How to manage work risks

This fact sheet provides brief guidance for a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) on how to manage health and safety risks.

PCBUs must, so far as is reasonably practicable, keep workers and others affected by their work healthy and safe.

How to manage work risks

Risks to health and safety arise from people being exposed to hazards (anything that can cause harm). Risks must be eliminated so far as is reasonably practicable. If a risk can’t be eliminated, it must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

Risk has two components – the likelihood that it will occur and the consequences (degree of harm) if it happens. To manage risk, you can reduce how serious the harm is if it does occur and/or reduce the chances of it occurring, or ideally both.

You are encouraged to use the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT approach described in Figure 1 to manage work risks.

You must involve your workers

You must, so far as is reasonably practicable, engage with your workers and their representatives on the health and safety matters that affect them. This includes assessing work risks and making decisions about how to manage those risks.

Use effective control measures

Choose the control measures that effectively eliminate or minimise the risk.

Check if there are widely used control measures (eg industry standards) for that risk. However, just because something is a common practice doesn’t mean that it’s the most reasonably practicable option. You should focus on the most effective control measures for your circumstances.

Check the WorkSafe website: www.worksafe.govt.nz for good practice advice on dealing with certain work risks.

Review for continuous improvement

On a regular basis review the effectiveness of the control measures in place.

It’s not about creating loads of paperwork

It is good practice to keep written records. For low risk work, records can be simple such as making notes in a notebook. You could note the main points about the risks you identified and what you decided to do. More risky work would require more complex records.

Further help

For more guidance and examples about managing risk, see WorkSafe’s website: www.worksafe.govt.nz or read WorkSafe’s quick guide Identifying, Assessing and Managing Work Risks and the Reasonably Practicable fact sheet.
FIGURE 1: The PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT approach to manage risks