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What Arrangements Do Employers Need to Make for Health and Safety?

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Employers are required by law to make the necessary arrangements for health and safety in the workplace as dictated by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. This legal responsibility includes the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of control measures.

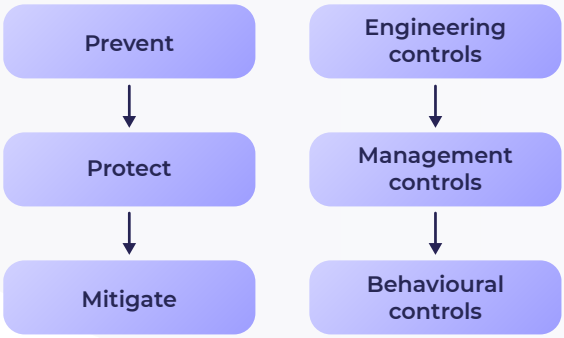
This effort should be proportionate to the nature of activities and the size of the business. Utilising hierarchies of control will help employers prioritise what arrangements need to be made for specific hazards and control measures, in order to keep the workforce safe.

Hierarchies of Control

When considering what arrangements need to be made for risk control measures to put in place for hazards, there are many practical tools to help determine the right course of action.

Employers should focus on the following degrees of control, in order of importance:

- **Prevention:** Having measures in place that eliminate the hazards' impact.
- **Protection:** Having measures in place to protect employees against the hazards should they cause an accident.
- **Mitigation:** These measures accept that the incident will occur, and they seek to reduce the inevitable impact.



For the nature of the intervention, different types of controls are considered preferable to others. They are as follows, in order of priority:

- **Engineering Controls:** These are physical modifications made to equipment or processes to reduce hazards.
- **Procedural Controls:** Establishing work instructions and guidelines to minimise risk.
- **Behaviour Controls:** Influencing worker actions and behaviours to promote safety through training and awareness campaigns.

Approaches to hierarchies of control can vary from person to person. We have always elected to use the ERIC SP approach. This is to address both the purpose and nature of the intervention. Any individual control measure has weaknesses, and a combination of controls will produce better results than any one control on its own.

The ERIC SP Hierarchy

ERIC SP is a six-stage hierarchy which seeks to make the workplace safe for all. How we advise professionals to remember this is by remembering ERIC SP – Eric Saves People.

The hierarchy is broken down as follows:

- Eliminate the hazard.
- Reduce the hazard.
- Isolate people from the hazard.
- Control exposure to the hazard.
- Safe System of Work.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

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Eliminate | Reduce | Isolate | Control | SSW | PPE

Eliminate

The most effective way to manage risk is to remove the hazard altogether. If the hazard no longer exists, the risk is entirely eliminated. However, health and safety should be used as an excuse to not undertake a particular task.

Buying components rather than manufacturing on-site may eliminate the hazard locally. However, that may transfer it elsewhere.

Eliminating a specific hazard by design may be straightforward. For example, the provision of adequate floor power sockets would eliminate trailing cable hazards. It could also involve introducing different hazards, like manual handling, and mechanical or hydraulic power hazards rather than electrical hazards. Exchanging one hazard for another requires careful consideration.

The risks posed by a particular hazard should also be considered in the context of its benefits e.g. an electric lawn mower compared to a manual mower. Electric mowers are far more efficient and timesaving and don't require sharpening as often, so, therefore, the inherent risk is worth it provided they are used safely.

Reduce

Hazards may also be reduced by substitution. For example, swapping a corrosive cleaning chemical for one that is an irritant or a highly flammable solvent for one that is flammable. This can also be by specification. For example, site rules require the use of 110V electrical equipment rather than 230V.

With this type of control strategy, two things require consideration:

- Is the lower-hazard alternative effective at doing the job?
- Does the workforce appreciate that a lower-hazard alternative is safer but not safe?

Isolate

Isolation strategies may be designed to keep the hazard away from people or to keep people away from the hazard. You might deploy an acoustic enclosure around a noisy machine that will contain the noise energy.

Other examples of isolation strategies would include:

- Machinery guarding to prevent people from reaching the dangerous parts.
- Guard rails to prevent people from falling off a scaffold.
- Security fencing to keep children away from construction sites.

Control

Engineering controls can help limit exposure to hazards, such as using local exhaust ventilation (LEV) to capture dust or fumes at the source, preventing high concentrations from reaching the worker's breathing zone.

