific information about managing bullying, harassment, discrimination and misconduct, see the Code of practice: *Workplace behaviour*.

Who should use this code of practice?

This code is intended to be read by persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) who have a primary duty of care to provide and maintain a work environment without risks to health and safety under the WHS Act. Health includes both physical and psychological health.

It provides practical guidance on the processes a PCBU could use to identify and manage psychosocial hazards at work. You should use this code of practice if you have functions or responsibilities that involve managing, so far as is reasonably practicable, hazards and risks to psychological and physical health and safety at work.

The code may also be a useful reference for other persons interested in complying with the duties under the WHS legislation.

Using this code of practice

The terms used in this code of practice are intended to have a broad and flexible application, for use across all Western Australian workplaces covered by the WHS Act. The term workplace usually means the physical location where someone works, including working at home or away from home. The code of practice provides high-level guidance for a risk management approach, which should be tailored to the unique demands of each workplace.

Managing psychosocial hazards and risks can be challenging because of the complex interplay and changing nature of risks. Effective consultation and communication are critical, and a proactive and integrated approach is required.

The code of practice includes references to both mandatory and non-mandatory actions. The word “must” indicates that legal requirements exist, which must be complied with. The word “should” indicates a recommended course of action, while “may” is used to indicate an optional course of action.

Acknowledgement

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1 Introduction

1.1 Psychosocial hazards at work

Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and work situations which can lead to psychological or physical harm. These stem from:

- the way the tasks or job are designed, organised, managed and supervised
- tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards and risks
- the equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments
- social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.

Workplace psychosocial hazards are related to the psychological and social conditions of the workplace rather than just the physical conditions. These include stress, fatigue, bullying, violence, aggression, harassment and burnout, which can be harmful to the health of workers and compromise their wellbeing (Figure 1.1).

Both short- and long-term exposure to psychosocial hazards may cause harm to a person. For example, while exposure to severe, short-lived (acute) psychosocial hazards such as experiencing violence at work may result in harm to health (e.g. acute-stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder), it is important to also recognise that the cumulative effect of low-level exposure to psychosocial hazards can also lead to psychological or physical injury. People may experience multiple psychological and physical symptoms of harm as a result of exposure.

In addition to adverse health outcomes for workers, exposure to psychosocial hazards and risk factors in the workplace can also affect performance and increase the risk of accidents or incidents.



Figure 1.1 Diagram showing the influence of workplace conditions on workers' health

1.2 Why is it important to manage psychosocial hazards at work?

Psychosocial hazards can create stress. It is recognised that stress can lead to a positive response (referred to as eustress); however, a negative response to stress (distress) can harm health.

Stress is not an injury, but if it becomes frequent, prolonged or severe, it can cause psychological and physical harm. Psychological harm or injuries from psychosocial hazards include conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and sleep disorders. In some cases, workplace psychosocial hazards could also lead to self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Physical injuries from psychosocial hazards include musculo-skeletal injury, chronic disease and fatigue-related accidents. Chronic, unmanaged work-related stress can result in burnout.

Fatigue can be both a psychosocial hazard and the outcome of being exposed to psychosocial hazards. Fatigue is a state of mental or physical exhaustion. Fatigue is common in situations where workers work long hours, often with high mental, physical and emotional demands.

Workers are likely to be exposed to a combination of work-related psychosocial hazards and risk factors, and these may interact with non-work related factors making this a complex and multi-faceted area. An individual's reaction to psychosocial hazards will be influenced by a range of factors including their personality, age, education level, degree of training, health status, social status in the organisation and pressures they face outside the workplace.

Ensuring a systematic process to manage psychosocial hazards and risks will help the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) and others to meet their responsibilities under WHS legislation. It will also decrease organisational disruptions and costs resulting from work-related harm to health and safety and may improve WHS and broader organisational performance and productivity.

1.3 Who is responsible for managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace?

Everyone in the workplace has a duty to manage hazards and risks to worker physical and psychological health and safety. Table 1 sets out those duties under the WHS Act.

Table 1 Duties in relation to managing hazards and risks in the workplace

Who	Duties
Person conducting a business or undertaking (section 19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A PCBU has the primary duty of care under the WHS Act to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that workers and other persons are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from work carried out as part of the business or undertaking.• This duty includes, so far as is reasonably practicable:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– providing and maintaining a work environment that is without risks to health and safety– providing and maintaining safe systems of work– monitoring the health and safety of workers and the conditions at the workplace to ensure that work related illnesses and injuries are prevented– providing appropriate information, instruction, training or supervision to workers and other persons at the workplace to allow work to be carried out safely.

Who	Duties
WHS service providers (section 26A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any PCBU that provides services relating to work health and safety, including those relating to workplace behaviour, must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that the WHS services are provided so that any relevant use of them at, or in relation to, a workplace will not put at risk the health and safety of persons who are at the workplace.
Officers (section 27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers, such as company directors, must exercise due diligence to ensure the business or undertaking complies with the WHS Act and Regulations. This includes taking reasonable steps to ensure the business or undertaking has and uses appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks associated with workplace bullying.
Workers (section 28)	<p>Workers including employees, contractors, subcontractors, labour hire employees, outworkers, apprentices or volunteers have a duty to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> take reasonable care for their own health and safety while at work take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons comply, so far as the worker is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU cooperate with any reasonable policies and procedures of the PCBU, for example a workplace bullying policy.
Others (section 29)	<p>Other persons at a workplace, such as visitors and clients, have similar duties to that of a worker and must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> take reasonable care for their own health and safety take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of workers or other persons, and comply, so far as the person is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU.

Workplace

A workplace is any location where work is carried out for a business or undertaking and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work. It can include:

- a home office
- work vehicles and private vehicles used for work purposes, such as transporting clients
- private homes and other community settings where clients are based
- accommodation camps for fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers
- work-related events such as training, conferences and social activities.

Reporting to the regulator

Certain injuries or diseases must be reported to WorkSafe WA by the PCBU including any injury, which, in the opinion of a medical practitioner, prevents the person from being able to do their normal work for at least 10 days.

Violence and aggression and some types of inappropriate or unreasonable workplace behaviour can attract criminal charges, and can also be unlawful under state and federal equal opportunity legislation. Refer to the Codes of practice: *Violence and aggression at work* and *Workplace behaviour* for more information.

Consultation

The WHS Act requires PCBUs to consult and cooperate with health and safety representatives (if any) and workers about health and safety at the workplace, as far as is reasonably practicable.

The WHS Act also requires PCBUs to consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with all other persons who have a duty in relation to the same matter, as far as is reasonably practicable.

1.4 Who is at risk?

When managing psychosocial hazards, the PCBU should take into account tasks and activities that may increase risks to particular groups, for example, workers:

- who are younger, in training, older, or who are new to the organisation or doing new tasks
- from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- who have experienced work-related injury, illness or previous exposure to a traumatic event.

Note: reasonable adjustments may need to be made for workers returning to work after a work-related injury, illness or exposure to a traumatic event to prevent further harm to their health occurring. The PCBU's risk management process should identify reasonably foreseeable risks for these workers and ensure risk controls take these workers' needs into account.

2 Work-related psychosocial hazards and risk factors

Table 2.1 lists some psychosocial hazards and risk factors that employers should assess as part of the risk management process described in [Chapter 3](#). Not all factors will apply to all workplaces. The list is not exhaustive and there are other psychosocial hazards and risk factors that an employer may need to consider. These should be identified through the risk management process.

Table 2.1 Common work-related psychosocial hazards and risk factors

Psychosocial hazard or risk factor	Description	Examples
Poor leadership practices and workplace culture	Leadership practices (e.g. style, resource allocation, supporting workers) that negatively influence workplace culture, which is the shared beliefs, norms and values of the workforce	Workplaces where there is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a leadership practice that tolerates or permits inappropriate or unreasonable workplace behaviours • leadership that does not respect diversity in the workplace such as ethnicity or sexuality • limited or no management accountability in managing psychosocial hazards and risks • a mismatch of leadership style to the nature of the work • a lack of trust and authentic consultation
Poor or no policies and procedures	Policies and procedures that do not meet legislative and business requirements, and were developed with no or limited consultation with workers	Workplaces where there are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no policies or procedures for managing inappropriate and unreasonable behaviour • procedures that cannot be applied as written • policies and procedures that lack clarity and are difficult to understand • policies and procedures that are not adhered to • procedures that have little to no flexibility to accommodate the uniqueness of each situation • no mechanisms for impartially addressing worker reports of inappropriate and unreasonable behaviour by senior management • procedures that systemically discriminate against groups of workers in the workplace

Psychosocial hazard or risk factor	Description	Examples
Work demands	Substantial and/or excessive physical, mental and emotional effort required to do the job	<p>Tasks or jobs that involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fast work pace and time pressure excessive or insufficient workload repetitive or monotonous tasks sustained concentration high mental workload frequent or high emotional labour extended work hours or roster length a large number of consecutive days worked shift rotation exposure to emotionally distressing situations (e.g. first responders)
Low levels of control	Lack of control over aspects of the work, including how and when a job is done (i.e. autonomy)	<p>Tasks or jobs where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work is machine or computer paced work is tightly prescribed or scripted workers have little say in the way they do their work, when they can take breaks or change tasks workers are not involved in decision making about work that affects them or their clients workers are unable to refuse working with aggressive individuals
	Lack of control over the aspects of accommodation arrangements	<p>Jobs with limited options to allow for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> personal scheduling of activities of daily living (e.g. meal times, showering) varying sleep schedules different accommodation preferences (e.g. privacy)
Inadequate support	Lack of support in the form of constructive feedback, problem solving, practical assistance, provision of information and resources	<p>Tasks or jobs where workers have insufficient or inappropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> support from leadership, supervisors or co-workers information or training to support performance equipment or resources to do the job
Lack of role clarity	<p>Unclear or constantly changing management expectations about the responsibilities of the job</p> <p>Incompatible expectations or demands placed on workers by different workplace stakeholders</p>	<p>Jobs where there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uncertainty about or frequent changes to tasks and performance standards important task-related information that is not available to the worker conflicting job roles, responsibilities or expectations

