

Contents

Before you begin	vii
Topic 1 Contribute to workplace procedures for identifying hazards and controlling risks	1
1A Identify and record existing and potential hazards	2
1B Contribute to the development of strategies for implementing risk controls	13
1C Implement risk controls and identify and report issues, including residual risk	20
Summary	23
Learning checkpoint 1: Contribute to workplace procedures for identifying hazards and controlling risks	24
Topic 2 Implement policies and procedures into work team processes	29
2A Regularly provide information about WHS policies and procedures to the work team	30
2B Provide information about identified hazards and the outcomes of risk assessment and risk controls	38
2C Monitor housekeeping practices to ensure that WHS policies and procedures are followed	46
2D Maintain WHS incident records in the work area according to requirements	52
Summary	54
Learning checkpoint 2: Implement policies and procedures into work team processes	55
Topic 3 Support consultation, cooperation and communication	59
3A Encourage work team participation in consultative activities	60
3B Report health and safety issues in line with workplace procedures and legislative requirements	64
3C Encourage and assist work team members to contribute to WHS	69
Summary	76
Learning checkpoint 3: Support consultation, cooperation and communication	77

1A Identify and record existing and potential hazards

As manager, you need to support people to work safely. There may be risks to the workers' personal safety. Risks in aged care, disability and home and community care include manual handling, infection control, working at night or managing behaviours of concern. You have a legal and ethical obligation to support workers in a way that reduces risk. Your workplace will have policies and procedures to follow. You also need to work within standards and legislation, as well as following codes of practice.



Identifying and recording hazards and supporting workers to identify and record possible and existing risks is an essential part of your role when maintaining a safe workplace.

Understand WHS responsibilities

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) outlines the responsibilities of the employer and the rights and responsibilities of the employee in keeping workplaces safe.

Here is a summary of employees, employers and others' responsibilities.

Employee responsibilities

These responsibilities are for all employees. The main things you must remember after training are to:

- ▶ work safely – you must follow all training, processes and procedures
- ▶ not put anyone else in danger and do everything you can to ensure a person's safety, in line with your duty of care requirements
- ▶ report any hazards or incidents including near misses
- ▶ follow the instructions you are given
- ▶ use equipment, including protective equipment, properly – in the way you have been trained and following the manufacturer's instructions
- ▶ cooperate with your supervisor and employer
- ▶ understand your rights and responsibilities are equally important.

It is just as important for you to follow the training you are given as it is for you to receive that training from your employer. It is also important for you to share information about any hazards or potential hazards. You must follow your workplace policies and procedures and report any hazards or incidents to the right person. This will usually be the HSR and your supervisor.

Workers have a duty of care (a legal responsibility) to keep themselves, people they support and others safe, therefore, they need a basic understanding of the risks associated with various hazards. As conditions in a workplace may change, information about WHS policies and procedures should be provided regularly to work teams.

Health and safety representative

Health and safety representatives (HSRs) are a key link between employees and employers. They tell employers about employees' safety and health concerns. They also help employers to make sure workplace safety processes and procedures work. To be an HSR the person must:

- ▶ be employed at the workplace
- ▶ be elected by members of that work group
- ▶ once elected, undertake training in work health and safety, approved by the regulator (or have previously undertaken the training)

Health and safety representatives:

- ▶ inspect workplace areas
- ▶ immediately investigate accidents or risk of serious injury or harm
- ▶ must keep up with information provided by the employer on hazards in the workplace, and liaise with government and other bodies
- ▶ report hazards in the workplace
- ▶ refer safety and health matters they think appropriate to the safety and health committee (if the workplace has one)
- ▶ liaise with employees about safety and health
- ▶ must be informed by the employer about dangerous situations or accidents, or when an inspector visits the workplace
- ▶ must be notified of any changes in the workplace that may affect employees' safety and health
- ▶ can attend any safety and health discussion between an employer and an employee if the employee asks them to be there
- ▶ can expect space and time to help them carry out their duties; for example, they will need storage space to keep records and information, and time off work on normal pay to attend to the safety and health functions
- ▶ can expect to be trained according to the regulations – they can get paid leave to attend accredited introductory training on WHS.

