Guide to inspecting the workplace

This Guide will focus on eight areas which worker's compensation statistics show cause the highest rate of injury or death in Western Australian workplaces each year.

- Chemicals and harmful substances;
- Electricity;
- Forklifts;
- Manual handling – lifting;
- Slips and trips;
- Working at heights;
- New and young workers; and
- Machinery guarding.

It is likely that many of these issues will be relevant to your workplace, so you will find it very helpful to use the checklists that follow. They can be adapted to suit the specific environment in which you work.

Although the checklists do not cover all the requirements under workplace safety and health laws, they will give you a better idea of whether your workplace meets basic standards of safety. They will also assist in laying the foundation for a safety and health management system in your workplace.

Chemical and harmful substances

Lost time at work, illness and sometimes death are all outcomes of failing to store, use or dispose of hazardous substances properly.

Pesticides, acids, solvents, cleaners, paint, asbestos, wood dust and welding fumes are some of the chemicals and harmful substances that can place workers at risk.

Employers must identify all chemicals and harmful substances being used in the workplace using a hazardous substances register.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) must be provided in the workplace for each chemical and harmful substance, listing the ingredients and giving health information and instructions for their safe storage, use and handling. MSDSs are available from manufacturers and suppliers of chemicals and harmful substances.

Further guidance on MSDSs is available on the WorkSafe website.

Examples of a hazardous substances register and a risk assessment form for a hazardous substance are available on the WorkSafe website.

chemicals and harmful substances safety checklist			
check	**yes**	**no**	**n/a**
Correct use of chemicals and harmful substances is part of induction			
All people who may be exposed to chemicals and harmful substances have been given information, instruction and training			
Records of training include: health effects, controls, safe work methods and personal protective equipment/clothing			
There is a complete easy to find and read list/register of all chemicals used			
There is an MSDS for each hazardous substance in the workplace			
MSDS are available for workers' reference and included in the hazardous substances register			
Original containers have the manufacturer's label			
Decanted containers are labelled with name, risk and safety instructions			
A risk assessment has been completed for all chemicals and harmful substances stored and used at the workplace			
The risk assessment is recorded in the list/register			
Assessment reports are available to monitor significant risks			
Actions have been taken to control risks. For example, an investigation has been done to find out whether an alternative safer chemical is available			
The hierarchy of controls has been considered when reducing risk			
There are appropriate first aid and emergency facilities and workers' are aware of them			
Where there is a risk eg. From lead, isocyanates and organophosphorous insecticides, a medical practitioner has been appointed to monitor the health status of workers.			

Electricity

Electrical hazards exist in almost every workplace. It is not only high voltage that causes electrocution – the smallest mistake can be fatal.

People can be electrocuted by coming into contact with overhead wires, carrying out maintenance work on live electrical circuits, working with damaged electrical equipment, extension cords, plugs or sockets. Familiar appliances like toasters and microwave ovens also cause a significant number of electrical burns.

A WorkSafe study found that, with the exception of deaths caused by overhead power-lines, many electrocutions could have been prevented with the use of residual current devices (RCD).

Safety regulations require employers to fit RCDs to minimise the risk of electric shock. All electrical installations must meet Australian Standards.

Further guidance on electrical hazards is available on the WorkSafe website.

electricity safety checklist			
check	**yes**	**no**	**n/a**
Electrical safety is part of induction			
People working with electricity have been given information, instruction and training			
There is a maintenance program in place for electrical installations			
Electrical equipment has been tested			
Residual current devices (RCD) are installed at switchboards or into fixed sockets			
Portable electrical equipment is protected by RCDs			
The RCD device is labelled and has been tested			
Flexible cord connections have either moulded or transparent type plugs			
Plugs, sockets and extension leads are in good condition			
Flexible cords are protected from water, being damaged or cut			
Switchboards are labelled correctly and protected from damage			
Light fittings are suitable for the location and protected from breakage			
Power points are suitable for the location and are positioned safely			
Safety procedures are in place for workers working near overhead power lines			
Machinery has been identified that may expose workers to electrical risk			
Site power been connected when construction site work has reached plate height			
Cords are of suitable length for the intended use			
There are no double adaptors or three-pin plug adaptors in use			
Electrical installations are protected from damage that would increase the risk of electrical shock or fire			
Portable cable stands are used when required			
On construction and demolition sites also check:			
Portable electrical equipment has been tagged			
There is a record of previous testing			
All final sub-circuits, socket outlets, portable generators and equipment are protected by RCDs			
No aerial cables are fixed or attached to scaffolding			

Manual handling – lifting

Lifting is the single most common cause of manual handling related injury in Western Australia. On average, workers with injuries from manual handling take the longest time to recover and return to work.