Psychosocial hazard or risk factor	Description	Examples
Poor organisational change management	Uncertainty about changes in the organisation, structure or job Unstructured approach to change	Workplaces where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organisational change is poorly managed there is inadequate communication and consultation with workers about the change
Low recognition and reward	Lack of positive feedback on job and task performance, and inadequate skills development and utilisation	Jobs where there is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an imbalance between workers' efforts and associated recognition and reward a lack of recognition of good performance a lack of opportunity for skills development an underuse of skills and experience
Poor organisational justice	Unfairness, inconsistency, bias or lack of transparency in the way procedures are implemented, decisions are made, or workers are treated	Workplaces where there is a real or perceived: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inconsistency in the application of organisational policies and procedures unfairness in the allocation of resources bias in the approval of worker entitlements (e.g. annual leave)
Insecure work	Employment types such as contract, seasonal work, casual, freelance and gig work	Jobs where there is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> little or no job security little or no entitlements or benefits (e.g. sick leave, pay rates) low levels of control need to work multiple jobs
Adverse environmental conditions	Exposure to conditions that influence worker comfort and performance	Working with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extremes of temperature nuisance and excessive noise that disturbs concentration poor air quality Accommodation arrangements that unreasonably affect the amount of quality rest and sleep needed to manage fatigue, including exposure to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hot and humid conditions with no relief nuisance and excessive noise that disturbs or disrupts sleep routines
	Adverse natural events	A natural event (e.g. cyclone, flooding, bushfire) that can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> restrict travel constrain activities interfere with communications create uncertainty in the workforce and families

Psychosocial hazard or risk factor	Description	Examples
Remote work	Work where access to resources and communications is difficult	<p>Working and living in a remote location may mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited access to reliable communication technology • limited access to preferred support network • limited access to recreational activities • interruption and reduced capacity to fulfil usual roles and commitments in family, community and other social networks • challenges with reintegration to home and work environments after being away from them • few opportunities to escape work issues and work relationships
	Work where travel times may be lengthy	<p>Commutes that involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multiple modes of transport • crossing time zones • overnight accommodation • impact on unpaid personal recovery time
Isolated work	Work where there are no or few other people around, including working at home	<p>Work where there may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited opportunities for problem sharing and feedback • a perception of increased responsibility for decision making • limited opportunities for socialisation • barriers to communication • blurring of boundaries between work and home life
Fatigue	A state of mental or physical exhaustion, or both	<p>Jobs where there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high cognitive demands, such as sustained concentration • extended work hours <p>Design, quality and management practices for accommodation facilities that compromise the amount and quality of sleep and rest</p>
Burnout	A psychological and physical response to chronic work-related stress	Emotionally demanding work with low support and control, and insufficient time for rest and recovery

Psychosocial hazard or risk factor	Description	Examples
Inappropriate and unreasonable behaviour	Exposure to behaviours that are unreasonable, offensive, intimidating or may cause distress	<p>Witnessing or experiencing situations involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • violence or aggression, including sexual assault • bullying • harassment, including sexual and racial harassment • conflict • discrimination
Family and domestic violence	Exposure to behaviours intended to coerce, control or create fear within a family or intimate relationship	<p>Witnessing or experiencing situations involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical threats and violence • controlling and monitoring work-related communication • emotional and psychological abuse
Traumatic events	Exposure to an event, or threat of an event, that is deeply distressing or disturbing for the individual	<p>Witnessing or experiencing situations involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • death or threat to life • serious injury • near misses • self-injury
Vicarious trauma	Results from repeated exposure over time to other people's traumatic experiences. It is a cumulative response and is sometimes referred to as compassion fatigue	<p>Work where there is the potential for exposure to traumatic or distressing information and material.</p> <p>Jobs that involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interaction with people who are experiencing trauma
Secondary trauma	Can occur unexpectedly and suddenly as a result of emotional distress from indirect exposure to another person's traumatic experience. It is an acute response where symptoms often mimic post-traumatic response disorder.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interaction with people who have been abused • investigations into traumatic events

3 Overview of risk management approach

3.1 Risk management process

To meet their duties to manage psychosocial hazards and risk factors in the workplace, the PCBU must eliminate or minimise the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

It is a requirement under the WHS legislation to use a risk management approach to manage hazards and risks to worker health and safety, including psychological health and safety. Using a risk management approach enables the PCBU to identify and address causal factors and systemic issues that may exist in the work environment.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the risk management approach for psychosocial hazards and risk factors as a continual process comprised of four steps:

1. identify the psychosocial hazards and risk factors
2. assess the risks
3. control the risks by making the changes necessary to eliminate the hazards or risk factors or, if not practicable, minimise the risk of harm
4. monitor and review the effectiveness of the controls and adapt or improve the controls where necessary.

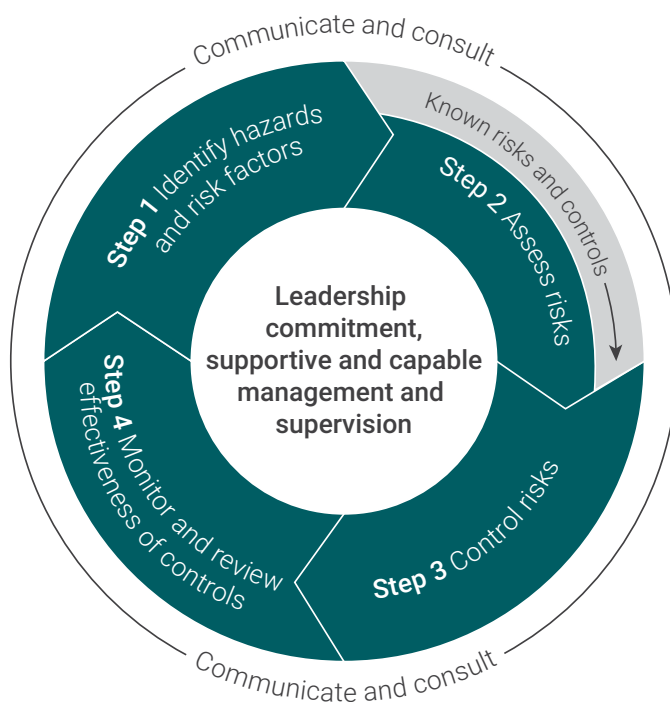


Figure 3.1 Overview of the risk management process (adapted from Safe Work Australia).

Key to the successful management of hazards and risks is leadership commitment and supportive, capable management and supervision, as well as clear and accessible policies and procedures, and training and education. Communication and consultation with workers and other stakeholders are important at all stages.

3.2 Identification

Undertaking a comprehensive risk assessment will help identify foreseeable psychosocial hazards and risk factors. It may require input from operational groups (e.g. work teams, health and safety representatives) and subject matter experts where reasonably practicable (e.g. organisational psychologists, organisational development consultants, human resources consultants).

When starting the process, it is important to:

- identify who will take part (e.g. management, workers, health and safety representatives, subject matter experts)
- gather workplace data that will inform the process (e.g. incident reports, complaints, absenteeism rates, staff turnover, survey results)
- understand legislative requirements and determine what the workplace is already doing to meet those requirements (e.g. policies, procedures, training)
- use a variety of sources (e.g. access online resources, engage a subject matter expert) to identify and understand how to apply the risk criteria
- consider how to maintain confidentiality and trust.

Psychosocial hazards and risk factors in the workplace may be identified in a variety of ways, including:

- reviewing organisational structure (e.g. lines of reporting, supervisory responsibilities)
- consulting with the workforce (e.g. health and safety representatives, focus groups, surveys) to help identify circumstances that could impact worker mental health
- inspecting the design and use of the physical workplace (e.g. use of break-out areas, assistive equipment and condition of the work environment)
- assessing specific job requirements to ensure workload is reasonable
- observing how work tasks are completed
- reviewing reporting and investigation processes and worker trust in these processes
- examining hazard and incident reports to identify common themes
- analysing human resources data such as leave utilisation, exit interviews, staff turnover and complaints
- examining records of past incidents and injuries, including workers' compensation claims, at the workplace
- examining data, where easily available, or published literature for similar workplaces
- consulting relevant codes of practice and other guidance
- analysing available de-identified data from vocational rehabilitation or injury management personnel and employee assistance providers (EAPs).

3.3 Assessment

Following the identification of psychosocial hazards and risk factors at the workplace, the next step in the risk management process is assessing the risks, which follows the same principles as the risk assessment undertaken for other hazards.

It is important those undertaking the risk assessment have access to information about the work environment and work processes, and knowledge and understanding of potential psychosocial hazards and risk factors. Assessments should:

- include data collection and monitoring of the controls (e.g. using workplace data and information from focus groups, interviews, de-identified surveys)
- involve consultation with health and safety representatives and committees
- cite the evidence used.

If those responsible for the risk assessment have limited knowledge and understanding about how to analyse evidence of psychosocial risks, then appropriate training should be provided or assistance sought from a subject matter expert.

A risk assessment involves considering what could happen if a worker is exposed to a hazard and the likelihood of it happening. The assessment helps determine:

- who might be exposed
- the source of the risks
- potential interactions of multiple risk and protective factors
- how severe the risks are – the frequency and duration of potential exposure to a psychosocial hazard, possible consequences of exposure and likelihood of harm
- whether existing controls are effective
- what additional measures should be implemented to control the risks
- how urgently action needs to be taken.

Workers may be exposed to more than one type of psychosocial hazard or risk factor at any one time. Psychosocial hazards and risk factors interact with each other so they should not be considered in isolation. For example, the combined effect of high work demands, low control and low support increases the likelihood and severity of harm to a worker's health. Conversely, high work demands with the control factors of good leadership and support can mitigate the negative impact on a worker's health.

PCBUs should demonstrate that psychosocial hazards and risk factors have been considered and recorded as a part of their hazard identification and risk management process. The hazard and risk assessments should be reviewed and updated regularly, including when changes are made at the workplace.

3.4 Implementing controls

Some controls are more effective than others. They can be ranked from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest. This ranking is known as the hierarchy of control. Elimination controls are the most effective and reliable form of control, followed by risk minimisation controls (engineering, substitution and isolation) then administrative and personal protective equipment (PPE) controls.

To minimise the risk to as low as reasonably practicable, PCBU's should apply elimination controls supplemented by risk minimisation and administrative controls. In some instances, such as in managing violence and aggression from clients, customers and patients, PPE controls such as duress alarms can also be used.

It may not always be reasonably practicable to eliminate the hazard or risk: for example, where jobs have some inherent hazards such as shift work, or dealing with violent or abusive members of the public; or where the cost of implementing the control(s) is grossly disproportionate to the risk. If a hazard or risk cannot be eliminated, then the PCBU must minimise it so far as is reasonably practicable. This could involve increasing protective factors such as support and control.

Every workplace is different. The best combination of control measures to eliminate hazards and minimise risks should be tailored to the organisation's business size, type and work activities to manage risks during everyday operations and in emergencies. [Appendix 2](#) contains case study examples of how the risk management approach can be applied to psychosocial hazards and risk factors in different workplaces.

The risk controls can involve good work design across the organisation and/or be targeted to affected work groups and tasks with the highest risks. Targeting controls in this way will provide the highest level of protection for the largest number of workers. These controls will usually also benefit individuals identified to be at risk of harm.

