



ADVICE SHEET 3

SAFE WORK PROCEDURES

WHY DO YOU NEED SAFE WORK PROCEDURES?

...because some work tasks carry risks.

Sometimes, risks associated with a work task may be obvious – eg dangerous machinery and chemicals used in a manufacturing or construction environment. For other tasks, the risks may not be as obvious – eg loading, unloading, packing, unpacking and handling goods in a retail environment may expose workers to back injuries or repetitive strain injuries.

Safe work procedures ensure your workers are aware of the risks in their work tasks, and outline how to avoid injury or illness while doing these tasks.

Safe work procedures are a means of briefly documenting the risks associated with a work task and incorporating the appropriate risk control measures into a sequence of steps for doing the task safely. Most effective when developed in consultation with your workers, safe work procedures provide a useful tool for training and supervising your workers, and responding to incident reports and changes in the workplace.

WHERE YOU TICKED IN THE RED ZONE...

...your workers are unlikely to have documented instructions to help them do their jobs safely.

Ticks in the RED zone indicate that you need to take action immediately to identify the tasks your workers do that may expose them to safety risks. Work with them to develop simple procedures to do their work safely.

Identify tasks that require safe work procedures

Develop safe work procedures for tasks that are likely to harm your workers if any risks are not addressed. Many tasks are unlikely to expose your workers to risks, so documented safe work procedures are unnecessary.

Speak with your workers about the tasks they perform and identify those tasks that could place them at risk. Consider the aspects of each task that expose them to risk and determine the likely consequences if the risks are not managed. This is known as **risk assessment**.

Prioritise the tasks that require safe work procedures

Develop safe work procedures for the tasks that present the greatest risk and pose the most serious consequences, and gradually work through those that present less risk.

Queensland legislation requires that foreseeable hazards are identified and the risks arising from these hazards are eliminated entirely –

or controlled in the following sequence:

substitution – replace the hazardous substance, machine, process or task with a safer alternative.

engineering – modify tools and equipment, erect enclosures around equipment, place guards around moving parts.

administration – develop and implement safe work procedures and introduce training for hazardous tasks.

personal protective equipment – safety glasses, footwear and hearing protection may be useful, but as a control measure they are a last resort.

Develop safe work procedures

Develop safe work procedures as follows:

- Involve your workers – they are more likely to follow a safe work procedure if they have been involved in its development, and they will often know the best and safest way to perform a task. Involve those workers who are experienced in performing the tasks.
- Identify the elements of each task and the associated risks – a production line may involve the lifting of objects onto a bench, shaping them with an electrical grinder, cleaning them with solvents and stacking them on a pallet. Identify the hazards and risks that each of these activities pose to those performing the task. Are there any risks of manual handling injuries from lifting and stacking? Does the grinder have moving parts that could cause injury? Are there dangerous fumes from the solvents? Ask your workers about the risks, check the operator's manual before using the grinder and read the solvent's material safety data sheet.
- Control the risks – once the hazards and their associated risks have been identified and assessed, decide how to control them. Consider the most effective way of minimising the risk of harm. Is a mechanical lifting device a better alternative to manual handling and lifting? Is personal protective equipment, such as goggles and gloves, available? Is a less hazardous solvent available? Can the moving parts of the grinder be enclosed to protect workers? Read the material safety data sheet and the operator's manual for advice on appropriate control measures. List all the control measures and determine the best option.
- Document your safe work procedures – the easier your safe work procedures are to understand, the more likely your workers will follow them. List all the control measures you have identified, as a series of steps set out in the sequence they need to be used.
- Distribute the safe work procedures for review – have your experienced workers review the safe work procedures and make amendments as appropriate.

Implement safe work procedures through training

Proper implementation of safe work procedures involves training and supervision. Your workers must be trained to do their work tasks safely and must demonstrate an ability to follow the safe work procedures. Simply reading the documented procedure is not enough and you must ensure that the safe work procedures are followed at all times. Discipline your workers when safe work procedures are not followed.

Review your procedures

Review your safe work procedures when there is a change to your workplace, or after an injury or near miss associated with the task. As a general rule, do a periodic review of all your safe work procedures to ensure they are current and effective. Involve your workers in this review.