The weight of an object is only one of many factors to consider in avoiding injuries. Other things to take into account include: how often and how quickly a task is performed; the age and physical strength of the person; and the size and shape of the object.

Workplace injuries most commonly linked to manual handling include sprains and strains, hernias and damage to the back. Injuries can be the result of gradual wear and tear from frequent or prolonged lifting or sudden damage from a single lift of something very heavy or awkward.

Further guidance on manual handling is available on the WorkSafe website.

manual handling-lifting safety checklist			
check	**yes**	**no**	**n/a**
Training in manual handling is part of induction			
Information, instruction and training in safe lifting has been provided to everyone involved in organising and implementing manual handling processes; investigating accidents; or performing tasks where manual handling hazards have been identified			
Workers understand manual handling risk factors and are aware of risk management procedures			
The weight of the object or person to be lifted is assessed before lifting is done to assess the lifter's capability			
Alternative ways of lifting and carrying have been considered, Eg. using a mechanical hoist or trolley			
Workers have been asked for suggestions on safer ways to do the job			
All hazards have been identified and the risks assessed			
Practical control measures have been put in place and maintained to eliminate or reduce the risks as far as possible			
Control measures are reviewed after accidents have occurred			
All manual handling-related incidents have been adequately investigated			

Slips and trips

Slips, trips and falls are a significant problem affecting every workplace, from factory floor to office. People who work near wet floors or concrete surfaces face the greatest risk of suffering an injury from slipping or tripping.

Factors that contribute to the risk of slips and trips include:

- unstable, loose, or uneven floor surfaces;
- obstacles blocking walkways;
- slippery floor surfaces from spilt substances, eg. fluid, mud or oil;
- types of flooring or surface texture, such as wood, concrete or vinyl;
- inadequate lighting; and/or
- inadequate footwear.

Further guidance on slips and trips is available on the WorkSafe website.

slips and trips safety checklist			
check	**yes**	**no**	**n/a**
Training in slips and trips is part of induction			
Information, instruction and training on slip, trip and fall hazards has been provided			
Floor surfaces are slip resistant			
Walkways are free of hazards, such as electrical leads and hoses			
There is a “clean as you go” policy to ensure spills are attended to immediately			
There are special provisions for slip resistance in wet areas such as bath tubs, showers, sinks, hotel/pub bars			
Floor surfaces are maintained and in good condition			
Warning signs are erected near spills			
Pathway accesses to and from work areas are kept free of obstacles			
Guard rails or other safety guards are provided on ramps and stairs			
There is adequate lighting			
Appropriate personal protective clothing, such as slip resistant footwear, is provided			
There are ramps in areas where the height of floor levels change and trolley access is required or where items are carried regularly			
Significant hazards have been identified and assessed			
The assessments have evaluated all the factors that affect the risk			
All practicable control measures been implemented and maintained to eliminate or reduce risk			
All slips, trips and falls-related incidents been adequately investigated and all controls reviewed after incidents occur			

Working at heights

In Western Australia, an average of two workers die each year after falling. Most of these falls occur from relatively low heights ie. less than 5 metres. A further 5 people are killed by falling objects. Many more suffered serious injuries.

Employees falling from ladders, stairs or scaffolding are typical accidents and the most common types of injuries are sprains and strains, fractures and bruising.

Further guidance on working at heights is available on the WorkSafe website.

working at heights safety checklist			
check	**yes**	**no**	**n/a**
Where relevant, working at heights is part of induction			
People working at heights have been given information, instruction and training			
Workers are supervised to ensure that safe work practices are in place			
Work areas are clear of protruding objects, water, vehicles and people			
Hand rails on stairs are secure and steps are well maintained			
All work areas are free from obstructions			
Walkways, corridors and stairs are free from obstructions			
Ladders are in good condition and are secure and fixed firmly in place			
High ladders have fall-back protection			
Mechanical lifts are safe			
Mezzanine floors have safe access and fall protection, such as handrails			
Fall arrest systems, such as harnesses, are in place			
Safer, alternative ways to do the work have been considered			
Potential existing hazards have been identified			
The risks of anyone falling from heights have been assessed			
Practical steps have been taken to prevent falls			

Forklifts

On average there are around 200 injuries and one death involving forklifts each year in Western Australia. A high risk work licence is now required to operate a forklift.