Because the controls may require changes to the way work is carried out, it may be necessary to support these with:

- safe work procedure(s) that describe the tasks, hazards, how tasks can be safely done, and the duties, roles and responsibilities of all parties to follow these
- information, training, instruction and supervision of workers on implemented controls including safe work procedures
- appropriate information and instruction for site visitors
- a schedule for maintaining, monitoring and reviewing controls to ensure they are effective and are not creating new unintended WHS or organisational risks.

When proposing changes to existing or new controls or workplace arrangements, it is essential that affected workers and their health and safety representatives are consulted as early as possible. For example, on the:

- design and management of the work such as restructures, work locations, changes to tasks, duties, and working arrangements
- the introduction of new technology, trialling plant or equipment production processes, or consulting on the redesign of existing workplaces.

In most cases, psychosocial risk management can use a mix of good work design, safe systems of work, and suitable and adequate information, training, instruction, and supervision. These are discussed in [Chapter 4](#).

3.5 Monitoring and reviewing

Monitoring should be undertaken through regular scheduled discussions at management meetings, staff meetings and health and safety committee meetings. A standing agenda item at these meetings may help to ensure that regular monitoring occurs. Regular monitoring of the incidence of grievances, staff turnover and use of employee assistance programs is also useful. Incident reports and findings should be reviewed to identify any trends and to work out whether additional measures such as training or information should be provided to workers.

The review process is used to confirm that control measures are working as expected, and checking that other hazards and risk factors have not been introduced when implementing or modifying controls. It can also identify learning opportunities for the purpose of continuous improvement.

The monitoring results should be used during the review to trigger corrective measures, including early intervention if necessary.

Mechanisms for the recognition and early detection of psychosocial harm to health in the workplace include analysing workplace data from:

- hazard, incident and investigation reports
- complaints
- worker surveys
- consultation with health and safety representatives and work teams
- alcohol and other drug test results
- direct observations (e.g. workers displaying the early signs and symptoms of psychological or physical harm).

Consultation with workers and their representatives is required throughout the risk management cycle, including when reviewing control measures.

4 Management and prevention

4.1 Leadership and workplace culture

4.1.1 Leadership commitment

Everyone contributes to the culture of their workplace, not only by what they say, but also by what they do. Effective leadership and a positive workplace culture set the tone for workplace relationships and drive the allocation of resources to support effective implementation of preventative actions and controls.

A commitment to managing psychosocial hazards and risks by leaders and managers is essential for effective systematic health and safety risk management. To achieve this, they must understand:

- the WHS obligations of the PCBU and workers
- the role of leaders and managers to assist the PCBU to meet their WHS duties
- systematic WHS management that includes management of psychosocial hazards and risks
- the business case for WHS, including why managing psychosocial hazards and risks is a concern to the organisation.

A visible and ongoing commitment to controlling the risk of psychosocial harm from leaders across the workplace is a key factor for success. Leaders and others involved in management and supervision should model behaviours and interactions to encourage positive work practices and demonstrate that it is important to appropriately identify and manage psychosocial hazards and risks.

4.1.2 Management and supervision

Competencies shown to influence positive outcomes in the workplace are based on being respectful and responsible, removing ambiguity by effectively managing and communicating existing and future work, leading teams, modelling desired behaviours and values, having difficult conversations and resolving conflict. Providing practical support, such as facilitating access to appropriate services and health management options such as recovery-at-work or return-to-work support, is a critical protective factor against harm to health from exposure to workplace psychosocial hazards and risk factors.

Respect is gained by having the knowledge, skills and support to be able to manage psychosocial hazards and risk factors, positively influence workplace culture and address inappropriate behaviours and interactions with integrity and credibility. A willingness to listen to and respond to workers' work health and safety concerns, engaging in a genuine dialogue and not adopting a punitive approach regarding issues raised, is fundamental to creating trust in working relationships.

4.1.3 Organisational culture

An organisation's culture consists of the values and behaviours that workers share and demonstrate. It can include the shared attitudes and beliefs that form part of the organisation's written and unwritten rules.

Organisational culture may become a risk factor when it permits inappropriate or unreasonable workplace behaviour or rewards it through a lack of consequences or tolerance of the behaviours from managers and supervisors. This can create a hostile work culture that may result in the socialisation of new or existing workers adopting the shared destructive norms and values, leading to a continued cycle of harmful behaviour.

Team dynamics and co-worker support can also affect worker wellbeing and performance in positive and negative ways.

Similarly, workplace culture may become a risk factor for inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour occurring if it involves an unjust and punitive culture where workers experience negative consequences for raising concerns and making mistakes.

Workplaces which use performance-based reward systems and generate competition between workers may be at higher risk of inappropriate and unreasonable workplace behaviour. While these offer many benefits, it is important that workplaces developing a reward system consider whether it will pose an increased risk of these behaviours occurring.

4.2 Workplace behaviours

Inappropriate or unreasonable workplace behaviour can create a risk of harm to health and may include violence and aggression, bullying, harassment (including sexual and racial harassment), discrimination, misconduct and conflict. These behaviours could be conducted in person or through the use of technology (e.g. electronic platforms, social media, emails, text messaging).

Considerations to support appropriate workplace behaviours include:

- development and maintenance of a positive workplace culture
- visible leadership commitment
- supportive work practices
- modelling of appropriate workplace behaviours by leaders and management
- fair and consistent implementation of policies and procedures, including standards of behaviour, reporting and responding to reports
- provision of regular training and information to all workers and management.

See the *Workplace behaviour* code of practice for information about managing inappropriate and unreasonable workplace behaviours.

4.3 Good work design

Good work design considers hazards and risks as early as possible in the planning and design process, including psychosocial hazards and risks. The best and most effective way to control these is at the source, that is, by substituting the current work methods with less hazardous alternatives.

The following work design control measures may reduce the risk of work-related psychosocial hazards:

- clearly define jobs, including areas of overlap and potential conflict, and seek regular feedback from workers about their role and responsibilities
- provide workers with the resources, information and training they need to carry out their tasks safely and effectively
- review and monitor workloads and staffing levels to reduce excessive working hours and workload, and potential inequitable distribution of work
- provide effective communication throughout workplace change, including restructuring or downsizing.

Physical hazards contributing to psychosocial risks should be controlled through relevant isolation and engineering controls; for example, the use of physical barriers to help control the risk of violence in the workplace.

4.4 Safe systems of work

PCBUs have legislative obligations to provide a safe system of work in which workers are not exposed to hazards in the work environment as far as practicable. This includes psychosocial hazards.

Safe systems of work are organisational rules, policies, procedures and work practices that must be developed and followed to ensure workers and others are not harmed by any remaining (residual) psychosocial risks. Systems of work may include rostering, working hours, task rotation and breaks to allow opportunities for rest and recovery, standards and procedures to manage hazardous tasks, and policies and procedures to manage workplace behaviour (such as bullying and harassment) or organisational codes of conduct.

Safe systems of work must be developed in consultation with workers and reviewed whenever there are changes to the work activities to ensure they remain appropriate.

4.5 Communication and consultation

Effective communication requires consistent and authentic engagement, action and feedback from management to address workforce concerns. This means sharing information with workers and giving them a reasonable opportunity to express their views on health and safety matters that may affect them.

Consultation with workers and health and safety representatives is important at each step of the risk management process and is a requirement under WHS laws. By drawing on workers' experience, knowledge and ideas, it is more likely that psychosocial hazards and risk factors will be identified and effective controls selected. Worker participation throughout the process can lead to increased support and understanding when strategies are implemented.

Examples of strategies to encourage communication and reporting include:

- modelling of desired behaviours and values by managers and supervisors
- actively encouraging workers to provide feedback
- consulting workers about workplace updates and changes
- proactively engaging and consulting with health and safety representatives in sharing information and ideas
- being responsive to worker reports
- empowering a safe, supportive and learning culture
- checking in regularly with workers
- maintaining confidentiality.

Examples of activities to support effective communication and consultation include:

- having a standing agenda or discussion item on psychosocial hazards at health and safety committee meetings, team meetings and toolbox meetings
- providing regular updates to the workforce (e.g. email broadcasts, newsletters).

4.6 Information and training

The PCBU must provide adequate and suitable information, training, instruction or supervision to workers (including supervisors and managers) which has regard to and includes:

- the nature of the work and tasks to be carried out by workers
- the psychosocial hazards and risks associated with the work
- the required control measures including safe systems of work and how to comply with these
- how workers should report and respond if a problem or risk arises.

They should ensure information, training and instruction is readily understood by any person it is provided to.

Uncertainty about how to safely and efficiently carry out new tasks, use of new technology, tasks that may not have been undertaken for some time or undertaken during an emergency, and unfamiliar worksites, are relatively common psychosocial hazards. Providing adequate and timely information, training, instruction and supervision are particularly important where the work has inherent risks (e.g. risk of violence for first responders).

Training and education may be required for leadership, as well as those with management and supervisory responsibilities, to ensure that they are competent to effectively prevent and manage harm to workers from psychosocial hazards and risk factors in the workplace.

5 Reporting and responding to reports

There are various ways in which workers report exposure to psychosocial hazards or risk factors to their PCBU. Addressing these reports helps to achieve safer and healthier workplaces.

Examples of types of reporting include:

- verbal discussions, emails and text messages
- hazard or incident report forms
- formal complaints or grievances
- medical certificates
- workers' compensation claims.

To encourage workers to report, there should be easy to access guidance with information about the steps to take publicised and known throughout the organisation. It is important that workers submitting reports are supported, assured of confidentiality and protected from victimisation. Any investigations and appeals processes should be fair and afford natural justice to all parties. There should also be processes in place to minimise any distress an investigation may cause.

The person receiving the report should communicate with the individual or group of workers about how they would prefer to address it, which may be an informal or formal process. Keeping people updated about the progress of their report also helps to establish trust and encourages a reporting culture. Continuing consultation with health and safety representatives, where appropriate, and affected workers is important.

Persons involved in formal processes or investigations should be impartial. If a formal process is conducted, those undertaking the investigation should be competent in identifying psychosocial risk factors, hazards, sources of risk and appropriate preventative control measures. As investigations into psychosocial risk factors and hazards can be complex, input from subject matter experts (e.g. organisational psychologists, organisational development consultants, human resources consultants) may be required.

The *Workplace behaviour* code of practice provides more information on reporting and responding to reports of inappropriate and unreasonable behaviour.

The *Violence and aggression at work* code of practice provides information on responding to incidents of violence and aggression, including investigation and recovery.

Appendix 1 Relevant legislation

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)

Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003

Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)

Equal Opportunity Act 1984

Fair Work Act 2009 (Commonwealth)

Industrial Relations Act 1979

Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993

Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003

Public Sector Management Act 1994 (State Government Departments)

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)

Work Health and Safety Act 2020

Appendix 2 Examples of risk management in various workplaces

The following examples show how the risk management approach can be applied to psychosocial hazards and risk factors in different workplaces.