WHS committees

Some workplaces might have a health and safety committee (HSC). A committee is a group of people who meet to talk, share information and make decisions about a certain topic. A health and safety committee will be responsible for thinking about WHS issues and how they can be solved. The committee might include:

- ▶ support workers
- ▶ maintenance staff
- ▶ other health professionals
- ▶ supervisors or managers.

It is a good idea for a committee to have people from all different parts of the organisation. This way, all the different parts of the business can share ideas. For example, if you did not include maintenance staff, you might miss out on important ideas about how to keep equipment operating safely. Everyone on the WHS committee is responsible for thinking of ways to make the workplace as safe as possible. They will then share their ideas with the managers or your employer.

State/territory WHS authorities

Each state and territory still has its own statutory body responsible for regulating and enforcing WHS laws, as shown here.

State/territory regulatory authority	
Australian Capital Territory	WorkSafe ACT
New South Wales	WorkCover NSW
Northern Territory	NT WorkSafe
Queensland	WorkCover Queensland
South Australia	SafeWork SA
Tasmania	WorkSafe Tasmania
Victoria	WorkSafe Victoria
Western Australia	Western Australia WorkSafe

Regulatory requirements

Legislation is the law, and regulations provide the rules for how to apply the law. Each state and territory in Australia has regulations to support WHS legislation. Regulations establish specific requirements, duties and procedures for particular areas of work.

Some regulations are very specific and apply to an individual industry. These are then used to create individual workplace policies and procedures.

Regulations, policies and procedures may relate to:

- ▶ personal protective clothing and equipment
- ▶ standard precautions
- ▶ handling hazardous/dangerous materials and goods
- ▶ emergency procedures and general safety precautions
- ▶ standard housekeeping.

Risk control methods and reporting

If a risk assessment results in an unfavourable risk level, steps can be taken to ensure activities continue, which include the application of one or several risk control measures.

The remainder of a risk assessment generally consists of explanatory notes relating to the hazard and the findings of the assessment, and the recommended action. Like any actions related to WHS, it is important that all staff are made aware of the hazard, the level of risk and all actions taken in response to the risk.



Report risk

If a hazard or emergency situation is reported early, sometimes the impact can be reduced. For example, if you smell smoke and report it immediately, your quick action might mean a fire is found and put out while it is still small, and not much damage has been done.

Reports may be made face-to-face, over the phone, using memos, or through a report form.

The following describes some of the ways hazards may need to be reported.

Writing a report

- ▶ Write about the hazard in the communication book or on a hazard identification form. Your written report will need to be factual and easy to understand.

Speaking to the appropriate person

- ▶ Speak to your HSR, nominee or committee chairperson or your supervisor or manager to ask their advice about what you should do.

Putting alert tags on faulty equipment

- ▶ Attach alert tags to let everyone know there is a problem with the equipment and it is not to be used.

Notifying all staff

- ▶ Tell the staff replacing your shift about any identified hazards.

Telephoning your supervisor

- ▶ Support workers may need to report the hazard or risk as soon as possible if it is serious; for example, if the front steps of an older person's house have collapsed.

Examples of control measures

To identify what measures should be applied, use the hierarchy of control. The hierarchy stipulates that the first and best level of control is to eliminate the hazard; the next is to substitute and so on until the final (and least effective) control option, which is to use PPE.

The following provides examples of control measures within each of the three levels of control.

Examples of hierarchy of control



Eliminate risk

This aims to eliminate the risk at its source and should always be the first choice. The source of the risk is the hazard, so this usually means removing hazardous materials or abandoning hazardous work practices. Here are some examples:

- ▶ Clean up a spill straightaway to avoid anyone slipping and hurting themselves.
- ▶ Stop using toxic substances that are not essential to the work.
- ▶ Repair or replace equipment.



Substitute

If elimination is not practicable, the next best control is to substitute the hazard with something of a lesser risk. This is also likely to be a less expensive measure to implement. Here are some examples:

- ▶ Use less-hazardous chemical materials.
- ▶ Reduce the size of objects that need to be lifted.
- ▶ Break a task down into smaller chunks so there is not as much risk; for example, share a task with another person to share the load.



Isolate

This involves physically separating the source of harm from people by distance or using barriers. For instance, install guard rails around exposed edges and holes in floors; use remote control systems to operate machinery; store chemicals in a fume cabinet.



