

## 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—e.g. dangerous machinery and chemicals used in a manufacturing or construction environment. For other tasks, the risks may not be as obvious—e.g. loading, unloading, packing, unpacking and handling goods in a retail environment may expose workers to back injuries or sprain/strain injuries.

Safe work procedures ensure your workers are aware of the issues 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 appropriate controls into a sequence of steps for doing the task safely. These documents are most effective when developed in consultation with your workers, and they provide a useful tool for training and supervising your workers. They should be reviewed if you have an incident at your workplace and/or changes occur 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 and prioritise tasks that require safe work procedures

Consider all the tasks that are done at your workplace. Safe work procedures should be developed for the tasks that could potentially harm your workers if the risks are not addressed. Many tasks are unlikely to expose your workers to risks, so documented safe work procedures for those tasks may not be necessary. Consult with workers about which tasks present a risk to them and determine how best to do the job safely.

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

## Develop safe work procedures

Develop safe work procedures by:

- Involving your workers, especially those that are experienced in performing the particular task—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.
- Identifying the elements of each task in order from start to completion of the job—e.g., 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.
- Identifying the risk that each of these elements pose to those performing the task. Are there any risks of sprain/strain injuries from lifting and stacking? Does the grinder allow access to the moving parts that could cause injury? Are there dangerous fumes from the solvents?
- Seeking as much information about the risks as you can. For example ask your workers about the risks, check machinery and equipment manuals, source best practice guidelines and read material safety data sheets (for chemicals).
- Controlling the risks—once you know what the problems are and how much of a problem they are, then you need to decide how to fix them; and then taking some action to implement the control solution. Consider the most effective way of minimising the risk of harm, using the following sequence:
  - *elimination* – can the hazard or risk be eliminated entirely? For example, outsourcing work to other suppliers etc.
  - *substitution* – replace the hazardous substance, machine, process or task with a safer, or less hazardous alternative.
  - *engineering* – modify tools and equipment, erect enclosures around equipment, place guards around moving parts, use mechanical aids (e.g. forklift, trolleys, jigs, conveyors etc).
  - *administration* – develop and implement safe work procedures and introduce training for hazardous tasks.
  - *personal protective equipment*—e.g. gloves, safety glasses, footwear and hearing protection may be useful, but as a control measure they are an **absolute last resort**.
- Documenting 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 order they need to be used.
- Distributing the safe work procedures for review—have your experienced workers review the safe work procedures and make amendments as appropriate.
- Once the procedure is finalised, you must communicate it to all staff—you need to tell them about what's in it, don't just get them to read it.

## 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; 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 work process 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 remain current and effective and involve your workers in this review.

<p><b>WHERE YOU TICKED IN THE ORANGE ZONE...</b></p>	<p><b>... you're on the right track, but you need to do more to address the risks in your workplace.</b></p> <p>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 issues 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.</p>
<p><b>Review work tasks</b></p>	<p>Have you done a thorough inspection of the workplace and a complete review of all work tasks?</p> <p>Perhaps you may have overlooked risks associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transporting chemicals</li> <li>• lifting and moving products</li> <li>• tasks performed at heights</li> <li>• areas where slips, trips and falls may occur</li> <li>• housekeeping</li> <li>• electrical equipment etc.</li> </ul> <p>Consult with your workers and get them involved in identifying the hazards associated with their work. Develop and implement safe work procedures for those tasks that pose the greatest risk.</p>
<p><b>Plan your approach to developing safe work procedures</b></p>	<p>Sometimes, business pressures or uncertainty about what to do next may stall the development and implementation of safe work procedures. Ask yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have work tasks been prioritised for developing safe work procedures?</li> <li>• Are workers involved in developing safe work procedures?</li> <li>• Have workers been trained in the safe work procedures for the tasks they perform?</li> </ul> <p>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 potentially help you overcome limitations such as shortage of time and resources. You can delegate the preliminary development of procedures to others whilst still over-viewing the process.</p>
<p><b>Involve your workers</b></p>	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying the issues and assessing the risks associated with their work</li> <li>• developing suitable options to control the risks,</li> <li>• documenting and reviewing the procedures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Keep procedures up-to-date</b></p>	<p>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 procedure is not being followed, either workers (including supervisors) need to change what they are doing, or the procedure needs to be changed to reflect what is actually occurring.</p> <p>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 and their competence level? Do you and your supervisors always follow the procedures?</p> <p>For further information on training and supervision, see Advice Sheet 4—Training and Supervision.</p>

## 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 make your existing controls and procedures ineffective. Review them regularly to ensure they continue to reflect existing conditions. Revise them, as appropriate.

Regularly review safe work procedures

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. Ensure these workers are properly represented during consultations about safe work procedures and related matters.

# EXAMPLE

## SAFE WORK PROCEDURE—USING AN ANGLE GRINDER

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

### Before operating

- Check that the electrical lead has a current tag and is in good condition.
- Ensure that the guard over the grinding disc is correctly positioned to protect the operator from any flying pieces from a broken disc and sparks.
- Ensure that you are using the right sized disc for the size of the grinder (i.e., do not use a 5 inch disc on a 4 inch grinder).
- Ensure that you use the right disc for the material being cut (e.g. a steel disc for grinding steel, masonry disc for bricks etc.).
- Use only grinding discs for grinding (these are generally thicker) and the thinner cutting discs for cutting.
- Check grinding disc for broken areas or damage. Replace damaged disc immediately.
- 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 and used—i.e. safety goggles, apron and ear protection.

### When operating

- Always wear eye and ear protectors, and an apron to protect against sparks during operation.
- Ensure the disc is not contacting the work piece before the switch is turned on.
- Before using the machine on an actual work piece, let it run until it reaches full operational speed. It should run smoothly (i.e., with no vibration or wobbling). If it does not run smoothly, turn it off and check the attachment of the disc and the disc itself
- Don't use cutting discs for surface grinding.
- Always use two hands to hold the grinder—one on the side handle and the other on the body of the grinder.
- Where possible have the job positioned so that the sparks travel away from the operator.
- Do not touch the work piece immediately after operation—it may be hot and could burn your skin.

### After use

- Check leads for damage.
- Check disc and replace if necessary.
- Replace machine in tool cupboard.
- Clean up the work area if residue or waste exists.

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#### Developed by:

Manager's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Worker's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Manager's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Worker's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Review date: 01 July 2013

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