These are examples only and may not address all the psychosocial hazards and risk factors at a workplace. A combination of controls may be required, depending on the circumstances of individual workplaces.

The level of detail provided should be appropriate for the risk profile (e.g. hazards, workforce characteristics, services provided), size and complexity of the business.

Table 1 Hazard identification and risk assessment example – small hairdressing salon

Risk factors	Risk control
Work demands – fast pace, time pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish achievable performance targets and expectations in consultation with staff Monitor peak workloads and roster additional staff during peak work periods Match clients' needs to staff skill sets whenever possible Check that staff are able to manage their workload in the time allocated and adjust if necessary Ensure that staff get adequate breaks throughout the day Roster staff so that all full time staff get regular two-day breaks
Work demands – repetitive or monotonous tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that staff have a variety of tasks to complete throughout the day
Inadequate support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote an inclusive environment Provide one-on-one supervision of junior staff Hold weekly team meetings to facilitate consultation Provide adequate support for junior staff when they have difficult clients
Low recognition and reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide positive feedback on job and task performance Offer growth and development opportunities Encourage attendance and networking at industry events
Adverse environmental conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use air conditioning to counteract heat generated by salon equipment Ensure that salon and adjoining rooms have adequate ventilation Reduce noise levels by managing acoustics and using quieter equipment Provide appropriate PPE (e.g. gloves, masks)
Inappropriate and unreasonable behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a procedure for managing complaints and conflict Seek external help if a matter cannot be dealt with internally Allow flexibility for staff to seek medical assistance or support if required Have a clear policy on drugs and alcohol Educate staff on healthy coping strategies and accessing supporting resources (e.g. support programs, online resources) Have a clear policy for acceptable behaviour of staff and clients

Table 2 Hazard identification and risk assessment example – medium-sized medical centre

The following example reflects a range of psychosocial hazards, risk factors and controls in a medium-sized medical centre. The centre offers the full range of general practice (family and occupational medicine), with doctors specialising in mental health and addiction services. The services are provided in-person, after hours (locum service) and via telecare.

Risk factors	Risk control
Work demands – fast pace, time pressure, excessive workload	<p>In consultation with practice doctors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build in time between appointments to allow for doctors to catch up • schedule time for paperwork, consultation with specialists and research • check that patients select appropriate appointment length for the complexity of their health issues • refer patients to a practice nurse where appropriate • establish rosters and ongoing availability, including coverage for personal and annual leave • set up rosters for Saturdays and locum services <p>For office staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roster extra staff to cover peak periods (e.g. Monday morning) • create a temporary staff pool to cover staff absences such as leave • offer patients the option to book online
Burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In consultation with staff, develop a case allocation system based on triaging, with distribution of complex cases monitored and reviewed • Incorporate fatigue management into rosters and work practices to allow for adequate rest and recovery • Provide training on recognising signs and symptoms of burnout and promoting early intervention • Provide training on decreasing stigma around help-seeking behaviour • Provide peer support and debriefing • Facilitate access to mentoring and peer supervision for doctors • Support access to confidential counselling • Provide access to an employee assistance program for work and non-work concerns • Refer staff to advice and support services available for medical practitioners
Vicarious trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide pre-employment information on the type of situations that may arise on the job • Support access to confidential counselling • Provide opportunities for peer support and debriefing • Facilitate access to mentoring and peer supervision for doctors • Provide training on behavioural techniques that reduce the body's physiological response to other people's traumatic experiences • Provide psychosocial education about common signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma and promote help-seeking behaviour • In consultation with staff, adjust workloads to facilitate recovery at work

Risk factors	Risk control
Inappropriate and unreasonable behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear policy for acceptable behaviour of staff and patients • Have a procedure for managing complaints • Have a notification process for workers showing clients or patients who have previously exhibited inappropriate behaviour • Seek external help if a matter cannot be dealt with internally • Have a clear policy on drugs and alcohol • Publicise relevant policies and procedures online and on signs in the practice waiting rooms

Table 3 Hazard identification and risk assessment example – medium-sized automotive workshop

Risk factors	Risk control
Poor leadership practices and workplace culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a consultative leadership style • Ensure that there is visible leadership support and modelling of appropriate workplace behaviours by leaders and managers • Develop an inclusive working environment • Consult workers when making decisions that affect their working environment
Poor organisational justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that policies and procedures are applied consistently and fairly • Ensure that meaningful work is distributed fairly • Ensure that decisions about work-related entitlements and opportunities are transparent and communicated
Poor or no workplace policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear policy for acceptable workplace behaviours • Have a procedure for managing complaints • Provide training and information to management and workers on acceptable workplace behaviours and conflict resolution • Seek external help if a matter cannot be dealt with internally • Ensure policies and procedures are accessible (e.g. lunch room, notice boards, reception area)
Lack of role clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In consultation with workers, establish clear position descriptions • Establish clear processes for work flow, responsibilities and reporting lines • Hold daily toolbox meetings to discuss tasks and work allocations • Provide an appropriate level of supervision to ensure workers have a clear understanding of their duties and performance expectations
Adverse environmental conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce noise levels by managing acoustics and using quieter equipment • In consultation with staff, consider and manage other background noise i.e. radios, mobile phones • Ensure workshop areas have adequate ventilation and temperature control • Provide appropriate PPE (e.g. hearing and eye protection, gloves; comfortable, fit-for-purpose clothing)

Table 4 Hazard identification and risk assessment example – large State Government department

State Government department employing 5,000 workers in a range of roles including office-based and field work.

Risk factors	Risk control
Poor leadership practices and workplace culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement an organisation-wide strategy to create a mentally healthy workplace which includes cultural change to address leadership styles, psychological safety in reporting, positive workplace behaviours and management accountability • Provide coaching to modify behaviours to improve leadership and management skills in conflict resolution, performance development and management, and provision of practical and emotional support • Ensure training in workforce diversity and inclusion is embedded in recruitment and selection processes as well as promotion • Implement key performance indicators for any positions that have responsibility for other staff relating to contributing to a positive workplace culture • Offer a range of flexible work practices to allow staff to manage work and personal needs, while maintaining operational needs
Poor organisational justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that policies and procedures are applied consistently and fairly • Ensure that meaningful work is distributed fairly • Ensure that decisions about work-related entitlements and opportunities are transparent and communicated
Work demands – fast pace, time pressure, emotionally demanding work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set achievable performance targets for current staff numbers and mix • Clarify workers' roles and responsibilities through position descriptions • Establish clear processes for work flow • Review resourcing and staff mix of skills to ensure there is adequate resourcing and skills to manage work demands • Establish achievable performance targets and expectations in consultation with staff • Monitor peak workloads and roster additional staff during peak periods • Ensure that staff get adequate breaks throughout the day
Poor organisational change management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a structured change management process to ensure all changes are communicated to affected workers, and workers are consulted about the proposed change and process
Inappropriate and unreasonable behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train workers, managers and supervisors in addressing and identifying inappropriate or unreasonable workplace behaviour • Address any instances of inappropriate and unreasonable behaviour promptly • Integrate the code of conduct into staff communications and forums to ensure the promotion of the code of conduct has occurred across all levels of the organisation • Appoint grievance officers and promote the grievance process

Risk factors	Risk control
Inadequate support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide practical resources and emotional support that match the demands of the work and workers' needs • Provide training to recognise signs and symptoms of distress and promote early intervention • Promote positive attitudes to mental health through the provision of programs that destigmatise mental health conditions and encourage help-seeking behaviour • Provide peer support and debriefing for client facing roles • Support access to confidential counselling • Provide access to an employee assistance program for work and non-work concerns. • Provide ongoing constructive feedback from direct line managers • Provide positive encouragement to help workers maintain their motivation and engagement in achieving milestones
Inadequate recognition and reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a system for professional development advancement opportunities with clear criteria • Recognise achievements on an individual and team level • Acknowledge and recognise workers demonstrating appropriate workplace behaviours or organisational values

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Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety**

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
303 Sevenoaks Street
CANNINGTON WA 6107

Telephone: 1300 307 877

NRS: 13 36 77

Email: SafetyComms@dmirs.wa.gov.au

Website: www.dmirs.wa.gov.au



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety**



CODE OF PRACTICE

Violence and aggression at work





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Department of **Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety**



WorkSafe
Western Australia

CODE OF PRACTICE

Violence and aggression at work



WHSC
WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

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Further details of safety publications can be obtained by contacting:

Safety Regulation Group – Regulatory Support
Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
303 Sevenoaks Street
CANNINGTON WA 6107

Telephone: 1300 307 877

NRS: 13 36 77

Email: Safety@dmirs.wa.gov.au

Foreword

This code of practice is issued by the Work Health and Safety Commission (the Commission), under provisions of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* (WHS Act). The Commission comprises representatives of employers, unions and government, as well as experts, and has the function of developing the work health and safety legislation and supporting guidance material, and making recommendations to the Minister for their implementation. To fulfil its functions, the Commission is empowered to establish advisory committees, hold public inquiries and publish and disseminate information.

The Commission's objective is to promote comprehensive and practical preventive strategies that improve the working environment of Western Australians. This code of practice has been developed through a tripartite consultative process and the views of employers and unions, along with those of government and experts have been considered.

Legislative framework for work health and safety

Work Health and Safety Act 2020

The WHS Act provides for the promotion, coordination, administration and enforcement of work health and safety in Western Australia. It applies to all workplaces. With the objective of preventing work-related injuries and diseases, the WHS Act places certain duties on PCBU's, workers, manufacturers, designers, importers and suppliers. These broad duties are supported by further legislation, commonly referred to as regulations, together with non-statutory codes of practice and guides.

Codes of practice published under the WHS Act

Codes of practice published under the WHS Act provide practical guidance on how to comply with a general duty or specific duties under the legislation. Codes of practice may contain explanatory information. However, the preventive strategies outlined do not represent the only acceptable means of achieving a certain standard.

A code of practice does not have the same legal force as a regulation and is not sufficient reason, of itself, for prosecution under the legislation, but it may be used by courts as a standard when assessing other methods or practices used.

If there is a code of practice about a risk, either:

- do what the code of practice says, or
- adopt and follow another way that gives the same level of protection against the risk.

If there is no regulation or code of practice about a risk, choose an appropriate way and take reasonable precautions and exercise proper diligence to ensure obligations are met.

Note: There may be additional risks at the workplace not specifically addressed in this code of practice. The WHS Act requires identification and assessment of them and implementation of control measures to prevent or minimise risks.

Scope

The code of practice focuses on the general principles applied to the prevention and management of violence and aggression in the workplace. The intent of this code is to provide practical guidance for workplaces where people may be exposed to various forms of violence and aggression at work, including physical assault, sexual assault, verbal abuse, threats, intimidation and harassment, including sexual harassment.

