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Topic 1

Work safely

All working environments involve some degree of risk. They are subject to regulations that outline how to identify, assess and control specific workplace hazards. You may not currently be working directly with machinery or hazardous chemicals; however, any job role may involve work associated with hazardous activities or environments. Work health and safety (WHS) is concerned with the health and safety of all people in the workplace. The main objective of WHS is to prevent injury or harm in the workplace.

In Australia every year, there are approximately 250 work-related deaths and over 300,000 cases of work-related injuries or disease. These result in disastrous consequences for the person involved, their families and colleagues, and in a loss of production for industry and payouts in compensation. You can make an important contribution to the health and safety of your workplace.

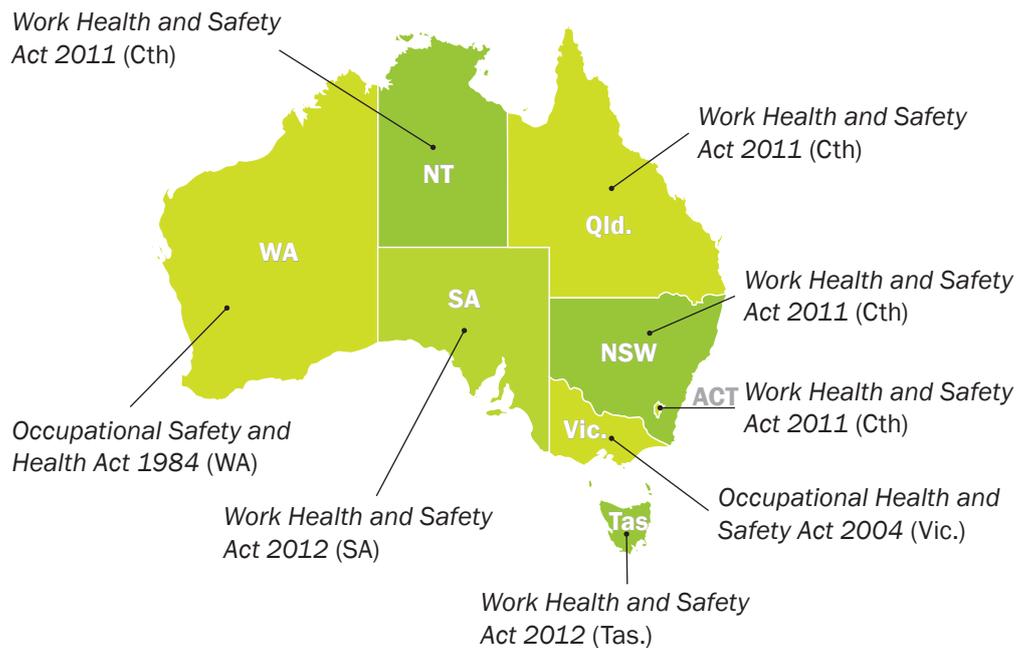
In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Follow safety procedures
- 1B Check systems and equipment
- 1C Follow procedures for responding to emergency incidents

WHS legislation

Commonwealth WHS legislation was updated in January 2012 with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) coming into effect. This replaces the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* (Cth). At this time, all states and territories have implemented harmonised WHS laws based on this new Act except Western Australia and Victoria, which continue to enforce state-based safety laws at present.

The WHS legislation in each state and territory is shown below.



Legal requirements for safe workplaces

All WHS legislation requires employers to provide a safe workplace, adequate training and supervision and to control workplace hazards and risks. You must work in line with legislative requirements, regulations, Australian and industry standards, and be aware of relevant codes of practice that provide guidance about best practice.

Health and safety legislation describes the legal requirements for ensuring workplaces are safe and healthy, such as:

- managing risks to health and safety
- promoting and maintaining the health, safety and welfare of people at work
- protecting people at work from injury and illness, including psychological injury
- protecting the health and safety of the public in workplaces
- consulting workers and encouraging participation in maintaining WHS
- providing rehabilitation and maximum recovery for injured workers.

Personal protective equipment

You may be required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to perform some aspects of your work. PPE is a control measure that is designed to protect the wearer from risks of injury or illness.