A forklift inspection and maintenance program is required to ensure forklifts comply with manufacturers recommendations.

Further guidance on working with forklifts is available on the WorkSafe website.
This checklist should be used in conjunction with the Commission for Occupational Safety and Health *Guidance Note – Working Safely With Forklifts.*

forklifts safety checklist			
check	**yes**	**no**	**n/a**
Maintenance record is complete			
Records are kept of alterations, regular inspections and maintenance, particularly brakes, steering, hydraulics, tyres.			
Operator is 18 years or older			
Operator is trained in accordance with national standards for high risk work			
Forklift is in good working order, with fittings as required by law			
• Pre-operational checks are conducted of:			
• Roll – over protection			
• Falling object protection			
• Seat			
• Seat belt			
• Lights (if used at night)			
• Steering			
• Controls			
• Horn			
• Gas cylinder			
• Warning signs (decals)			
• Brakes			
• Mast			
• Chains			
• Tynes			
• Hoses			
• Counterweight			
Capacity chart is legible, applies to forklift, is amended for attachments and has detail as per manufacturer's specifications			
Operator's manual is legible, accessible, applies to forklift and has detail as per manufacturer's specifications			
Work is organised for the safety of the operator and others			
Checks are made of:			
• Work surface			
• Ramps			
• Loading docks			
• Signs			
• Hazardous areas			
• Control of traffic			
• Control of pedestrians			
Unless otherwise instructed, keys are not left in unattended forklift to prevent unauthorised use			

Guarding

Recent analysis of Notices issues by Inspectors showed lack of machine guarding to be one of the most common breaches identified in workplaces across a wide range of industries.

The high number of fatalities and serious injuries involving a lack of guarding on machinery is of great concern to WorkSafe.

Records of notifiable iInjuries at WorkSafe also illustrate particular concerns at the number of young workers being injured by unguarded machinery. Many young people are injured within hours of commencing work, suffering amputations or mutilation of hands and fingers that can leave them scarred and impaired for life.

Guarding requirements are not new, and guarding remains the simplest and most effective method of preventing injury. Industry has known how to guard most common types of machinery for decades, and although new technology now provides more options, the old methods and standards are still effective, practicable, and if implemented properly, still acceptable.

Regulations require that every dangerous part of fixed, mobile or hand held plant must as far as practicable, be fenced or guarded. The inclusion of the term "as far as practicable" is not intended to be reason for non-compliance on grounds such as cost but rather to cover situation such as with a circular saw blade, which needs part of its circumference unguarded in order to carry out its function.

Further guidance on guarding is available on the WorkSafe website.

guarding safety checklist			
check	**yes**	**no**	**n/a**
Are operators and maintenance personnel properly trained, familiar with the operation and set up of machinery and able to demonstrate safety features			
Where fixed guards are provided, are they of substantial construction, and secured into position while machinery is in operation			
Where interlocking guards are provided, do they prevent operation of the machinery when open, and are the guards prevented from opening while the machinery is in operation			
Where a presence sensing system is used, does it operate as intended and stop the machinery when the light beams or sensors are interrupted			
Do guards protect against hazards to the rear and sides of machinery			
Are pre-operational checks conducted to ensure safety features are in working order			
Are appropriate isolation procedures provided for maintenance			
Are manufacturer's manuals available and understood by operators			
Are machine controls protected to prevent unintentional operation clearly marked and within easy reach of the operator			
Are warning signs and decals clearly visible			
Where it is not practicable to provide guarding and people are required to operate or pass close to dangerous moving parts, is a safe system of work in place to reduce risk			
Is it practical to provide a higher level of guarding than currently provided			

New and young workers

All workers who are new to the job are at risk of injury, with young people aged 15 to 19 the most likely to be hurt.

When assessing risks to young people, special factors to consider are:

- the size of the person and their level of physical maturity;
- their general behaviour and psychological maturity;
- their work experience and training;
- their ability to make mature judgements about their own safety and the safety of others; and
- their ability to cope with unexpected, stressful situations.

Use the safety induction checklist to ensure your new and young workers are familiar with safety procedures. The access movement and safety of visitors must also be considered.

