**Assess risk associated with hazards**

After an accident or dangerous incident, an investigation is vital and every detail counts. It provides valuable information that can assist in determining what happened and the actions required to prevent a similar incident in the future.

One of the duties of SHRs is to participate in investigations. However, investigations should be carried out by a team so everyone can contribute their skills and expertise.

A common practice in an accident/incident investigation is to look for the cause, however this can be restrictive as it focuses attention on only one, or at best a very few, of the risk factors. Others, that may be more easily controlled, pass unnoticed.

SHRs and their employers need to investigate accidents or incidents. There are publications that provides information on how to conduct an investigation and what to look for during the investigation. Here are some points:

 events leading up to the accident;

 facts of the incident itself;

 acts regarding what occurred immediately after the incident; and

 essential factors and causes.

Table 3.1 (extracted from Risk assessment website

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1 Could people be injured or made sick by things such as:·**  [Noise](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe/Content/Safety_Topics/Noise/Further_information/An_introduction_to_noise_at_wo.html) [Radiation](file:///C:\Users\Karl\Desktop\Boeingconsult\tafe\Safety\BlackBoard\Element%203\Radiation.html) Toxicity [Infection](http://www.ohsrep.org.au/hazards/infectious-diseases/index.cfm) High or low temperatures Electricity Moving or falling things (or people) Flammable or explosive materials Things under tension or pressure (compressed gas or liquid; springs) Any other energy sources or stresses Laser | **3 Can workplace practices cause injury or sickness?**·  Are there heavy or awkward lifting jobs?  Can people work in a comfortable posture? If the work is repetitive, can people take breaks? Are people properly trained? Do people follow correct work practices? Are there adequate facilities for the work being performed? Are universal safety precautions for biohazards followed? Is there poor housekeeping? Look out for clutter Torn or slippery flooring Sharp objects sticking out Obstacles |
| **2 What could go wrong?·** What if equipment is misused? What might people do that they shouldn't How could someone be killed? How could people be injured? What may make people ill? Are there any special emergency procedures required? | **4 How might these injuries happen to people?**·  Broken bones Eye damage Hearing problems Strains or sprains Cuts or abrasions Bruises Burns Poisoning· etc |

**How to assess the risks in your workplace**

Don’t overcomplicate the process. In many organisations, the risks are well known and the necessary control measures are easy to apply. You probably already know whether, for example, you have employees who move heavy loads and so could harm their backs, or where people are most likely to slip or trip. If so, check that you have taken reasonable precautions to avoid injury.

If you run a small organisation and you are confident you understand what’s involved, you can do the assessment yourself. You don’t have to be a health and safety expert.

If you work in a larger organisation, you could ask a health and safety advisor to help you. If you are not confident, get help from someone who is competent. In all cases, you should make sure that you involve your staff or their representatives in the process. They will have useful information about how the work is done that will make your assessment of the risk more thorough and effective. But remember, you are responsible for seeing that the assessment is carried out properly.

When thinking about your risk assessment, remember:

 a hazard is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an

open drawer etc

 the risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards,

together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

**a)  Identify the hazards**

First you need to work out how people could be harmed. When you work in a place every day it is easy to overlook some hazards, so here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter:

 Walk around your workplace and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm.

 Ask your employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things that are

not immediately obvious to you.

 If you are a member of a trade association, contact them. Many produce very helpful

guidance.

 Check manufacturers’ instructions or data sheets for chemicals and equipment as they can be very

helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them in their true perspective.

 Have a look back at your accident and ill-health records – these often help to identify the less

obvious hazards.

 Remember to think about long-term hazards to health (eg high levels of noise or exposure to

harmful substances) as well as safety hazards.

**b)  Decide who might be harmed and how**

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed; it will help you identify the best way of managing the risk. That doesn’t mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people (eg ‘people working in the storeroom’ or ‘passers-by’).

In each case, identify how they might be harmed, ie what type of injury or ill health might occur. For example, ‘shelf stackers may suffer back injury from repeated lifting of boxes’.

**Remember:**

 some workers have particular requirements, eg new and young workers, new or expectant mothers

and people with disabilities may be at particular risk.

Extra thought will be needed for some hazards;

 cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance workers etc, who may not be in the workplace all the

time;

 members of the public, if they could be hurt by your activities;

 if you share your workplace, you will need to think about how your work affects others present, as

well as how their work affects your staff – talk to them; and

 ask your staff if they can think of anyone you may have missed.

Explore the WorkSafe and other websites for hazard identification & risk assessment

[WorkSafe example forms](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe/PDF/Hazard_identification/workshop-forms.pdf) !

Familiarise yourself with the above subject matter. Then attempt the selftest. The selftest will ask you specific questions on this element. The selftest should be done at least three (3) times. The objective of the self test is to check your knowledge of Element 3.

This element and others are also covered in the Indicators of Assessment 2

Please note:

Linked files will open in a new window. If you don't need an opened file anymore close it.