PPE is more effective when used in conjunction with other control measures to manage exposure to risk, but there are some instances in the workplace where it may be the only control in place. Your organisation's WHS policies and procedures and your supervisor will give you advice about the use of PPE.

It is essential, and part of your duty of care, that you use PPE correctly to protect your own health and safety. Your workplace is responsible for supplying any PPE you require. You should let your supervisor know if the PPE that you use needs repair or replacement when it is damaged or has passed its expiry date.

Common PPE items

The PPE used in your workplace will have been selected to suit the specific work performed. PPE should be used in conjunction with other controls when the equipment or process has a risk that cannot be eliminated or reduced.

Here are examples of common PPE items.

Common PPE items

- Overalls help protect from grime and hazardous substances.
- Safety boots protect the feet and may be steel-capped. They are compulsory on some work sites.
- Safety gloves help protect hands against cuts, heat or cold.
- Safety helmets help protect the head against injury by falling objects.
- Masks help protect from dust and other airborne particles, especially when using tools.
- Respirators help protect against breathing in toxic gases. This includes work carried out in confined spaces.
- Earmuffs are for use in noisy environments. They can help protect against industrial deafness

Example: duty of care in the workplace

Bronwyn is employed as an administration officer in a reception area. Her role is to engage with clients and refer their needs to staff members who can provide the information requested as and when it is required. When she first starts work, her supervisor Ron, explains during induction training that Bronwyn has a duty of care to:

- her colleagues, including other administration staff and those not employed in the administration section of the business
- clients
- non-client visitors to the reception (such as service staff and professional guests).

Practice task 1

1. The following is a list of WHS terms and words. Definitions of these are contained throughout this topic. As you find the definitions, write them in your own words in the spaces provided. You may want to compile this as an electronic file on your computer so you can easily search and update the stored information, and add other words. The first one has been done for you.

Work health and safety glossary	
Biohazard	A biohazard is any organism, or material of biological origin, that causes harm to humans, plants, animals or the environment.
Consultation	
Duty of care	
Hazard	
Hazard control	
Hazard or risk register	
Housekeeping	
HSR	

continued ...

1B

Check systems and equipment

Your job may require you to use a range of technology and equipment. When working with this equipment, it is important that you carry out pre-start systems and equipment checks according to workplace procedures. Each piece of technology and equipment poses a risk to health and safety if it is not in correct working order or is not used correctly.

When you use the same equipment every day, it is easy to become complacent and not use the right precautions to make sure the equipment has been regularly maintained and is operating properly. This section provides you with the opportunity to learn about equipment and systems safety checks, documenting equipment and systems safety checks and equipment start-up and operation procedures.

If using a new piece of equipment, always follow the operating procedures or manufacturer's instructions.

Equipment and systems safety checks

An important part of your daily work routine is to check the various systems and equipment you will use during the day to make sure they are in correct working order. Your workplace policies and procedures should include the steps to follow. You may need to perform this procedure at the beginning of your working day or at specified intervals during the day.

When we work with technology and equipment every day, it's easy to forget about safety. But technology and equipment poses a risk to health and safety if it is not in good working order, or if it is not used properly.

Position yourself in front of your computer. Make sure you can reach your keyboard comfortably.

Position the monitor out of direct sunlight. Adjust it to the correct height.

Dust your work area whenever necessary. Dust can cause problems with monitors and computers.

Secure all cables. These can be a serious trip hazard for you and others.

Reduce glare and heat at your workstation by using available window coverings.

Keep temperatures at no higher than 26°C. Maintain humidity levels at around 40 to 60 per cent when practicable to do so.



Below are some examples of emergency incidents and the consequences that may result.

Emergency incidents	Incident consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accidents, near misses and sudden illness• Crime, alcohol and other drug intoxication• External threats such as bomb threats• Fire, flood and severe storms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain or suffering to the individuals involved• Anxiety for their families, colleagues and witnesses to the incident• Lost production, work time and financial costs to the organisation

Prevent incidents

Incident prevention ensures that all equipment and fixtures, including furniture, are regularly checked and maintained. Incidents can be caused by the failure of equipment components; for example, faulty equipment can cause unexpected or forceful movements that result in strains and injuries, and electrical faults can cause electric shock or burns.