This code of practice is primarily concerned with managing violence and aggression from external parties such as customers, clients, patients and students. For guidance on managing violence and aggression and other inappropriate and unreasonable behaviour between workers, see the Code of practice: *Workplace behaviour*.

The guidance in this code of practice should be considered in conjunction with the general duties in the WHS Act, the Codes of practice: *Workplace behaviour* and *Psychosocial hazards in the workplace*.

Who should use this code of practice?

This code is intended to be read by persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) who have a primary duty of care to provide and maintain a work environment without risks to health and safety under the WHS Act. Health includes both physical and psychological health.

It provides practical guidance on the processes a PCBU could use to identify and manage violence and aggression at work. You should use this code of practice if you have functions or responsibilities that involve managing, so far as is reasonably practicable, hazards and risks to psychological and physical health and safety at work.

The code may also be a useful reference for other persons interested in complying with the duties under the WHS legislation.

Using this code of practice

The terms used in this code of practice are intended to have a broad and flexible application for use across all Western Australian workplaces covered by the WHS Act.

Violence and aggression are present in situations where workers and other people are threatened, attacked or assaulted at work. All forms of workplace violence and aggression are serious work health and safety issues which can impact on a worker's physical and psychological health and safety. This code of practice is designed to help PCBUs and workers to identify and manage behaviour that creates a risk of harm to health at the workplace.

Managing violence and aggression in the workplace can be challenging because of the complex interplay and changing nature of risks. The code of practice provides high-level guidance for a risk management approach, which should be tailored to the unique demands of each workplace. Effective consultation and communication are critical, and a proactive and integrated approach is required.

This code of practice includes references to both mandatory and non-mandatory actions. The word "must" indicates that legal requirements exist, which must be complied with. The word "should" indicates a recommended course of action, while "may" is used to indicate an optional course of action.

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1 Introduction

1.1 What is work-related violence and aggression?

Work-related violence and aggression is any incident where a person is threatened, attacked or physically assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.

Work-related violence and aggression covers a broad range of actions and behaviours that create a risk to health and safety of workers. These are actions or behaviours that may physically or psychologically harm another person. Examples include:

- abusive behaviour, including insults and name-calling intimidating behaviour that creates a fear of violence, such as stalking or threatening to cause physical harm
- any form of assault, such as biting, spitting, scratching, hitting, kicking, punching, pushing, shoving, tripping, grabbing or throwing objects.

Sexual harassment is another set of behaviours, not always obvious, repeated or continuous, that can create a risk to worker health and safety. These include:

- suggestive comments or jokes, insults or taunts based on a person's gender preference or sexual orientation
- repeated or inappropriate advances online
- sending unwanted pictures, content and messages of a sexual nature
- indecent physical contact, including unwanted touching, hugging, cornering and kissing
- actual or attempted rape or sexual assault.

While both men and women experience sexual harassment, women are significantly more likely to experience it than men and are more likely to suffer negative impacts on their physical and psychological health and safety at work.

Sexual harassment should be reported to WorkSafe WA if it meets the notification threshold (see Section 1.2 Reporting to the regulator). Attempted and actual sexual assault is a criminal matter and the appropriate response is to contact the police. Contact with the police should be done with consent of the individual affected, wherever possible. There may be circumstances, for example, if the person is in imminent danger or incapacitated, where it would be appropriate to call the police without consent. The individual may choose to report the matter to police, WorkSafe WA or both.

Violence and aggression can harm both the person it is directed at and anyone witnessing it. Psychological harm, in particular, can arise from repeated exposure to violence and aggression.

Violence and aggression can be:

- physical, psychological, verbal or written
- one-off or repeated incidents
- minor behaviours through to more serious acts, including criminal offences, which require the intervention of public authorities
- in person or can include threats by correspondence, electronic means or social media.

Whether the violence or aggression was intended or not, or whether the perpetrator has the capacity to recognise that their actions could cause harm, does not reduce the risk of harm from the violence.

Acts such as indecent exposure, physical and sexual assault, stalking, and obscene or threatening communications (e.g. phone calls, letters, emails, text messages and posts on social media) may be offences under criminal law and should be referred to police as well as managed under WHS laws.

Physical assault or the threat of physical harm of any form is a criminal act. If a suspected criminal act has been committed, the appropriate response is to contact the police. Contact with the police should be done in consultation with the individual affected, wherever possible. This is to ensure they maintain control over their circumstances and are not unintentionally put at further risk which can occur with some forms of violence and aggression, such as family and domestic violence. For clarity, if the person is in imminent danger it would be appropriate to call the police without consultation.

1.2 Who is responsible for managing violence and aggression at work?

Everyone in the workplace has a duty to manage hazards and risks to worker physical and psychological health and safety. Table 1.1 sets out those duties under the WHS Act.

Table 1.1 Duties in relation to inappropriate or unreasonable workplace behaviour

Who	Duties
Person conducting a business or undertaking (section 19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A PCBU has the primary duty of care under the WHS Act to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that workers and other persons are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from work carried out as part of the business or undertaking. This duty includes, so far as is reasonably practicable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing and maintaining a work environment that is without risks to health and safety providing and maintaining safe systems of work monitoring the health and safety of workers and the conditions at the workplace to ensure that work related illnesses and injuries are prevented providing appropriate information, instruction, training or supervision to workers and other persons at the workplace to allow work to be carried out safely.
WHS service providers (section 26A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any PCBU that provides services relating to work health and safety, including those relating to workplace behaviour, must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that the WHS services are provided so that any relevant use of them at, or in relation to, a workplace will not put at risk the health and safety of persons who are at the workplace.
Officers (section 27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers, such as company directors, must exercise due diligence to ensure the business or undertaking complies with the WHS legislation. This includes taking reasonable steps to ensure the business or undertaking has and uses appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks associated with violence and aggression.

Who	Duties
Workers (section 28)	<p>Workers including employees, contractors, subcontractors, labour hire employees, outworkers, apprentices or volunteers have a duty to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take reasonable care for their own health and safety while at work • take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons • comply, so far as the worker is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU • cooperate with any reasonable policies and procedures of the PCBU.
Others (section 29)	<p>Other persons at a workplace, such as visitors and clients, have similar duties to that of a worker and must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take reasonable care for their own health and safety • take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of workers or other persons, and • comply, so far as the person is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU.

Workplace

A workplace is any location where work is carried out for a business or undertaking and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work. It can include:

- a home office
- work vehicles and private vehicles used for work purposes, such as transporting clients
- private homes and other community settings where clients are based
- accommodation camps for fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers
- work-related events such as training, conferences and social activities.

Reporting to the regulator

Certain injuries or diseases must be reported to WorkSafe WA by the PCBU including any injury, which, in the opinion of a medical practitioner, prevents the person from being able to do their normal work for at least 10 days.

Some types of violence and aggression can attract criminal charges and should be reported to the police with the consent of the victim.

Consultation

The WHS Act requires PCBUs to consult and cooperate with health and safety representatives (if any) and workers about health and safety at the workplace, as far as reasonably practicable.

The WHS Act also requires PCBUs to consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with all other persons who have a duty in relation to the same matter, so far as is reasonably practicable.

1.3 Who is at risk?

All workers and other people at workplaces are potentially at risk of experiencing some form of violence or aggression. Workers most at risk are those who have regular contact with the general public or provide direct services to clients.

Higher risk industries and occupations include:

- health care and social assistance – this includes nurses, doctors, paramedics, allied health workers, child protection workers, and residential and home carers
- public administration and safety – such as police officers, protective service officers, security officers, prison guards, welfare support workers and frontline service workers in large government agencies
- retail and hospitality – particularly for new and young workers, including workers at grocery outlets, pharmacies, petrol stations, restaurants, bars and takeaway food service
- education and training – including teachers and education assistants.

This is supported by Western Australian workers' compensation data which shows that, of all approved claims related to violence and aggression between 2014-15 and 2018-19, most claims came from education and training (35%), health care and social assistance (32%) and public administration and safety (15%). However, these percentages represent only the workers who have received workers' compensation. It is likely that many more incidents involving violence and aggression occur without being reported.

In some workplaces where workers are interacting with patients, clients or members of the public over time, it may even be considered "part of the job". This general level of acceptance may also be responsible for the under reporting of the hazard. Research shows that under-reporting this hazard is due to a belief amongst these occupations that a certain level of violence and aggression is inevitable.

1.4 Why is it important to reduce the risk of violence and aggression?

Violence and aggression are workplace hazards. They may cause physical and psychological injury or harm and may result in permanent disability or death.

Violence and aggression can lead to:

- feelings of isolation, social isolation or family dislocation
- loss of confidence and withdrawal
- physical injuries as a result of assault
- stress, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- illness such as cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, immune deficiency and gastrointestinal disorders; e.g. as a result of stress
- suicidal thoughts.

There can also be considerable direct and indirect costs for the organisation, including lost productivity while people are not working, repairing property damage, and medical and legal expenses.

The injuries and harm to health can be cumulative. The incident that results in the worker complaining or taking time off work may be minor in nature, but may result in significant injury after cumulative exposure. Symptoms can appear some time after the exposure to violence and aggression.

2 Develop a prevention plan

Finding out what workers are exposed to, the types of behaviour they experience, the frequency and severity of incidents, and what can be done to prevent or mitigate the risk of exposure, needs a systematic and holistic approach. This can take the form of a violence and aggression plan developed using a risk management approach.

Generally, the plan should have:

- measures and procedures for preventing violence and aggression in the workplace
- measures and procedures for dealing with workplace violence and aggression immediately, should it occur or if it is likely to occur, including communicating risks and the need for assistance
- measures and procedures for workers to report incidents of workplace violence and aggression to the PCBU or supervisor
- information about how the PCBU will investigate and deal with incidents or complaints of violence and aggression.

The same measures and procedures for preventing violence and aggression will also work to prevent or mitigate the risk of exposure to sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The plan should include a violence and aggression prevention and management policy. The policy can be developed on its own, or may be included in a work health and safety policy.

All workers must be made aware of policies and procedures in place to manage violence and aggression in the workplace. PCBU's should ensure that policies are accessible and understood by all workers. Training should be provided as part of induction and refreshed as required.

The next sections outline the steps for developing a violence and aggression prevention plan using a risk management approach.

Workplaces are usually constantly changing environments with new risks being introduced. Risk management should be conducted as an ongoing process, using information gained from reviews. Factors that affect the likelihood of an unwanted event and its consequences may change.

Once the prevention plans are established they should be periodically reviewed. Ongoing review is essential to ensure that the prevention plan remains relevant.

2.1 Provide information and training

PCBUs should make information on workplace violence and aggression available to all workers, supervisors and managers. Workers need to know what the procedures are for managing and responding to violence and aggression in the workplace. This information should also be included in induction training for new workers.