WHERE YOU TICKED IN THE ORANGE ZONE...

... you're on the right track, but you need to do more to address the risks in your workplace.

Ticks in the ORANGE zone indicate that you have started to address the risks associated with work tasks, but you may need to look more closely at the work tasks, identify any hazards you may have overlooked, and ensure that your safe work procedures are appropriate and help your workers do their jobs safely. You may need to take the following action.

If you have not already begun documenting your safe work procedures, refer to the RED zone section for advice on how to do it.

Review work tasks

Have you done a thorough inspection of the workplace and a complete review of all work tasks? Perhaps you have overlooked risks associated with:

- transporting chemicals
- lifting and moving products
- working at heights
- slips, trips and falls
- housekeeping
- electrical equipment.

Talk to your workers. Involve them in identifying the hazards associated with their work. Develop and implement safe work procedures for those tasks that pose the greatest risk.

Plan your approach

Sometimes, business pressures or uncertainty about what to do next may stall the development and implementation of safe work procedures.

Ask yourself:

- Have work tasks been prioritised for the development of safe work procedures?
- Are workers involved in developing safe work procedures?
- Have workers been trained in the safe work procedures for the tasks they perform?

Plan the process carefully so that you are able to develop safe work procedures gradually, within the constraints of your other business demands. A good plan will help you overcome limitations in time and resources.

Involve your workers

Consult your workers in all stages of developing safe work procedures for the jobs they do – it will ensure that the procedures are comprehensive, accurate and useful.

Involve your workers in identifying the hazards and assessing the risks associated with their work, in developing suitable measures to control the risks, and in documenting and reviewing the procedures.

Ensure procedures are up-to-date

If you find that your workers are not always following safe work procedures, review the procedures to ensure they provide appropriate safeguards and reflect current work processes, equipment, and substances used in the task. Ensure that the procedures consider the different circumstances under which the task may be performed.

If the procedures appear up-to-date and appropriate, is the problem related to training or supervision? Have your workers been trained and assessed against the procedures before commencing the task? Are they adequately supervised in accordance with the procedures? Do you and your supervisors always follow the procedures?

For further information on training and supervision, see Advice Sheet 4 – Training and supervision.

WHERE YOU TICKED IN THE GREEN ZONE...

...your workers are using safe work procedures to help them do their jobs safely.

Ticks in the GREEN zone indicate that you are effectively managing safety risks in your workplace through your safe work procedures. Be aware, however, that changes in your workplace and work processes can render your existing risk controls and procedures obsolete. Review them periodically to ensure they continue to reflect existing conditions. Revise them, as appropriate.

Determine if any technological changes have evolved since your last review that could make the task safer. Review the effectiveness of your training and supervision.

Periodically, verify that your vulnerable workers, including young people, people with disabilities and those with language difficulties, are able to understand the safe work procedures and use them effectively – and are properly represented during consultations about safe work procedures and related matters.

EXAMPLE: SAFE WORK PROCEDURE – WORKSHOP GRINDER

Safety risks from electricity, moving parts, metal fragments, noise, heat

Before operating

- Check that the lead is tagged and in good condition.
- Check wheel for cracks or damage. Replace cracked or damaged wheel immediately.
- Use only wheels having maximum operating speed at least as high as 'No Load RPM', as marked on the machine's nameplate.
- Use only flanges specified for the machine.
- Position the machine so that the power cord always stays behind the machine during operation.
- Ensure personal protective equipment is available – ie safety goggles and ear protectors.

When operating

- Always wear safety goggles and ear protectors during operation.
- Ensure the wheel is not contacting the work piece before the switch is turned on.
- Before using the machine on an actual work piece, let it run for a while. Watch for vibration or wobbling that could indicate poor installation or a poorly balanced wheel.
- Use the specified surface of the wheel to perform the grinding.
- Do not touch the work piece immediately after operation – it may be hot and could burn your skin.

After use

- Check leads.
- Check wheel and replace if necessary.
- Place machine in tool cupboard.

Developed by:

Manager's name

Worker's name

Manager's signature

Worker's signature

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