Your supervisor may be responsible for making sure equipment is regularly maintained by qualified people. You need to let your supervisor know if you become aware of equipment faults or breakdowns or where maintenance has not been performed according to the schedule. Many organisations use a 'breakdown and maintenance' checklist or register to record breakdowns and ensure repairs are carried out promptly.



Fire safety

All workplaces should have a fire plan that ensures all workers and visitors can get out of the building safely. Workers should be warned not to attempt to deal with a fire unless they have been trained to do so.

Here are the steps to follow if you are told to evacuate the building or a fire alarm sounds.

Fire evacuation steps

- 1** Remain calm.
- 2** Follow the fire warden's instructions.
- 3** Stop what you are doing. Leave the building immediately via the closest escape route. Do not use the lift.
- 4** Close windows and doors as you go if safe to do so and time allows.
- 5** Before opening any door, feel the door and door handle. If the door is hot, take another route.
- 6** If you encounter smoke during your evacuation, drop to the floor and crawl.
- 7** Assemble and remain at the evacuation assembly point. Do not return to the building until you are told by the fire brigade, fire warden or your supervisor that it is safe.
- 8** Advise your supervisor or emergency personnel of any injuries you or others have sustained, as soon as possible.

Learning checkpoint 1 Work safely

This learning checkpoint is designed to confirm your skills and knowledge in working safely.

Part A

Read the scenario, then answer the questions that follow.

Scenario

You are employed as an administration assistant. Your supervisor, Shannon Brown, has sent you an email asking you to help prepare for a seminar that is being organised for customers.

email message		sent: 2 April 2015
To:	Administration assistant	
From:	Shannon Brown	
Subject:	Seminar preparations	
<p>As you know, we have organised a seminar for 10 of our most important customers. The seminar will be in the boardroom next Wednesday from 9 am. The seminar will be managed by the sales and marketing department.</p> <p>I need your assistance to prepare the boardroom on the morning of the seminar. Please organise the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The boardroom needs to be tidied during the lunchbreak. You need to organise cleaning products and equipment to perform this task. • Customers will be given a tour of the production area. They will pass through the warehouse on their way to production. Both areas are noisy and have mobile plant. • The sales manager has asked that a notebook computer and projector be available on the boardroom table. A projector screen is also required. • There is not an adequate number of power points in the room. Powerboards are required. • Three notebook computers are being set up on a side table so visitors can log on and check their email during the breaks. Please start these up in the morning. • Desmond Lee, one of the visitors, requires wheelchair access. Please check that there is adequate access in the public areas and the boardroom for him. 		

2A

Report WHS queries and concerns

Participating in WHS in your workplace involves asking questions and reporting queries and concerns about safety. There are people who can help you work safely in your organisation. These include your supervisor and specialised WHS personnel.



Your supervisor

The instructions or training you receive, so you can do your job and any new tasks or additional duties, should include information about how to work safely. This is particularly important when you are working with plant and machinery, technical equipment or hazardous materials.

If you are unsure about any aspect of this information, ask questions. Your supervisor has a duty of care toward you and will appreciate you taking an active interest in participating in workplace health and safety.

It may not be practical for you to refer to your supervisor every time you have a question or concern about WHS. Depending on the issue, a range of other sources of information may be available to you, including:

- health and safety representatives (HSRs) or health and safety officers
- more-experienced colleagues
- the organisation's policy or procedures manuals
- training manuals.

... continued

WHS issue	Action to be taken by Natiq
2. The ergonomic chair cannot be adjusted as the mechanism appears to be broken.	
3. Natiq frequently works through his lunch break to make sure the department's telephone is answered.	
4. Natiq has to carry large quantities of paper to the photocopier each morning because there is no equipment available to transport it.	
5. The light is not working in the storeroom.	

Methods of identifying hazards

Workplace procedures include instructions for identifying hazards. Several of these procedures will be formal and may include forming teams to perform inspections, analysing incident reports and writing reports.

The most valuable information you can provide about hazards in your work environment is usually based on observation, consultation with other team members and colleagues, safety checklists completed as part of your daily work routine, customer feedback and implementing your daily work practices.

