

A risk assessment is the basis for any good health and safety program



Even when not working through a global pandemic, IHSA member firms are known to undertake potentially high-risk activities in their work. That is why the assessment of hazards is so important in understanding, reducing, or eliminating any associated risks at all times.

Despite the current challenges of COVID-19, companies still need to manage all of their other safety risks in the workplace to ensure injuries and fatalities are prevented for all potential hazards.

Basic elements of health and safety

It's time to refocus efforts on the basic elements of health and safety, beginning with an overall risk assessment of the work being completed.

A risk assessment should become part of your overall occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS) and your continuous improvement process. This will ensure updates are made as circumstances change or new hazards are identified.

Hazard: A hazard is an event or condition that can expose a person to risk of injury or occupational disease. It's any potential source of harm, damage, or adverse health effects.

Risk: The likelihood that a person may be harmed or suffer adverse health effects if exposed to a hazard.

Controls: A hazard control system is an organized set of measures or methods applied to eliminate or minimize hazards.

Identifying and controlling hazards in the workplace

Hazards are generally divided into two categories: safety hazards and health hazards.

Tasks that expose workers to a high degree of personal risk require special planning. For these tasks, the Joint Health and Safety Committee, the Health and Safety Representative(s), management, the National Construction Safety Officer (NCSO™), and any affected workers (as applicable) should complete a job or task hazard analysis. The analysis and precautions to control or reduce the hazard must be communicated to workers prior to performing the tasks.

Companies should establish safe work practices and procedures for addressing significant hazards or for dealing with circumstances that may present other significant risks or liabilities for the company. These practices and procedures should reflect your company's approach to controlling hazards.

Effective occupational health and safety management systems

Many different hazards may be encountered or created by the type of work they perform. An effective system does the following:

- Monitors the workplace for hazards or potential hazards.
- Requires all employees to report hazards.
- Implements the appropriate controls.
- Ensures corrective action is taken.

Some regulations require employers to have written procedures and instructions for specific activities and conditions. The number of practices and procedures and the degree of detail will depend on the range of work activities your company performs. It is important that management is involved in the development of safe work practices and that they provide adequate training for workers likely to follow these practices.

RACE

Even at their most basic levels, all risk assessments should:

Step 1: Recognize and identify the hazards

Step 2: Assess the risks

Step 3: Control the risks

Step 4: Evaluate and review the controls

Control the Risks poster

The poster included in this issue of the magazine is a reminder to keep risks top of mind in any work that takes place. Consider adding a regular assessment and review process to all work, from complex pandemic planning to even the most basic and repetitive tasks on site.



Learn more

Learn more about hazard and risk assessment by going to ihsa.ca/hazardassessment.

If you are looking for a risk assessment strategy specific to the COVID-19 hazard, check out Volume 20, Issue 2 of IHSA's *Health and Safety Magazine* here: ihsa.ca/magazine.