Engineering controls

The next best solution is to implement engineering controls that involve changing equipment or tools. Here are some examples:

- ▶ Provide a trolley to move heavy loads.
- ▶ Install ventilation to remove chemical fumes.
- ▶ Change the layout of work levels to minimise bending and twisting during manual handling.

2A Regularly provide information about WHS policies and procedures to the work team

Organisations have requirements under the Commonwealth, state and territory acts that they must adhere to. These include having a WHS policy, maintaining registers of identified hazards and incidents in the workplace, and putting in place procedures for emergencies, evacuations, incident and accident reporting and investigation and auditing.

You must be able to identify all relevant policies and procedures applicable to your work group and extract relevant elements. The information in these policies and procedures is important to everyone associated with the organisation, whether employed as full-time, part-time, casual or contract staff, a volunteer or a person who visits the organisation.

Information may include:

- ▶ hazard, incident and injury reporting
- ▶ hazard identification, risk assessment and control
- ▶ human resources policies and procedures such as harassment and grievance procedures, induction programs, team meetings and alcohol and drug policies
- ▶ consultation and participation
- ▶ incident investigation
- ▶ quality system documentation.

Remain current

Be aware that legislation, standards, codes of practice and guidelines are regularly updated, so it is vital that there are protocols in place that ensure the information relied on and provided to others is current. This may include regularly checking the websites of WHS authorities or the organisation responsible for WHS in your state or territory.

Safe Work Australia is the peak national authority on WHS policy development. Find out more information about Safe Work Australia at www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au. You can also join or subscribe to a WHS group or association such as Occupational Health and Safety Representatives at Work via their website at www.ohsrep.org.au.



Emergency evacuation

- ▶ This procedure would include the general evacuation plan for a number of possible events (fire, earthquake, terrorist attack, gas leak, electrical fault or bomb threat). Typically it would also include responsible persons (chief and/or area wardens), exits and exit procedures, assembly areas and roll-call procedures.

Electrical safety

- ▶ This procedure would include safe use of electrical equipment, including safety devices for exposed power outlets, electrical equipment maintenance or safety inspection scheduling and safe storage of electrical devices.

Vehicle operation (car or minibus)

- ▶ This procedure would include vehicle safe operating instructions; alcohol and prescription drug use restrictions; use of co-drivers if required; and basic vehicle servicing and maintenance.

Hazardous manual tasks

Manual tasks relate to handling heavy objects or handling people or animals. Manual tasks may result in muscle exertion or strain and can cause back injury or other musculoskeletal disorders, such as hernias. Injury may result from repetitive strain, or overexertion.

Some people you support will not be able to move on their own accord, and may require assistance – such as moving between bed and wheelchair. Ensure you follow the two-person rule and use a lifting hoist. You will need specific training to use the hoist.

When lifting boxes or equipment, ensure you always follow the two-person rule, and follow correct manual handling techniques.



Identify hazards and risks

To be able to reduce the risk to all people in the workplace, hazard identification procedures need to be in place. These procedures are generally included as part of a broader risk management process that is implemented through the workplace health and safety committee (HSC) or health and safety representatives (HSRs).

If there are no defined procedures, or if the procedures are vague, you must motivate the work group and promote a culture of safety to ensure every member of the team is both vigilant and aware of what constitutes a hazard.

Workers should have a good idea of what constitutes a hazard in their individual work space. However, there are other hazards that are often overlooked or simply accepted without a second thought.

Consider the presence of some of the hazards and associated risks in the following.

Messy staffroom

- ▶ Health risks related to bacteria, insects (including cockroaches and ants) and also slipping or tripping on clutter

Faulty neon light tubes or poor office lighting

- ▶ Health risks related to eye soreness/strain, headaches and fatigue

Worn or loose carpet squares

- ▶ Health risks related to a trip hazard, which can cause minor or major injuries

General clutter

- ▶ Health and safety risks related to the possibility of fire; for example, in an evacuation scenario, a cluttered environment may cause delays that could be costly in terms of everyone reaching a safe place

Faulty air conditioner

- ▶ Health and safety risks related to the possibility of effects on health, bacteria from faulty filters (for example, legionella bacteria); or a fire hazard if electrical in nature

Personal hygiene

- ▶ Health risks such as cross-contamination and germs spreading when hands are not washed or appropriate PPE (disposable gloves) are not worn in food preparation, injury treatment or cleaning

Risk assessment

Risk assessment involves the probability or likelihood of the risk occurring and the severity of the harm incurred. A risk assessment helps guide you in your decision-making process in terms of the tasks undertaken. Therefore, a risk assessment is a tool used to determine the risk profile (viability) of a certain task or function. Here is a description of the risk assessment matrix.