Organisational or procedural controls can also reduce overall exposure, particularly when there is a dose-response relationship (i.e. higher exposure increases the risk or severity of harm). Examples include managing trigger times for vibrating equipment or implementing job rotation to minimise the frequency and duration of repetitive tasks.

Behaviour controls are utilised to influence worker actions and behaviours to promote safety through training and awareness campaigns. This might be things like additional training etc.

Safe Systems of Work (SSW)

Safe Systems of Work (SSW) provides a clear definition on safe methods of undertaking a particular activity. You might put together method statements, standard operating procedures and Permit-to-Work (PTW) systems where necessary.

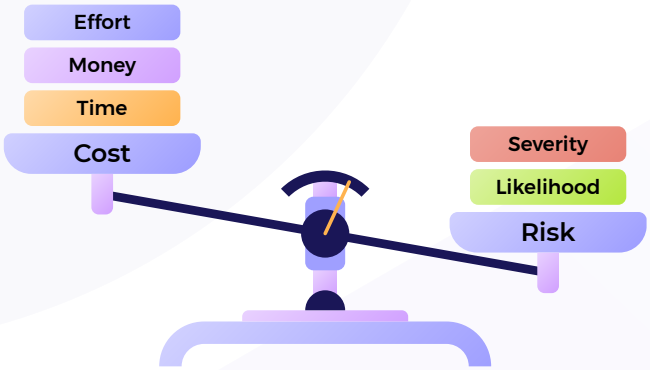
The HSE defines a safe system of work (SSW) as:

"A formal procedure which results from a systematic examination of a task in order to identify all the hazards. It defines safe methods to ensure that hazards are eliminated, or risks minimised."

An SSW is required when hazards cannot be eliminated and a degree of risk remains after technical control measures are introduced. This is adequate for most work activities, but some require extra care. A 'permit to work' is a formal system noting what work is to be done and when, and which parts are safe.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be considered the very last line of defence against an incident. PPE itself does not prevent accidents from happening. It provides a protective barrier to reduce harmful consequences. For example, construction safety helmets reduce the effects of impact should an object fall from a height and land on a person's head, but it does not prevent the accident from happening.



What Required Levels of Control Are Reasonably Practicable?

By law, employers must do all that is **"reasonably practicable"** to protect the health and safety of their employees and others at their workplace.

Determining whether or not a control measure is "reasonably practicable" requires a balancing of the costs of dealing with the risk against the severity and likelihood of an injury. Quite plainly, the greater the risk the greater the efforts expected to control the risk. If there is a significant gap between the two then it may be argued that the control is not reasonably practicable.

Once controls have been put in place there will be a **'residual risk'**. The objective is to ensure that the residual risk is **'tolerable'**. This means that employees are willing to live it because it delivers certain benefits and there is a belief that the risk is being properly controlled.

Remember!

There is no such thing as "zero risk". Whatever a person is doing there is always a risk of injury or death. There is a 1 in 600 chance that a forty-year-old man will not live to be forty-one. Each individual's risk (or odds or chance) will vary from the average because of the many variables such as age, gender, location, etc.

Emergency Arrangements

Accidents can occur even when every effort has been made to prevent them. Emergency arrangements are vitally important for these moments.

When conducting risk assessment employers should identify the potential for emergencies (events which pose a serious or imminent danger).

Risk control measures should include emergency procedures for a range of possible outcomes such as:

- Fire and explosions.
- Workplace accidents and first-aid emergencies.
- Environmental emergencies, including flooding.

Employers are required, by law, to:

- Arrange procedures for employees to follow in the event of serious or imminent danger, to effectively communicate them to employees and to appoint competent persons to put them into effect.
- Make contact with external emergency services regarding first-aid, emergency medical care and rescue work.

As an employer, you will need to identify plausible emergency scenarios through your risk assessment process. If you need guidance on how to complete a risk assessment we have a free template and guide available for you to download.

You must then clearly identify roles and responsibilities for individuals to undertake during an emergency. You can communicate these procedures to staff and third parties and organise the necessary training for these individuals.

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Try Our IOSH Managing Safely Course

For your training program, we recommend making use of the IOSH Managing Safely course. Our online version of the course can be delivered to learners in any language and allows employees to complete the course in and around their work schedule.

Upon completion of the course, employees will be able to:

- Understand the importance of managing health and safety.
- Identify how the law can have an impact on safety and health in the workplace.
- Identify workplace hazards and risks, their impact and how to manage them.
- Identify how to evaluate and respond to an incident.
- List the benefits and characteristics of an effective health and safety management system.
- Describe the principles that underpin good safety and health performance.

IOSH Managing Safely

More Info

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