Formal procedures are combined to form a hazard identification plan. The hazard identification plan for your organisation may include the processes detailed below.

Processes in hazard identification plan

- Analysing injury and illness records, including workers compensation information
- Analysing work processes
- Collecting information on trends and developments in WHS
- Consulting with HSRs and HSC members
- Contacting supervisors in similar workplaces to learn from their expertise and experiences
- Gathering feedback from workers, known as consultation
- Investigating workplace incidents and near-miss reports
- Performing inspections or safety audits
- Reviewing the potential impact of new work practices or equipment introduced into the workplace

Workplace inspections

Workplace inspections are conducted on a regular basis with the assistance of the HSR or health and safety officer. The purpose is to identify and control the hazards before they cause harm. This is a way of being proactive about hazards, rather than reacting after the hazard has caused harm.

Evidence needs to be gathered to show that workers are following relevant health and safety legislation, regulations and the organisation's policies and procedures. Site and workplace inspections also provide an opportunity for workers to raise any WHS concerns.

If you are involved in formal WHS processes, you may carry out inspections in some or all of these ways:

- Inspect the existing and known hazards.
- Inspect the work processes; that is, how the tasks are performed. These can be routine inspections at specific times of the month or year.



Hazard control

The role you play in your workplace in eliminating or controlling hazards depends on your organisation's policies and procedures. Your involvement may include:

- reporting hazards you have identified
- assisting your supervisor to investigate appropriate risk control methods
- implementing procedures to eliminate or control hazards
- monitoring the implementation of new or enhanced procedures
- maintaining records related to hazard control.

Once a hazard has been identified, action must be taken to either eliminate or control the hazard before it results in injury or illness. Hazard control is the process of determining and implementing the best way to control hazards. The best way to control a hazard is to eliminate it. Elimination is the first choice in a system called the hierarchy of control.





This is poisonous

A yellow triangle means a health risk.



This area or item is dangerous

Danger signs have DANGER written on them, in white letters on a red oval shape.



Be careful when walking here

A rectangle indicates information. A rectangle with an exclamation mark always has a written warning on it.



This contains flammable liquids

A red diamond with flame symbol indicates danger due to flammable materials.



Eye protection must be worn

A circle indicates that an order is in force. White image on blue background means it is mandatory.

Example: an incident report

Workplace incident report

Report no: _____

Surname: _____

First name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____ Mobile number: _____

Date of injury: _____ Time: _____

Details of injury: _____

Describe the circumstances of the incident: _____

Description of incident by witness: _____

Signature of witness: _____

(please also print name) _____

Date: _____

When was the injury reported?

Date: _____

Time: _____

Who was the injury reported to?

Name: _____

Position: _____

continued ...



Practice task 7

Investigate the procedures followed in your workplace (or a community or sporting organisation) to document near misses, serious incidents and emergencies.

Ask an appropriate person why they feel it is important to document all activities, actions and outcomes immediately after an incident.

Record your findings.

Summary

1. Poor work practices, unsafe behaviours and not following relevant policies and procedures may jeopardise the health and safety of those in the workplace and the organisation's reputation.
2. If you are uncertain about any WHS issues in your work environment, or if you observe any hazards, talk with your supervisor, health and safety representative and/or health and safety officer.
3. You may have the opportunity to participate in a site or workplace inspection. These are usually conducted on a regular basis with the assistance of the health and safety representative or health and safety officer.
4. Once a hazard has been identified, action must be taken to either eliminate or control it before it results in injury or illness. This process is called hazard identification and risk control.
5. All workers must report any hazards, emergency incidents and injuries that occur in the workplace. This usually involves completing an incident report form and submitting it to your supervisor as soon as possible.
6. The WHS duty holders in your organisation need to consult, cooperate and coordinate activities to be able to control risks effectively.

HSC membership

According to WHS laws, at least half of the members must be workers who are not nominated by the PCBU.

Role of the HSC

- HSCs play an important role in organisations by:
- facilitating cooperation on health and safety
 - discussing identified WHS problems
 - consulting with workers and making recommendations aimed at improving WHS
 - assisting in developing health and safety standards, rules and procedures
 - monitoring and reporting on WHS performance, including compliance with legislation and workplace policies and procedures.