Purpose

A risk assessment matrix assists in determining the level of risk an activity or area of the organisation may pose. You use a risk assessment matrix to evaluate a potential hazard by assessing the likelihood and impact of a risk. The matrix allows people to:

- ▶ consider what can potentially go wrong
- ▶ determine what the negative impact would be – the consequences determine the likelihood
- ▶ determine the risk level.

Using the matrix

Determine the likelihood of the particular hazard occurring – select unlikely, likely or very likely from the choices on the y axis. Then, determine the possible impact of the hazard, as per the x axis – is the possible impact minor, moderate or major? A minor impact refers to no or minor injury caused to staff and no time lost as a result of the hazard; moderate refers to injury or illness occurring and time lost; and major refers to major injury or incident with a significant amount of time lost and even permanent incapacity or death.

Risk levels

Once the likelihood and impact have been determined, locate where they intersect on the matrix to establish the level of risk. The result will be:

- ▶ Acceptable risk – low
- ▶ Acceptable risk – medium
- ▶ Unacceptable risk – high or extreme

Any risk found to be high or extreme must be acted on immediately. Risks deemed medium should be acted on as soon as possible, and those deemed low may require little action.

Risk assessment matrix

Consider the probability and impact of a risk you may face in your work and use the following matrix to estimate whether it is an acceptable or unacceptable risk.

LIKELIHOOD	VERY LIKELY	Acceptable risk Medium	Unacceptable risk High	Unacceptable risk Extreme
	LIKELY	Acceptable risk Low	Acceptable risk Medium	Unacceptable risk High
	UNLIKELY	Acceptable risk Low	Acceptable risk Low	Acceptable risk Medium
		MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR
	IMPACT			

Risk assessment nomogram

A risk assessment nomogram is a tool that can be used to assess risk. It provides a visual guide to the risk associated with an activity.

Develop a nomogram

The following provides instructions for developing a nomogram.



1. Encourage participation

- ▶ While it is the responsibility of you or another senior member of staff to conduct risk assessments and take the necessary follow-up action, participation by the work group should be encouraged. By engaging the team, you can effectively cover more ground in the assessment, and also use the team members' experience and knowledge to help undertake a full and complete assessment.

2. Probability and exposure

- ▶ To assess risk using a nomogram, you need to work from left to right, to determine the likelihood of the risk occurring (in this case represented by the 'Probability' line); the frequency of undertaking the task (represented by the 'Exposure (Frequency)' line); and the impact (represented by the 'Possible consequence' line).

3. Likelihood

- ▶ So, in relation to the hazard, determine the 'Probability' (likelihood of the event occurring) based on the exposure to the risk. These range from 'Practically impossible' (for example, a worker is killed in the car park by having an aeroplane fall on them) to 'Almost certain' (for example, a worker will almost certainly be injured if they are expected to carry a 30 kg box of equipment upstairs with no assistance). Mark this point on the line.

4. Frequency

- ▶ The frequency of which the event is likely to occur is then selected using the options on the next vertical line (from 'All the time' to 'Once a year') – again, based on exposure to the hazard. Mark this point on the line. You then need to draw a line from the 'Probability' point, through the determined frequency ('Exposure') and continue the line to finish at the 'Tie line', in the centre of the nomogram.

5. Consequences of hazard and action

- ▶ Determine the possible consequences of the hazard and mark this point on the vertical line second from the right; in this case, the possible consequence is determined to be 'Important'. Draw a line from where the first line ended at the Tie line, through the point on the 'Possible consequence' line and end the line at the 'Risk' line on the left. Where this second line ends, this establishes the risk. What action do you think would be appropriate in this case?

Limitations of risk assessments

It is important to understand that risk assessments are not perfect. Limitations aside, one thing is certain: some risk assessment is always better than none, both legally and ethically.

Here are the limitations.

