

Health and Safety

Principle:

Workers are protected from exposure to occupational health and safety hazards that are likely to pose a risk of permanent injury, illness or death.

Key message:

Prevention is the key to tackling health and safety hazards.

Definition

“Occupational safety and health is identified as the discipline dealing with the prevention of work-related injuries and diseases as well as the protection and promotion of the health of workers.”

What is health and safety management?

- Health and safety (H&S) management is about following procedure intended to prevent accidents, injury or illness in the workplace.
- Prevention of harm is central to H&S.
- Prevention involves identifying, assessing and controlling H&S risks.

How to identify health and safety hazards?

- Walking around sites and speaking to workers is a good first step towards identifying H&S hazards.
- Other steps for identifying H&S hazards include:
 - (i) Checking manufacturers’ instructions for chemicals, machinery or other equipment.

Facts:



Respiratory disease such as silicosis, can be a cause of illness and death in some sectors.

- A worker dies every 15 seconds from a work-related disease or injury.²
- Work-related injury and illness causes 2.3 million deaths per year.³
- 81% of these deaths are the result of illness and disease.⁴
- The most common forms of work-related death are from cancer, circulatory diseases and infectious and transmissible diseases.

¹ International Labour Organisation. (n.d.). Occupational Safety and Health. <https://libguides.ilo.org/occupational-safety-and-health-en>

² International Labour Organisation. (2013). ILO calls for urgent global action to fight occupational diseases.

https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_211627/lang-en/index.htm

³ International Labour Organisation. (n.d.). World Statistic. https://www.ilo.org/moscow/areas-of-work/occupational-safety-and-health/WCMS_249278/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20ILO%20estimates%20that%20some,of%20work%2Drelated%20illnesses%20annually.

⁴ World Health Organisation. (2021). WHO/ILO: Almost 2 million people die from work-related causes each year.

<https://www.who.int/news/item/17-09-2021-who-ilo-almost-2-million-people-die-from-work-related-causes-each-year>

- (ii) Reviewing accident records regularly to identify patterns in accidents.
 - (iii) Thinking about activities which are not conducted frequently but could be hazardous.
 - (iv) Identifying the causes of bad health, such as the long-term health effects of chemical inhalation or loud noise.
- Looking at examples of H&S risk assessments others have created (i.e., Health and Safety Executive examples [here](#))

How to control health and safety hazards?

- The hazard should be removed where possible (i.e., by covering electrical wiring).
- Try a less risky alternative - if the hazard cannot be removed, it is often possible to implement less risky alternatives.
- Install protective equipment - for example, guards and rails on machinery or fences to stop falls.
- Provide healthcare facilities and first aid boxes. These should always be available in case of an accident. Designated individuals should be trained in first aid, with records kept.
- Restrict access to hazardous areas, processes or products. Unsafe areas should be off limits to unauthorised personnel, and chemicals should be kept in locked chemical stores.
- Reduce the exposure to the risk - reducing the amount of time or contact with a hazardous process.
- Issue personal protective equipment (PPE). If the hazard cannot be removed, it may be necessary to issue PPE free of charge, with training provided on its use.

- 317 million non-fatal accidents occur at work every year.⁵
- Workplace accidents are much lower when workers feel part of the H&S process.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Activities requiring PPE should be identified through risk assessment.
- PPE needs to be appropriate for the task and climate.
- PPE must be used - workers should be trained in proper PPE use and its importance.
- The use of PPE must be enforced by site management.
- PPE should be maintained, not tampered with, and replaced regularly.



- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) should be used to help manage health and safety (H&S).

Risk Assessments

- A process for identifying things that might cause harm to workers and the public.
- It involves prioritising the most likely and harmful risks.
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⁵ International Labour Organisation. (n.d.). Business, Occupational Safety and Health. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/events-training/events-meetings/WCMS_DOC_ENT_HLP_OSH_EN/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=317%20million%20accidents%20occur%20on,Gross%20Domestic%20Product%20each%20year.



What is expected at sites?

- Organisational health and safety policies.
- Risk assessments.
- Health and safety emergency response plans, including fire response and emergency alarms.
- Appropriate fire equipment, including functional fire extinguishers.
- Accident records.
- Training on health and safety, emergency response and personal protective equipment (PPE) usage, together, with records kept.
- Chemical lists controlling hazardous chemical storage and use.
- Clear access to emergency exits and emergency lighting.
- Guards and safety features on equipment and machines.
- Sufficient ventilation.
- Portable water for workers, tested to ensure it is safe for drinking.
- Clean and hygienic toilets, canteen and break areas.
- First aid equipment, access to medical facilities and trained first aid providers.
- Issuing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and records.
- Machine and general site maintenance and records.
- Insurance for workers.

- These risks can then be controlled through health and safety (H&S) management.

Additional information and resources

- [ILO Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(No.155\)](#)
- [Earthworm Foundation's Respect for Workers Principles](#)

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