Information to workers could include:

- the nature and causes of violence and aggression in their organisation or industry sector, including potential triggers
- suggested measures to prevent such problems occurring, and best practices for their reduction and elimination
- the laws and regulations covering violence and aggression, both specifically and generally
- how to report incidents and how they will be investigated
- the services available to assist workers exposed to work-related violence and aggression.

Training can be preventative (e.g. positive communication skills, live risk assessment), focussed on management of aggressive behaviours (e.g. conflict resolution and de-escalation) or post-incident response (e.g. evacuation and incident communication). It may be formal, informal or on the job. If necessary, information should be provided in languages other than English.

There may be times when workers will have to assess the level of risk in a particular situation and choose the most appropriate procedure. Workers should be trained to make reasonable decisions in the circumstances and to balance the actions needed to maintain their own safety and the safety of others who may be in their care.

Managers and supervisors should analyse reported incidents to work out whether additional training or information should be provided to workers.

The training should be evaluated to ensure workers have acquired the skills they need to work safely.

3 Risk management approach

It is a requirement under the WHS legislation to use a risk management approach based on the hierarchy of control to manage hazards and risks to worker health and safety, including psychological health and safety. Because it can affect the health and safety of workers, violence and aggression should be treated like any other hazard. Situations involving violence and aggression should be assessed for risks, and steps taken to minimise those risks.

Adopting a risk management approach helps PCBU's to:

- prevent and reduce the likelihood of incidents of violence and aggression occurring
- prevent and reduce the likelihood of harm from exposure to violence and aggression
- identify and take opportunities to improve health and safety management systems (e.g. reporting systems, working environment and psychological support structures)

Figure 3.1 illustrates the risk management approach to managing exposure to violence and aggression in the workplace. Risk management is a continual process that involves the following steps:

1. identify the hazard
2. assess the risks
3. control the risks by making the changes necessary to eliminate the hazards or risk factors or, if not practicable, minimise the risk of harm
4. monitor and review the effectiveness of the controls and adapt or improve the controls where necessary.

The following sections describe each step.



Figure 3.1 Overview of the risk management process (adapted from Safe Work Australia).

Leadership commitment, and supportive and capable management and supervision are key to the successful management of risks. Communication and consultation with your workers and other stakeholders are important at all stages.

3.1 Identify the hazards

The first stage in the risk management process is to identify the hazard. In this context, the hazard is violent and/or aggressive behaviour from a client, customer or other person who is not a worker in that workplace.

In doing so, it is important to consider:

- the nature of the violence and aggression; in particular, its location, frequency and severity
- the interaction of different factors which can increase the likelihood of violence and aggression occurring.

There are a number of ways to identify situations where violence and aggression may occur. Choosing an appropriate process or procedure for identifying violence and aggression risks will depend on the nature of the work environment and the specific violence and aggression-related behaviours involved.

If there is not already a workplace health and safety incident reporting system in place, this should be established. This can then be used to review reported incidents of violence and aggression.

Some of the ways to identify situations include:

- consulting with the workforce about violence and aggression risks in their work area
- checking accident reports, injury records or client histories to find out about previous incidents
- conducting workplace inspections to identify risks of exposure; e.g. controlled access to staff-only areas, natural surveillance, duress alarm and communication systems
- reviewing means of access and egress for workers before/after working hours
- reviewing working arrangements; e.g. workplace design, working alone, contact with public, working after hours
- analysing feedback from clients to identify problem areas; e.g. service delivery, waiting times, way-finding
- seeking advice from external experts; e.g. WA Police, WorkSafe WA.

3.2 Assess the risks

The second stage in the risk management process is to assess the risk of injury or harm occurring. The risk assessment is a way of understanding the causes of the violence and aggression and prioritising what needs to be addressed. PCBUs should focus on workplace sources of risk that are within their influence, such as organisational and environmental factors.

A risk assessment worksheet may assist in identifying violence and aggression problems. Example risk assessment worksheets in [Chapter 5](#) show how hazard identification and risk assessment can cover workers and other people who may be at a workplace. The examples are a community worker, an education assistant, a 24-hour service station worker and a licensing centre customer service officer.

After the risks have been assessed they should be prioritised. Prioritising involves looking at the likelihood of violence or aggression occurring and, if it does occur, the extent of any harm or injury (i.e. the consequences). This includes looking at the different situations in which it is likely to occur, who might be exposed and how often.

3.3 Control the risk

The third stage is to implement control measures to eliminate or reduce the risk of the violence or aggression occurring and to ensure those measures are monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Some controls for the management of violence and aggression risks are more effective than others. They can be ranked from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest. This ranking is known as the hierarchy of control. Elimination controls are the most effective and reliable form of control, followed by risk minimisation controls (engineering, substitution and isolation), then administration and personal protective equipment (PPE) controls.

To minimise the risk to as low as reasonably practicable, PCBU's should apply elimination controls supplemented by risk minimisation and administrative and PPE controls. For example, in a workplace where it is known that a person has a history of violent behaviour towards workers or others in that workplace, this person can be sanctioned from the workplace (elimination), physical barriers in place (risk minimisation) and workers provided with information, including triggers and responses (administrative).

Case study examples using this approach are provided in [Chapter 5](#), and the principles of the hierarchy of control are explained more fully in [Appendix 1](#).

3.4 Monitor and review

The PCBU needs to consult with workers to review the effectiveness of the control strategies put in place. Questions to be asked include:

- Have incidents of violence and aggression decreased?
- Have any new risks been introduced following implementation of the risk control?
- Are there other controls which may be more effective?

After an incident occurs, it is important to look at whether or not controls were applied, their effectiveness, and whether they need altering, amending or replacing.

Monitoring and reviewing are important steps to ensure that the controls are working as intended. This involves finding out whether the changes made have eliminated or reduced the assessed risks, whether control strategies are continuing to be effective and ensuring that new risks have not been introduced into the workplace as a result of implementing a control.

There should also be ongoing analysis of reported incidents to work out whether additional measures such as training or information should be provided to workers.

4 Responding to incidents

How PCBU's respond to incidents is a critical part of the overall prevention plan. Information from the risk management process will guide the response. There are three key areas:

1. Planning and implementation
2. Immediate response: this is comprised of de-escalation and emergency procedures
3. Investigation and recovery which includes review of the controls in place.

4.1 Response planning and implementation

The PCBU has a duty of care to prevent harm to health for every person in the workplace. This includes injury or harm from violence or aggression.

It is important that PCBU's support workers at all stages in managing violence and aggression in the workplace, from prevention strategies, to immediate response procedures and post-incident counselling and legal proceedings, should they arise.

Preventing violence and aggression in the workplace is the best way of ensuring workers and others at the workplace are not harmed. However, it may not be possible to completely eliminate or reduce risk associated with all situations where violence and aggression could occur.

When violence or aggression occurs in a workplace, ideally the planning should result in a well-coordinated response, with agreed procedures followed in accordance with the training provided. The response plan should also include reporting and investigation procedures.

Consider if a multi-agency response is required. There may be organisations who can share information, control strategies and emerging risks depending on the industry, workers and clients.

4.2 Immediate response

It is essential that there are clear procedures to be followed for an effective immediate response that controls and defuses the situation, and provides avenues for retreat should de-escalation and prevention fail.

The types of de-escalation strategies that can be applied are context-specific and should be identified in the risk management stage. Workers need to be aware of the antecedents to violence and aggression, how to respond and how to communicate with individuals who present a threat.

Workers must also be aware that they can remove themselves from situations that present a serious and imminent risk of harm and that they can do so without fear of being penalised.

When violent incidents occur, workers should know who has the authority to take charge of the situation. That person should be trained to coordinate the response, including taking care of workers who may be injured, in shock or affected by the incident in other ways.

Establishing effective communication systems to be used in an emergency is an essential part of emergency planning. This is especially important for people who work alone and those requiring rapid assistance. Further information on the use of technology can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Assistance should be available as part of the immediate response and the recovery phase of violent or aggressive incidents to minimise the effects of trauma. Individual reactions to workplace violence and aggression can be delayed and continue for a long time after the incident. If the incident and workers' reactions are not actively managed, the impact of the incident on the individual and the organisation can be significant.

Physical assault or the threat of physical harm of any form is a criminal act. If a suspected criminal act has been committed, the appropriate response is to contact the police. In certain violence and aggression situations, such as those regarding family and domestic violence, contacting the police without consultation with the affected individual can unintentionally put them at further risk. For clarity, if the person is in imminent danger it would be appropriate to call the police without consultation.

4.3 Investigation and recovery

There are two components to post-incident response. One is investigating the incident and how it can be prevented from reoccurring; the other is supporting worker recovery, including injury management, counselling and return to work, where required.

When investigating an incident, it is important to:

- consult with workers and interview witnesses to investigate the incident
- review the controls to assess their effectiveness and whether they can be improved, replaced or new controls introduced
- inform all workers about what action will be taken to reduce the risk of harm or injury in the future
- keep records of incident reports, investigations and actions taken so that trends can be established and reviewed as part of the ongoing risk management.

To facilitate worker recovery, the PCBU should provide ongoing support for workers, which can include debriefing, allowing time to recover and to consult medical professionals if needed. If necessary, support workers who wish to press charges to apply for restraining orders or other court actions.

Table 4.1 provides examples of incident response measures that can be applied in a health care setting.

Table 4.1 Responding to incidents in a health care environment

Before	<p>Introduce measures to convey levels of risk across shifts i.e. patient flagging, documented risk assessments and regular risk alerts for the business.</p> <p>Orientate workers to the safety measures in the workplace, how to summon help and locations of duress alarms.</p> <p>Regularly maintain, test and review safety measures.</p> <p>Design the workplace to reduce the risk of aggression and allow for appropriate response; i.e. isolation.</p>
During	<p>Have a stepped response for violent and aggressive situations which is easily accessible to staff.</p> <p>Take action early to defuse situations and contain violent incidents.</p> <p>Prevent escalation of a situation and further danger to staff or property; i.e. during an armed hold up, by giving the person what they want, allowing them to leave and not following them – call 000.</p>
After	<p>Provide immediate support and emotional containment for the workers affected, restart the work processes and, if required, make arrangements for staff that need to temporarily leave the workplace.</p> <p>Make arrangements to check in with workers regularly.</p>

5 Risk management examples

Hazard identification and risk assessment form

Note: these are examples only and may not address all the risks, or all the work activities, at a workplace. A combination of controls may be required, depending on the circumstances of individual workplaces.

The following example reflects worker exposure to unpredictable behaviours from clients, family or visitors in the client's home. The source of risk is that the client is unable to communicate their needs effectively, and an unpredictable reaction or risks posed by other persons in this workplace. As the employer has limited control over the client home, the risk is managed through communication systems, live risk assessment and clear procedures.