Subjectiveness of assessor

- ▶ The principle weakness of a risk assessment is that it is purely subjective – it is the assessor's perception of what the risk is. Often the same assessor, given different prevailing circumstances, may make a different judgment as to the risk of a particular hazard.

Quality and quantity of information

- ▶ An accurate risk assessment also relies on the assessor having all possible information on a particular hazard, and assessing all possible factors affecting the outcome, which is often impractical or unachievable – even impossible.

Provide information about risk assessment

Use effective communication when providing information to your work group about risk assessment procedures. You should provide a specific training session dedicated to explain risk assessment processes, including identifying hazards, analysing risk using a nomogram and a risk assessment matrix, and how to implement controls and report risks. As well as verbal communication, support training by providing written procedures, and examples of already-completed documentation, and nomograms.

Relevant documents, such as hazard identification and emergency procedures, should be readily available. Each staff member may have documentation accessible in their intranet file or as printed copies.

Ensure your work group are familiar with risk assessment processes, and offer opportunities for individual training and supervision, to ensure correct WHS procedures are followed.

Provide information about risk control

Your work group need to know how to respond if a hazard is identified. In Topic 1, you learned about possible risk controls according to the hierarchy of risk control. Risk control measures refer to the devices and methods employed to eliminate the hazard or, where this is not practicable, minimise the risk associated with the hazard. When determining the appropriate form of risk control to be used, the primary form of reference should be the hierarchy of control. The six risk controls in the hierarchy relate to the action that should be taken to control a risk, in the preferred order; that is, if the first one does not work, or is not applicable, move on to the next risk control.



Methods used for monitoring

Workplace procedures are designed to ensure safe working practices are followed and exposure to risk is minimised. Following procedures is not about complying with management directives, but about maintaining safe working practices that ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone in the organisation. Those in leadership positions need to understand the existing processes and procedures, and have a good working knowledge of their application. This allows a supervisor or work group leader to confirm that all members of the team are compliant with the procedures and, by monitoring the work standard of those within their team, recognise any deviations. All this must be done while maintaining a high standard themselves, to lead by example.

Here are explanations of different methods you could use to monitor safe practices in the workplace.

Observation

- ▶ Observe and encourage others to regularly observe the conditions of the workplace. Check for clear walkways, and fire exits. Ensure PPE is stored correctly. Monitor floors for trip hazards.

Hazard reports

- ▶ Hazard reports must be completed if hazards are identified. They should specify where and what the hazard is, and its possible effect.

Maintenance reports and requests

- ▶ Machinery and equipment needs to be regularly monitored for useability. Maintenance reports should be regularly reviewed to ensure equipment is serviced when necessary.

Daily hazard identification checklist

- ▶ The checklist can be completed daily. Check off each area when safety has been reviewed. For example, check that the first-aid kit is safely stored at the end of each day.

Incident reports

- ▶ Incident reports are used if an incident occurs. They should detail the nature of the incident and the actions taken.

WHS audit

- ▶ The supervisor, in consultation with the HSR, will carry out safety audits to check that records about safety are kept properly. They might check that forms are kept in the right place and that policies and procedures about safety are kept where everyone can find them.

Example

Monitor housekeeping practices to ensure that WHS policies and procedures are followed

Here is an example of a safe housekeeping guidelines form that can be used to monitor WHS work practices.

Housekeeping Form		
Area inspected:		
Date of inspection:		
Inspected by:		
Area	Action	Corrective action
Office Areas and Amenities	<p>Offices are free of clutter and piles of paper.</p> <p>Shelf storage is orderly and floor coverings intact.</p> <p>There are no exposed computer leads, double adaptors in use or frayed electrical cords, or frayed cords to electrical appliances.</p> <p>Employee lunch areas are clean.</p> <p>Tables and food preparation benches are free of rubbish.</p> <p>Microwaves and fridges are wiped clean regularly.</p>	
Stairs/ Passageways	<p>Passageways are free of obstructions.</p> <p>All stairs are free of rubbish, oil and grease.</p> <p>Slip resistant treads and toe-boards are intact and handrails in place are intact and secure.</p>	
Fire and Emergency	<p>Fire doors are closed and not propped open.</p> <p>Fire extinguishers are not free-standing and are secured in holders to the wall and have signs stating use for type of fire to be fought.</p>	
Tools and Equipment	<p>Tools and equipment are correctly stored in their proper place when not in use.</p> <p>Area is keep clean of rubbing.</p>	
Outdoor Areas	<p>The surrounding grounds and parking areas are free of rubbish and unnecessary materials.</p>	

'Safe housekeeping guidelines' excerpt reproduced courtesy of University of Western Sydney Occupational Health & Safety Information Services.



Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Encourage work team participation in consultative activities**
- 3B Report health and safety issues in line with workplace procedures and legislative requirements**
- 3C Encourage and assist work team members to contribute to WHS**

Support consultation, cooperation and communication

Consultation is a critical element for success in any WHS process. It is a legal requirement for a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) and workers to engage in open communication about WHS matters. Consultation is also about talking with the work group and encouraging them to raise their concerns and identify any WHS queries or questions they may have. Consultation usually occurs through either one-to-one or group meetings.

All forms of consultation have both benefits and drawbacks. For one-to-one consultation, the benefit lies in the confidentiality aspect and that the individual may feel they can speak more freely about issues they may have; however, this comes at the expense of having group knowledge available that may be able to resolve any issues immediately. The ideal forum or consultation option in the workplace is therefore a personal preference and may involve a combination of the two options.

Seek contribution

Team meetings are a particularly useful way to consult with team members about safety issues. You may find that time is provided for discussion of workplace health and safety at each team meeting. You should provide opportunities for staff to raise WHS issues, by clearly explaining the issues, referring to any evidence staff may have, and if possible, making a suggestion about how to solve any problems raised. You may use this WHS information to investigate further. Any issues that cannot be resolved or that may impact on other areas of the organisation will be referred to relevant staff (such as the HSC or the HSR).

During meetings, you may:

- ▶ report on recent workplace incidents
- ▶ report on production time lost to workplace injuries
- ▶ report on new practices to improve workplace health and safety
- ▶ ask team members to raise WHS issues
- ▶ ask team members to describe any hazards that have been identified
- ▶ provide a copy of the minutes of recent HSC meetings
- ▶ report on recent workplace incidents
- ▶ report on production time lost to workplace injuries
- ▶ report on new practices to improve workplace health and safety.

Encourage staff to maintain and update knowledge about WHS practices

People can only contribute to a healthy and safe work environment if they have the skills and knowledge to do so. All employees should have the WHS policies and procedures of their workplace carefully explained to them and receive adequate training for their job. Individually, staff should take steps to maintain and update their knowledge of WHS issues in the workplace to ensure they keep themselves and others safe. The requirements for maintaining and updating knowledge of WHS issues are described here.

Employer requirements

Legislation places a significant responsibility on employers to ensure workers are adequately trained for the tasks they are required to undertake. Training in WHS issues ensures that all workers are aware of their responsibilities and is crucial for enabling employees to work safely in a particular workplace. For HSRs, WHS legislation requires that they attend relevant training programs to enable them to effectively carry out their responsibilities.

Currency of knowledge of WHS issues and practices may also extend to ensuring that workers and supervisors are aware of any changes to systems, procedures or equipment that may affect the way a task is carried out. Ongoing training should be provided as circumstances change.

3B Report health and safety issues in line with workplace procedures and legislative requirements

The record-keeping requirements specified in state, territory and Commonwealth legislation are designed to facilitate investigation, should an incident occur. Documentation of hazards, risks, training and incidents provides a history from which an organisation can learn and incorporate continuous improvements. Having thorough and accurately documented WHS records also stands the organisation in good stead, should any incident occur and lead to legal action taken against a person or the organisation.



WHS records

Various records are required in relation to WHS under Commonwealth, state and territory Acts, regulations, standards and codes of practice depending upon the industry or sector. There may also be further requirements, which must be met by organisations, from industry associations or groups as part of terms of membership.

It is important to note that there may be specific lodgment time limits for some forms and notifications. That is, the report, such as a WHS incident report, must be lodged with the appropriate government agency within a certain time period. An example is reporting a fatality, where in the Commonwealth jurisdiction, Comcare (the Australian Government WHS agency) must be notified within 24 hours. Failing to do so may result in prosecution in some circumstances.

