

# Hazard Assessment toolbox talk

A simple, 5 minute outline of what to cover in a toolbox talk on Hazard Assessment.

Employers have a duty to protect their workers and others from harm in the workplace. To do this, they must identify and control any hazards. Likewise, workers need to know about the hazards on the job and how to protect themselves. The aim of this toolbox is to provide education on how to assess a workplace for any potential hazards.

## Why run this toolbox:

- Learn about different types of hazards
- Learn when to conduct a hazard assessment
- Learn how to conduct a hazard assessment

## What is a hazard?

A hazard is any source of potential injury, illness or damage to someone or something. Importantly, a hazard only becomes dangerous once a person is exposed to that hazard. If left alone, a hazard poses no risk.

Hazards usually fall into one or more of the following categories:

1. Safety hazard, e.g. unguarded machinery
2. Biological hazard, e.g. blood and bodily fluids
3. Physical hazard, e.g. radiation
4. Ergonomic hazard, e.g. poor posture
5. Chemical hazard, e.g. welding fumes
6. Work organisation hazard, e.g. workload
7. Environmental hazard, e.g. noise

## When to identify hazards:

Formal hazard assessments should be completed before work begins. This should be documented and reviewed frequently. Informal hazard assessments are ongoing and consist of continuously scanning for any changes in the surroundings.

It is important to identify hazards:

- During the design phase of the job. This includes when designing new processes or purchasing new equipment/plant.
- Before starting a task in a hazardous environment.
- During work. Make sure you are aware of any changes or abnormal conditions.
- After an incident, including near misses.

## How to identify hazards:

1. Plan your hazard assessment. Identify specific tasks, equipment, and locations of work.
2. Review past learnings. Have there been any incidents or near misses that indicate areas of concern?
3. Work as a group to utilise multiple perspectives. Engage workers from various roles, especially people who perform any task or use any equipment that is being assessed.
4. Observe work being done. Work as planned is often different to work as done. Shortcuts often expose unseen hazards.

Hazards and exposure to hazards change over time. Equipment deteriorates, jobs change, and people can be under all sorts of different stress. Review workplace hazards as frequently as possible, evaluate control measures, and look after one another.

## Key takeaways:

- Hazards come in many shapes and forms and are prone to change over time.
- Review workplace hazards as frequently as possible to ensure there are adequate controls in place.
- Work as a team when assessing hazards because multiple perspectives offers a more balanced and comprehensive view.

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