The following risk profile summarises the risk assessment and controls for the scenario of a community service worker alone with a client in the community

Location: Client home		Position:	Date prepared:
Prepared by:		Hazard: Physical or verbal assault	
Task #. 1 Visiting client with a disability and known history of unpredictable or challenging behaviours in their home to complete personal care tasks			
Task frequency: Daily		Risk level: High	Comment: Restrictive practices such as physical restraint are not permitted
Preferred order of controls	Risk control What can be done to make the job safe	Person responsible Who makes sure it happens?	Completion
			Date Sign off
Elimination	Employer refuses to provide services to clients who continue to exhibit threatening behaviour towards community support workers, including indecent physical contact Service provider has an onboarding process that does not accept high risk clients		

Substitution	Transfer client to a clinic or hospital setting with other staff present and additional security measures (i.e. standby security)			
Isolation	Conduct live risk assessment in accordance with agreed system and record in client notes prior to entering premises (e.g. greet client from behind screen door and observe/listen for risks before entering) Provide support and advice remotely (i.e. via phone/video link up)			
Engineering	Install mobile phone app on all community support worker mobile phones (these apps can track worker location, provide client behaviour plan, risk assessment detail including history of aggression for residents, and act as duress alarm in emergencies)			
Administration	Identify critical communication points (e.g. handover at shift end/beginning) to communicate emerging risks prior to entering client premises Consider sending two workers to a high risk home environment Ensure there is a journey management plan, including clear directions for parking and egress Ensure all workers know the emergency response procedure and communication protocol outlining who to contact and when Provide de-escalation training and refresher training to all community support workers Conduct environmental risk assessment of client home every three months to identify emerging trends			
Personal protective equipment (PPE)	Provide workers with a personal duress device (e.g. duress watch with GPS) on clothing or as a watch. Ideally, in addition to location tracking, it should allow a third party to listen in or ask questions and come with a “man down” function for injury Provide a mobile phone charger for vehicles			

The following example reflects exposure to client-related violence in a classroom. The source of risk in this example is unpredictable behaviours from students with a history of violence and aggression.

The following risk profile summarises the risk assessment and controls for the scenario of an education assistant working with a child with a history of aggression in classroom					
Location: Classroom		Position:		Date prepared:	
Prepared by:		Hazard: Physical or verbal assault			
Task #: 1 Assisting child with history of unpredictable or challenging behaviours in class		Risk level: High		Comment: Restrictive practices such as using restraint are not permitted	
Task frequency: Daily					
Preferred order of controls	Risk control	Person responsible	Completion	Sign off	
	What can be done to make the job safe	Who makes sure it happens?	Date		
Elimination	Expulsion or suspension of students with a history of violence and aggression towards others in cases where this is permitted and all other options have been explored				
Substitution	Provide an alternate learning setting				
Isolation	Provide a “calm down” space where the child exhibiting aggressive behaviours can be moved and which separates them from others until behaviour de-escalates and self-regulation occurs				
Engineering	Review safe design of the classroom situation for existing and new buildings, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">ability to reduce the stimulus in the classroom; e.g. noise and lightingchoice of furniture to remove hard edges and potential for weaponisationconstruction of buildings to include dual egress for staff and location of hardwired duress alarms at various locations				

<p>Administration</p>	<p>Ensure relevant staff are familiar with the management plan for the child</p> <p>Provide regular refresher training on evasive response to aggression</p> <p>Roster education assistant to work in buddy shift with high risk child</p> <p>Complete environmental risk assessment of classroom to identify any hazards restricting quick egress and provide room templates for optimal set up</p> <p>All workers provided training in the emergency response procedure</p> <p>Provide de-escalation training and talk-down techniques to education assistants</p> <p>Conduct environmental risk assessment of classroom annually to identify safe egress, controlled access and natural surveillance</p>			
<p>Personal protective equipment (PPE)</p>	<p>N/A</p>			

In a retail setting, it may assist to prepare a risk profile for each type of hazard likely to be encountered in the environment. This scenario looks at the hazard of robbery in a 24-hour service station. Because robbery is at the extreme end of violence and aggression, most of the controls for robbery will also work to minimise harm or injury from other incidents of violence and aggression.

The following risk profile summarises the risk assessment and controls for the task of handling money at the counter

Location: 24-hour service station				
Prepared by:		Position:		Date prepared:
Task #: 1 Handling money at the counter		Hazard: Robbery		
Task frequency: Daily		Risk level: Extreme	Comment: In addition to verbal aggression and threats of and actual violence, weapons may be used in attempts to steal cash and other goods of value	
Preferred order of controls	Risk control What can be done to make the job safe	Person responsible Who makes sure it happens?	Completion	
			Date	Sign off
Elimination	Provide payment options to eliminate customer interaction such as pay at pump, pay by mobile app and pay at night fill window (this is also substitution) Introduce card-only payments to eliminate trigger of cash on premises			
Substitution	As above			

Isolation	<p>Control customer access to staff areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • install screens and/or jump wires to the counter area • increase or elevate the height of the counter • increase the depth of the counter • ensure that any access points to the counter (e.g. a gate) are substantial, properly locked at all times and the lock cannot be reached from the public side <p>Increase distance between workers and customers by placing display stands in front of the counter</p> <p>Install two sets of electronic doors controlled by workers</p>			
Engineering	<p>Ensure clear visibility at all times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • install good lighting around the forecourt, parking areas and inside the premises • do not obstruct the shop floor or windows with tall fixtures and fittings • install mirrors for areas of obscured vision • elevate the cashier by raising the floor behind the counter, or providing a high stool • Install on-site security cameras • Install an under bench duress alarm, or alarm keys on the till • Install time-delay locks on safes 			

Administration	<p>Develop procedures to address risks identified in hazard identification/risk assessment phase (e.g. handover procedures at night shift)</p> <p>Train staff in how to manage violent and aggressive situations (including armed hold up) on induction and provide refresher training</p> <p>Train staff in cash-handling procedures, emergency procedures and operation of security devices, and confidentiality of those procedures</p> <p>Increase staff during high risk periods (e.g. at opening and closing times)</p> <p>Consider employing a security guard during high risk periods</p> <p>Prominently display signs saying the premises are monitored</p> <p>Advertise that large amounts of cash aren't kept on the premises</p>			
Personal protective equipment (PPE)	<p>Provide personal duress alarms for all staff to use when they move away from the counter</p>			

People working in frontline counter service environments often encounter verbal abuse and threatening behaviour from members of the public. Using the hierarchy of control approach allows for a number of strategies to be put in place to reduce the risk of violence and aggression occurring.

The following risk profile summarises the risk assessment and controls for the scenario of a customer service officer (CSO) providing driver and vehicle licensing services to members of the public					
Location: Vehicle Licensing Centre		Position:		Date prepared:	
Prepared by:		Hazard: Verbal abuse, threatening behaviour			
Task #: 1 Providing driver and vehicle licensing services to members of the public		Risk level: High		Comment: CSO separated from customer via counter	
Task frequency: Daily		Person responsible Who makes sure it happens?		Completion Date	Sign off
Preferred order of controls	Risk control What can be done to make the job safe				
Elimination	<p>Increase scope of online licensing services and improve ease of access to online services to eliminate need for customer to attend centre</p> <p>Outsource the services to a third party</p> <p>Establish self-service computer terminals at each of the centres so that customers can use these terminals and not have to wait in line to be served by a CSO</p>				
Substitution	Live tracking of waiting times in licensing centres publicised online can allow customers to choose to attend less busy licensing centres				
Isolation	<p>Use counter design to provide a barrier between the CSO and the customer</p> <p>Consider installing perspex screens between the CSO and customer</p> <p>Controlled access to worker-only areas (e.g. keycard)</p>				

Engineering	<p>Silent duress alarm system to alert manager of escalating behaviours from customer or other member of public</p> <p>Installation of free-to-air televisions to distract customers</p> <p>Installation of CCTV cameras and signage to deter anti-social behaviour</p> <p>Design of concierge, use of colour schemes and application of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles to deter anti-social behaviour</p> <p>Use of ticketing machines to triage specific service needs (reducing waiting times)</p>			
Administration	<p>Restriction of service warning letter issued to customer with history of aggressive behaviour</p> <p>Workers are trained in de-escalating aggressive behaviour (signs of aggression, verbal and non-verbal communication strategies)</p> <p>Police attendance procedure for customers who refuse to leave the premises</p> <p>Traffic-light procedure displayed at customer service counters outlining process for responding to aggression</p> <p>Consideration of screening of customers with a history of aggressive behaviours and flagging of customer records to alert CSO of at-risk customers</p>			
Personal protective equipment (PPE)	N/A			

Appendix 1 Hierarchy of control relating to violence and aggression

Eliminate the hazard – change the system of work

In some situations it is possible to pinpoint the exact reason or “trigger” for workplace violence and aggression. If this “trigger” could be completely eliminated, the work could be carried out without the threat of violence, robbery or attack.

As the environment is a significant contributing factor to the potential for violence and aggression, attempts should be made to eliminate environmental triggers when designing or renovating workplaces.

Examples

- Banning persons with a history of violence and aggression, including indecent physical contact, from venues or facilities (e.g. patrons at pubs or clients at health services)
- Refusing service to clients who repeatedly expose workers to violence and aggression, including unwelcome touching
- Providing alternative methods of customer service to eliminate face-to-face interactions (e.g. online licence renewal, ticket dispensers at customer service counters)
- Having controlled access to the work area.

Substitution – use a safer alternative

Replace a hazardous procedure with a less hazardous one.

Examples

- Use EFTPOS machines instead of cash
- Minimise discomfort in waiting rooms (e.g. provide televisions, water dispensers) and use signs to advise current waiting times
- Use way-finding volunteers at hospitals to reduce customer frustration and encourage them away from triage nurses and front desk admin.

Isolation – separate workers from the hazard

If possible, workers should move away from violent or aggressive situations to a safe area. In other situations, it may be possible to move the violent/aggressive person; for example, an aggressive student could be taken to a designated area within the school.

Barriers could also be used to separate workers from customers, clients or members of the public who may cause them harm. Effective barriers are usually physical, but could also be in the form of procedures that isolate workers from hazards (e.g. requirement for live risk assessment conducted by community service worker out in the community).

Physical barriers

Examples

- Electronically controlled doors with viewing panels that allow surveillance of public areas before the doors are opened from the inside
- Using furniture to create a barrier between workers and clients in interview rooms
- Staircases in venues with alcohol to have appropriate barriers to protect workers
- Controlled-access doors where access is via a security card or code
- Screens to reduce the risk of attack from clients; e.g. on buses, at counters.
- Interview rooms in hospitals, community health clinics and mental health clinics designed with controlled access and separate emergency egress to isolate aggressive clients.



Well-designed counter to eliminate ability of client or member of public climbing or reaching over.

Figure 1 Counter design as a physical barrier.

