Each workplace is unique and different. IHSA recommends that employers and business owners conduct a risk assessment to determine the most appropriate controls and actions for a particular workplace/situation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This guide provides companies with the knowledge and tools to facilitate a risk assessment and to assist with the development of appropriate controls to eliminate or reduce the exposure to the hazards related to COVID-19.
WHAT IS A RISK ASSESSMENT?

A risk assessment is the term used to describe the overall process/method where you:

1. Recognize and identify the risks.
2. Evaluate the risks, determine who might be harmed and how.
3. Decide on and implement control measures.
4. Evaluate your results and make improvements.

Note: Once the risk assessment is completed, all steps should be reviewed and updated as required.

WHY COMPLETE A RISK ASSESSMENT?

The goal of the risk assessment process is to evaluate hazards, followed by implementing methods to minimize the risk. Overall, this should create a safer and healthier workplace. In completing the risk assessment, you should try to answer the following questions:

- What can happen and under what circumstances?
- What are the possible consequences?
- How likely are the possible consequences to occur?
- Is the risk controlled effectively, or is further action required?
COMMONLY USED TERMS:

**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 suffers 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.

It is helpful to use a systematic approach to prioritize possible actions. One common approach is the Hierarchy of Controls (see image below). This framework ranks control measures based on their effectiveness and sustainability, and by how much supervision and individual effort is required to apply the control.
All workplace parties including workers, managers, clients, customers, and contractors have an important role to play in taking steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This is why it is very important to engage the appropriate workplace parties, including managers, supervisors, workers, and health and safety reps or joint health and safety committee members during the risk assessment process. A risk assessment becomes part of your overall health and safety management system and is part of your continuous improvement process. Re-assessment is key to ensure it is updated as circumstances change or new hazards are identified.
The risk assessment should be completed by the safety/risk manager and in conjunction with a team of subject matter experts and the joint health and safety representative or committee. These individuals should have a good working knowledge of the job-specific procedures that are being reviewed.

To complete the risk assessment, use the following process:

**Step 1:** Recognize and identify the risks
**Step 2:** Assess the risks
**Step 3:** Control the risk
**Step 4:** Evaluate and review the controls

*Step 1: Recognize and identify the risks*
*Step 2: Assess the risks*
*Step 3: Control the risk*
*Step 4: Evaluate and review the controls*
STEP 1 RECOGNIZE AND IDENTIFY HAZARDS

Goal is to find and record possible hazards that may be present in your workplace for all of the variety of work tasks.

Watch while tasks are being done.

Talk to or interview staff about their work areas and how tasks are done.

Be part of workplace inspections.

Look at reports and records that your workplace has about work.

Listen to employee concerns about work.
STEP 2 ASSESS THE RISKS

To do this you need to understand how likely it is that someone will get hurt or be made sick by the identified hazard.

Ask the following questions when assessing the hazard:

- How does the hazard compare to legislation, standards, and guidelines?
- In what ways could the worker get hurt or become sick because of the hazard?
- Is it likely the hazard could affect worker health and safety?
- To what degree could a worker be hurt or become sick because of the hazard?

Probability of Occurrence:
- The likelihood that a worker may fall ill.

Severity of Consequences:
- The severity of resulting harm, illness or injuries, and the magnitude of associated losses or negative consequence.

One method to assess the risk is to use a simple risk matrix which relies on probability and severity scores of high, medium, or low to assign relative risk rankings. The colour coding in the matrix provides you with a visual sense of the relative priority attached to that hazard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Probability</th>
<th>Severity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Frequent or repeated event</td>
<td>Serious or disabling personal injury, permanent disability or fatality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater than 50% chance of occurring</td>
<td>Major loss of business continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Event is known to occur</td>
<td>Injury requiring medical aid with or without lost time from work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 10% to 49% chance of occurring</td>
<td>Minor loss of business continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Unlikely event, has not occurred in your company but could happen</td>
<td>No injury or minor injury requiring first aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 0 to 10% chance of occurring</td>
<td>Minor business interruption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table One: Simple Risk Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Low</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
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STEP 3  CONTROL THE RISK

Selecting an appropriate control is not always easy. Choosing a control method may involve:

- Evaluating and selecting temporary and permanent controls.
- Implementing temporary measures until permanent (engineering) controls can be put in place.
- Implementing permanent controls when reasonably practicable.

As per the Hierarchy of Controls

- Elimination is simply removing the hazard from the workplace. Eliminating a hazard is clearly the most effective and sustainable way of dealing with it.
- Substitution involves replacing a hazardous condition or process with one that has no associated hazards, or has hazards that pose lower risks.
- Engineering controls do not directly eliminate the hazard. Instead, they reduce risks by separating or isolating the individual from exposure to the hazard.
- Administrative controls are the policies, operating procedures, rules, and practices that describe the way work is performed at your workplace.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) worn by individuals to reduce the exposure is the least effective type of control.
STEP 4 EVALUATE AND REVIEW THE CONTROLS

It is important to know if your risk assessment was complete and accurate, and to monitor the effectiveness of control methods. Create a plan to monitor that the controls are working. For example, check during inspections, discuss at safety meetings, and develop a pre-shift checklist.

For each control you should be able to answer YES to these questions:

1. Have you discussed the hazards and controls with the workers?
2. Have you provided training for these control measures?
3. Have the controls solved the problem?
4. Is the risk posed by the original hazard contained?
5. Are new hazards appropriately controlled?
6. Are monitoring processes adequate?
7. Have workers been adequately informed about the situation?
8. Have orientation and training programs been modified to deal with the new situation?
9. Has the effectiveness of hazard controls been documented in your committee minutes, inspections, or health and safety management system review?

For each control, you should be able to answer NO to these questions:

1. Have any new hazards been created?
2. Are any other measures required?

Finally, what else can be done?

For more information on hazard assessment, analysis, and control: ihsa.ca/resources/hazard_assessment_analysis_control

You can also download IHSA’s Hazard Identification form here: ihsa.ca/smallbusiness/resources_small-businesses