Practice task 9

Describe how you would contribute to consultation activities in your workplace when dealing with a range of WHS issues, listed in the following table.

Refer to the information in this learner guide and your workplace policies and procedures to work out the best consultation method.

Your answers should describe when you would raise the issue (for example, at the next team meeting), identify the party with whom you would raise the issue (for example, a supervisor) and identify the method you would use to raise the issue.

Issue	When I would raise this issue	Who I would raise this issue with	How I would raise this issue
There is frayed wiring on the toaster in the staff lunch room.			

continued ...

3B Raise WHS issues

At times, you will need to raise WHS issues without waiting to be consulted. Employers and all workers have a duty of care towards other people in their workplace. Organisations develop policies, procedures and systems to make sure they comply with relevant WHS legislation, regulations and codes of practice.

Supervisors, department managers and specialist WHS personnel work together to manage WHS matters. Your first step in reporting a WHS issue is to decide who the best person to give advice is. Your induction training and workplace procedures will most likely include advice on the best communication channel for reporting WHS issues. In many cases, your supervisor will be your first contact point on WHS issues.



WHS reporting processes

Below is further information about the WHS reporting process.

How to report WHS issues

Your workplace procedures contain information on the method you should use to report the matter to your supervisor and/or other WHS staff. Usually, you would advise your supervisor and potentially other WHS personnel by speaking with them. Remember to do the following:

- Explain the issue clearly.
- Refer to any evidence that you might have.
- If possible, make a suggestion about how to solve any problems raised.

Then, follow up with a formal notification. This notification could be an email or a form that has been developed to suit the needs of your organisation. Your organisation may have an electronic or printed list of hazards and the action that should be taken to address them. This list is called a hazard or risk register. Check with your supervisor or WHS personnel as to whether you are required to enter information about hazards in the hazard or risk register.

Housekeeping

Your organisation may have a housekeeping policy about general cleaning and presentation of the workplace, including the reception and waiting areas. It may reflect the nature of the work performed in the organisation. For example, an organisation involved in production may keep the area tidy by safely storing ladders and machinery. The housekeeping policy for a retail organisation may describe how to store merchandise and keep aisles clear of equipment and merchandise.

You must be familiar with this policy and understand your housekeeping responsibilities. Your work team may have developed a cleaning schedule that requires you to regularly do 'spot maintenance' or cleaning throughout the day. Make sure you use the recommended cleaning agents and PPE. Remember, taking these precautions is part of your duty of care.



Example: housekeeping policy

This organisation's WHS policy commits the organisation to ensuring its workplaces are healthy and safe for staff, customers and visitors. A well-kept workplace minimises the probability of accidental injury to people and damage to property.

Below are details of the housekeeping policy.

Guidelines for housekeeping

The organisation aims to meet the following objectives:

- All dangerous goods, including combustible materials and flammable liquids, are stored in accordance with statutory requirements.
- All work areas are kept clean and orderly.
- Containers, boxes, equipment and materials are stored in a manner that prevents objects from falling.
- Floors are kept clear of objects and substances that could cause slips, trips or falls.
- No smoking rules are enforced throughout the workplace.
- Stairways, emergency exits and corridors are kept clear to ensure free passage of persons, if required in an emergency.

continued ...

Noise

Noise in the workplace can be a problem if it distracts or annoys people, interferes with communication or causes stress.

Too much noise can result in a lack of concentration, errors and a loss of communication between workers. Exposure to noise can permanently damage hearing.

In an office, unacceptable levels of noise may come from:

- machines, such as photocopiers, fax machines and printers
- other equipment, such as telephones and paging systems
- background building noise, such as lifts, doors, air conditioning and traffic.

If you feel that the noise in your work area poses a hazard to health and safety, notify your supervisor or WHS specialist according to your workplace policies and procedures.



Slips, trips and falls

Uneven and slippery floors, items left in walkways or electrical cords on the floor are all possible causes of slips, trips and falls in workplaces. Injuries from tripping and falling may cause damage to arms, legs, back, neck and head, and even permanent disability.