Administrative barriers

Examples

- Service agreements that outline acceptable behaviour and consequences when clients or members of public are violent or aggressive
- Procedures that prevent customers from contacting workers out of business hours, such as refusing to provide workers' home phone numbers and addresses
- Posters outlining acceptable behaviours and consequences of unacceptable behaviours
- Ensure workplaces with customer and client service are designed in a way to maximise natural surveillance as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour
- Signs warning that cameras are in use
- Roster work to minimise workers working in isolation.
- Use way-finding volunteers at hospitals to reduce customer frustration and encourage them away from triage nurses and front desk admin.

Engineering solutions

Building or introducing technology, plant or equipment to reduce the exposure to the hazard.

Examples

Building layout

- Allow for "escape routes" and avoid dead ends where workers are unable to retreat to a safer place when necessary
- Bollards outside entry points to the workplace
- Barriers in vehicles used to transport patients/clients
- Security doors to ensure controlled access to worker-only areas
- Permanent screens
- Security lighting (including for worker entry/exit and car parks if workers work late hours)
- Use of fixed and portable alarm systems
- Communication systems
- Furniture that cannot be used as projectiles.

Technology

- Closed circuit TV/surveillance/video monitoring
- Audio-capture wearable cameras on security guards
- Provide workers with a dedicated work phone
- Mobile phone apps for tracking workers (e.g. home-based care, community visits) and communication
- GPS tracking in vehicles used by community-based workers
- Rostering software that allows community workers to communicate location and potential delays in service back to head office for action
- Devices that increase mobile phone coverage in areas where mobile phone reception is poor

Note: There can be overlap between substitution, isolation and engineering controls.

Administrative controls – managing the hazard

Administrative controls are usually procedures, training and internal processes which help to reduce the effect of the hazard. They can include “work arounds”.

Examples

- Training workers in appropriate systems of work, dealing with difficult clients and conflict management skills; for example, in situations where cleaners work alone at night, there would be less risk of attack if cleaners worked together, cleaning one building after the other, rather than working alone in different buildings
- Implementing job rotation to reduce the amount of time workers are in stressful situations or working with high-risk clients, especially when they are new to the job
- In an organisation with client contact, ensuring new workers are not required to work alone until they have the competencies to do so. Assistance from more experienced workers should be available when it is needed
- Rostering to provide support for situations where it is known that the situation may be difficult
- Implementing regular emergency response drills for Code Black (i.e. personal threat of violence or a threatening confrontation) or client-related violence
- Establishing communication protocols for sharing information and facilitating the solution of problems related to service delivery. This includes not providing worker personal information to clients or customers
- Creating a social media policy which discourages use of personal social media accounts to engage with clients or customers
- Implementing customer feedback procedures
- Ensuring time is available for peer support, sharing information and problem solving and incident reporting.

Personal protective clothing and equipment

Personal protective clothing and equipment (PPE) should not be the only control that is used, as it is the least effective way of dealing with workplace violence and aggression. PPE should be provided as a temporary measure whilst other risk controls are being considered, or in conjunction with other controls.

Examples

- PPE for protection from contact with body fluids
- Protective body gear or riot gear in prisons or high security detention centres
- Personal duress alarms.

Appendix 2 Relevant legislation

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)

Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)

Equal Opportunity Act 1984

Mental Health Act 2014

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)

Work Health and Safety Act 2020

Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981

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Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety**

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
303 Sevenoaks Street
CANNINGTON WA 6107

Telephone: 1300 307 877

NRS: 13 36 77

Email: SafetyComms@dmirs.wa.gov.au

Website: www.dmirs.wa.gov.au



Government of Western Australia
Department of Commerce

Aggression in the workplace:

Risk management toolkit

All employers should carry out regular checks of the workplace in consultation with health and safety representatives and employees to identify if there are signs that aggression in the workplace is happening or could happen (risk identification) and take steps to implement solutions to control risks. The following tools will assist your organisation with identifying risks and implementing risk controls for aggression in the workplace.

Risk assessment tool

This risk assessment tool is designed to help employers meet their legal obligations to manage risks associated with aggression in the workplace. This tool is not exhaustive. You may need to consider other risk factors which are unique to your organisation. Add these factors to the 'Additional Factors' section of this checklist. More information on aggression in the workplace can be found in the publication, *Code of Practice: Violence, Aggression, and Bullying at Work (2010)*.

To start using this tool simply read the statements and provide your answer by circling either Yes or No. Make any relevant comments which should be considered as part of the risk assessment process. You may have to examine workplace data or consult with employees before you provide your answer. A risk rating table (Figure 1) has been provided to assist you in assessing the risk. When determining the risk rating of an identified risk factor you will need to consider the likelihood of the injury occurring against the severity of the consequences if the injury occurs.

Figure 1. Risk Rating Table

Likelihood of injury or harm to health	Consequences of any injury or harm to health				Existing systems
	<i>Insignificant</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>Catastrophic</i>	<i>How do the existing controls and systems impact on the risk rating?</i> <i>(increase/decrease?)</i>
<i>Very Likely</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	
<i>Likely</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	
<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	
<i>Unlikely</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	
<i>High Unlikely (rare)</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	

Completed by:	Position/s:
Date of risk assessment:	Review date/s:
Location / group:	

Incident/ injury records	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
1. There have been no incidents of aggression in the workplace in the last 12 months.	Yes	No		
2. Employees have not been threatened or assaulted in the past 12 months.	Yes	No		
3. Violence or aggression in the workplace is not frequent.	Yes	No		
4. Violence or aggression incidents have not resulted in serious injury or harm to health. (i.e. Employee off work for more than 10 days or has resulted in a psychological condition such as depression, anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)	Yes	No		

Work environment	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
5. The building has multiple access points which are secure or visitor access is controlled.	Yes	No		
6. Access to alarms is easy and unobstructed.	Yes	No		
7. The locations of alarms are not obvious.	Yes	No		
8. The environment is comfortable for clients (e.g. temperature, seating, noise).	Yes	No		
9. The physical layout provides privacy for clients.	Yes	No		
10. Access to employees by clients or members of the public is controlled.	Yes	No		
11. Employees are able to move to a safe place if in danger.	Yes	No		
12. Employees are able to communicate their need for assistance when threatened (i.e. access to mobile telephone, duress alarm).	Yes	No		
13. Visibility of the working environment from the outside is adequate.	Yes	No		
14. External lighting is adequate.	Yes	No		
15. Money/valuables/drugs are not kept at the workplace.	Yes	No		

Work practices	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
16. Any service delays are communicated to the client.	Yes	No		
17. Clients are unlikely to become frustrated.	Yes	No		
18. Staffing numbers are sufficient at demand times.	Yes	No		
19. Employees do not provide community outreach / at home services.	Yes	No		
20. Employees do not work in isolated locations.	Yes	No		
21. The workplace has security and emergency procedures.	Yes	No		
22. The workplace regularly tests the security and emergency procedures.	Yes	No		
23. The workplace has a clear process for managing conflict and aggression.	Yes	No		
24. The workplace has procedures to deal with aggression and violence during and after an event.	Yes	No		

Behavioural factors	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
25. Clients/ service users are unlikely to be distressed or aggressive.	Yes	No		
26. The behaviour of clients is predictable.	Yes	No		
27. People are not likely to be affected by alcohol or other drugs.	Yes	No		
28. People or service users are not likely to be physically or mentally ill.	Yes	No		
29. Customers are not likely to be angry or disgruntled.	Yes	No		
30. The aggressor is not likely to have a weapon or access to things that could be used as a weapon.	Yes	No		
31. It is likely to be only one aggressor.	Yes	No		

Employee factors	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
32. Employees are unlikely to become violent.	Yes	No		
33. Employees do not work alone.	Yes	No		
34. Employees do not work at night.	Yes	No		
35. Only experienced employees deal with customers or work in front line positions.	Yes	No		
36. Employees are unlikely to be bored, stressed, and/or unhappy at work.	Yes	No		
37. Employer-employee relationships are not strained.	Yes	No		
38. Employee relationships are not stressed or tense.	Yes	No		

Training	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
39. Employees have received adequate training to manage aggression and / or challenging behaviours.	Yes	No		
40. Employees have the appropriate knowledge or skills to deal with clients.	Yes	No		
41. There are safe procedures for violent and aggressive situations.	Yes	No		
42. Employees are aware and/or understand aggression and management procedures.	Yes	No		
43. Employees have received training to report violent and aggressive incidents.	Yes	No		

Identify, assess and control	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
44. Workplace aggression and violence reports are analysed.	Yes	No		
45. Potentially violent people are identified.	Yes	No		
46. Employees are asked about risks of aggression and violence.	Yes	No		
47. Causes of potential violence are identified.	Yes	No		
48. Risks of injury or harm have been assessed.	Yes	No		
49. There are controls for averting violence.	Yes	No		
50. Current controls were demonstrated to be successful.	Yes	No		
51. Employees are happy with the controls.	Yes	No		

Consultation and co-operation	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
52. The safety and health committee are involved.	Yes	No		
53. The safety and health representative/s are consulted about hazards.	Yes	No		
54. There is a procedure for reporting incidents.	Yes	No		
55. All changes are discussed with employees.	Yes	No		
56. Employees are asked opinions on aggression and violence.	Yes	No		
57. Employees' perceptions of safety are considered.	Yes	No		
58. The safety of the public and service users is considered.	Yes	No		

Aggression and violence management plan	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
59. My workplace has a violence and aggression management plan.	Yes	No		
60. The plan was drawn up in consultation with employees.	Yes	No		
61. The plan identifies, assesses, and controls hazards.	Yes	No		
62. The plan covers induction and training.	Yes	No		
63. Safe procedures for hazardous tasks have been developed.	Yes	No		
64. There is an action plan for aggressive and violent situations.	Yes	No		
65. First aid and medical support is included.	Yes	No		
66. Backup from police, emergency services are included.	Yes	No		
67. Prompt de-briefing and counselling is included.	Yes	No		
68. A rehabilitation service is provided.	Yes	No		
69. The plan is reviewed after each aggressive situation.	Yes	No		

Additional factors	Answer (Each NO answer indicates a risk control is needed)		Risk rating (N/A, Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)	Comments (Make notes on reasons for your assessment .For example, why have you provided this answer and what could be done to prevent it.)
70.	Yes	No		
71.	Yes	No		
72.	Yes	No		
73.	Yes	No		
74.	Yes	No		

Risk management plan

If you tick NO to any of the statements in the risk assessment checklist, you will need to identify and implement risk control solutions.

Location / group :		Risk factor:		
Short term (up to four weeks)				
Action required	Person responsible	Completion date	Review date	Comments on review
Medium term (four weeks to six months)				
Action required	Person responsible	Completion date	Review date	Comments on review

Long term (more than six months)				
Action required	Person responsible	Completion date	Review date	Comments on review

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