WHS legislative reporting requirements relate to:

- ▶ serious incident and injury reporting
- ▶ registered plant (equipment)
- ▶ hazardous substances and dangerous goods
- ▶ environmental monitoring
- ▶ health surveillance.

Education and workplace culture

Maintaining a safe and healthy workplace involves trusting those you work with to adhere to the required practices. There is a chain of responsibility under WHS legislation for PCBUs and managers to ensure the safe working practices are adhered to by their workers.

The following explains the importance of education and culture.

Education

If all members of an organisation are properly trained in the performance of their duties and informed about WHS policies and procedures, they should be able to complete their tasks safely. Education can simply be an information session or work group meeting where a WHS matter is discussed. How these sessions are structured is dependent on the workplace context and reliant upon having an accepting workplace culture.

Culture

Workplace culture, or more specifically, a positive workplace safety culture, encourages participation from all members of an organisation by including them in all facets of the WHS process. By giving workers a sense of responsibility for the WHS processes, achieved by including everyone in all facets of WHS applicable to their area of interest (work area), a positive safety culture is fostered.

Documented performance

Regular reviews of the overall staff performance (monthly, bimonthly or quarterly) in regard to WHS can provide an indication of success, or any areas where adherence to WHS practices has been neglected in the preceding period. These should then be discussed at team meetings to ensure all workers know what is and is not being achieved in terms of safety practices.

Identify staff training needs

All members of an organisation need to be familiar with the laws, regulations, standards and codes of practice that apply to them, and they must comply with WHS policies, procedures and practices. Communicating this information regarding individual compliance does not have to take the form of a formal course of instruction; it can be held as one or a series of information sessions. Consider the following.

Training days

- ▶ Organisations often institute annual training days at the start of each calendar or financial year. Existing and new workers are trained, the year ahead is previewed and organisation policies, procedures and practices are explained.

Opportunities

- ▶ Annual training days present opportunities to reinforce and remind workers about their WHS responsibilities; to train them in new or better safe work practices; or to identify any training needs that can be addressed immediately or in the future.

Identify training solutions

When a training need is identified, you need to determine whether appropriate training exists to meet the need. This may not be easy, as the range of training and training providers is as varied in quality as it is in quantity. Some examples of a perceived training need and a potential training solution are provided here.

Sharps

Training need: Working with needles to assist a person with type 1 diabetes

Training solution: Safe handling of medical sharps

Optional training: First-aid training

Chemicals

Training need: Working where toxic chemicals are stored for use in cleaning

Training solution: Dangerous goods handling

Optional training: Poisons and first-aid training

Record and communicate outcomes of consultation

It is important to maintain a record of what has occurred as part of the participative processes. Apart from the legislative requirement to maintain records, we live in a society where litigation is rife, so it makes sense for anyone providing any advice to maintain a written record of all outcomes – particularly for WHS, where injury, illness or death may result from actions or inaction.

Commonwealth, state and territory legislation and regulations require not only that records are maintained of incidents or accidents (WHS incident registers), but also that a record of WHS reports or issues raised by members of the organisation are kept, generally in the form of a WHS hazard or risk register. The following information must be recorded relation to the outcomes of WHS consultation.

WHS consultation record keeping requirements

- ▶ The name of the person making the inquiry or raising the issue
- ▶ The name of the person who received the inquiry or was informed of the issue
- ▶ A description of any advice offered
- ▶ The name and position of any party to whom the issue was referred
- ▶ The date, time and place of the report
- ▶ Any additional pertinent information; for example, actions taken, particularly if they were contrary to the advice provided

3. Explain how training can assist group members to participate in WHS processes.

Click to complete Practice task 10

Summary

1. Consultation with a work group on WHS issues can take the form of one-to-one or group meetings.
2. A supervisor should be available and knowledgeable enough to offer advice on most routine WHS issues faced by their work group.
3. If you are unsure how to deal with a WHS issue, or the issue is beyond your professional knowledge, you should refer to an appropriate person for guidance.
4. WHS issues should be dealt with promptly to ensure everyone's safety, and according to your organisation's policy and procedures.
5. WHS issues can be referred to internal or external personnel.
6. Maintain a list of appropriate contacts to refer to or call upon.
7. Records of the outcome of the WHS consultation process should be kept and promptly communicated to the work group, to ensure everyone is aware of how a situation has been resolved or referred.