Further information on vulnerable workers is available on the WorkSafe website.

new and young workers safety induction checklist

Name:
Position:
Date of commencement:
Location:
Name of person providing the induction:

Check		Yes	No	If no, why?
1.	Explain work tasks			
2.	Tour of sections			
3.	Explain			
	• OSH policy			
	• Duty of care employer and employees			
	• Consultation: OSH committee and SH Reps			
	• Safe work procedures and instructions			
	• Issue resolution procedure			
	• Hazard reporting procedure			
	• Injury/incident reporting procedure			
	• Injury management policy and guidelines			
	• Emergency procedures			
	• Manual handling procedures			
	• Hazardous substances procedures			
	• Machinery safety procedures			
	• Working from height procedures			
	• Slips and trips prevention			
	• Electrical safety			
	• Permit to work			
	• The use storage and maintenance of personal protective equipment and clothing			
	• Vehicle safety			
	• Safety procedures for working on the side of the road			
	• Procedures for good housekeeping			
	• Safety signage			
	Procedures for working outside such as skin protection			
	• Smoke free workplace			
	• Alcohol and other drugs at the workplace			
	• Compensation claims process and rehabilitation			
4.	Provide locker, personal protective equipment, tools as required			
5.	Schedule of follow-up training			
6.	Supervision to ensure that workers are following safety instructions			

Name of manager/supervisor:		signed:		date:	
Name of new employee:		signed:		date:	

OSH System Checklist

Do you have		More information
An OSH policy	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• SafetyLine magazine Small Business April 07 • **More detailed information** - WorkSafe Plan
Elected safety and health representatives and/or an OSH committee	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• Bulletins: Electing safety and health representatives 05/2005 ; Safety and health representatives training 12/2005; Establishing safety and health committees 7/2005 Safety and health representatives – frequently asked questions • **More detailed information** – - Guidance Note: *Formal consultative processes at the workplace* - SafetyLine Institute Readings: Safety and health committees; Safety and health representatives
Hazard identification checklists and risk assessment tools	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• *The First Step* Priority areas section of website Safety topics area of the website • **More detailed information** SafetyLine Institute Reading: Inspections, checklists and procedure audits
Hazardous substances register and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all chemicals	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• *The First Step* • **More detailed information** - Guidance note: *Provision of information on hazardous substances at workplaces, MSDS's* - SafetyLine Institute Readings: Material Safety Data Sheets; Hazardous substances management; Identification of hazardous substances in the workplace
Hazard report form	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• *The First Step*
Accident / incident report form	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• *The First Step* • **More detailed information** - Bulletins: Tips for investigating accidents and incidents 2/2007 - SafetyLine Institute Readings: Accident recording and analyisise
Access to the WorkSafe Small Business Assistance program	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	Free independent consultation service for businesses with 20 or less full time employees. For more information contact WorkSafe on 9327 8777 or visit our website at: www.worksafe.wa.gov.au
An induction program	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• *The First Step* • Website information on new and young workers in the workplace • *New to the Job* induction DVD available from WorkSafe • **More detailed information** - SafetyLine Institute Readings: Induction/on the job training
Emergency and first aid procedures	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• Code of Practice: *First aid, workplace amenities and PPE* • Guidance note: *Preparing for emergency evacuations in the workplace* • **More detailed information** - SafetyLine Institute Readings: Emergency workplace evacuations; Workplace first aid
A violence and bullying at work policy and procedures	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• Guidance note: *Dealing with bullying in the workplace: a guide for workers* • **More detailed information** - Code of practice: *Violence, aggression and bullying*
A resolution of issues procedure/grievance procedure	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	The Occupational Safety and Health Act – Section 24. Available: www.slp.wa.gov.au Guidance Note: *Formal consultative processes at the workplace*
Ongoing training in OSH and a way to record training undertaken across the organisation	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	In addition to inductions and initial training, training should occur when there is a new task is introduced to a worker and to refresh a worker's skills and knowledge. WorkSafe Community Education Officers may be available to give free presentations at your workplace on safety issues for groups of more than 10 people. Community Education Officers are not able to conduct in-depth training courses. For more information email shreps@docep.wa.gov.au or phone WorkSafe on 9327 8777.
Processes to manage contractors and labour hire arrangements	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• Bulletins: Labour hire industry and duty of care 6/2005 Host employers / clients 6/2006 Agents providing workers to clients 7/2006 • **More detailed information** – Guidance Note: *General duty of care in Western Australian workplaces*
An ongoing plan to monitor and improve OSH in your workplace	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	• *The Next Step* • **More detailed information** – *The WorkSafe Plan*
Access for workers to OSH information	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐	www.worksafe.wa.gov.au http://www.publicsectorsafety.wa.gov.au/ Contact the WorkSafe Library on 9327 8777

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