



Welcome to the safe@work Review Module

This module reviews the main information in the General Module. You may want to complete the review module to revise material covered in the general module. However, you **must** complete this Module if twelve months or more have elapsed since you successfully completed the General Module.

If you do not understand any of this Module information you should return to the General Module and read the more detailed information again.

Health and Safety Responsibilities

Key Point

Health and Safety at work is everyone's responsibility.

The key responsibilities for work place health and safety are set out by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985 (OHS Act)*. This Act is supported by various Regulations, including the *Manual Handling Regulations 1999*, *Noise Regulations 1992*, *Plant Regulations 1995*, *Hazardous Substances Regulations 1999*, *Incident Notification Regulations 1997*, *Issue Resolution Regulations 1999*.

Victoria's other principal piece of OHS legislation is the *Dangerous Goods Act 1985*. This Act is supported by the *Dangerous Goods Storage and Handling Regulations 2000*.

Because an employer has control and management of the work place, they have the primary responsibility for ensuring it is safe.

Employees must also take responsibility for looking after their own health and safety, and must not place others at risk by their actions (or by any failure to act which could result in an incident).

Key Point

Young workers have a much higher risk of being injured at work than older workers.

Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Risk Control

Section 21 of the OHS Act makes it mandatory for employers in all work places to provide and maintain, so far as is practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risks to health. Under each OHS Regulation it is the duty of employers to identify hazards, assess the risks they may present and put effective risk controls in place.

The three ThinkSafe steps (Spot the hazard, Assess the risk and Make the changes) are a simple way of expressing these three principles.

You can use the ThinkSafe steps to help prevent accidents and injuries. If you have any concerns, tell your supervisor or employer about the hazard.

Teachers can use the Hazard, Risk Assessment & Control activities in the Resource Section.

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Manual Handling

Manual handling is not just about lifting heavy objects. It includes any activity requiring the use of force exerted by a person to lower, push, pull, hold or restrain a person, animal or thing.

In the Manual Handling Regulations, all manual handling injuries are referred to as musculoskeletal disorders. They include strains and sprains; neck and back injuries; slips, falls and crush incidents; cuts, bruises and broken bones; hernia; and occupational overuse syndrome (OOS).

You should speak to your supervisor or employer if you feel your job is too heavy, too difficult, too tiring or puts you at risk of injury.

It is the employer's responsibility to assess manual handling tasks and control any risks. This may mean redesigning the task, or providing you with safe work procedures and appropriate instruction, training and supervision.

Teachers can use the Manual Handling activities in the Resource Section.

Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods

A hazardous substance can be any substance, whether solid, liquid or gas, that may cause harm to your health.

Dangerous goods are substances that may be corrosive, flammable, explosive, spontaneously combustible, toxic, oxidising, or water-reactive. They must be identified in the work place (and when being transported) by a coloured "diamond" symbol.

Hazardous substances are classified only on the basis of health effects, whether acute (immediate) or chronic (longer term). Dangerous goods are classified on the basis of immediate physical or chemical effects, such as fire, explosion, corrosion and poisoning. An incident involving dangerous goods has the potential to seriously affect property or the environment.

Not all hazardous substances are dangerous, and *vice-versa*. Many hazardous substances however, are also classified as dangerous goods.

How dangerous a hazardous substance is depends on the type of substance, what it is made of, the way it enters the body, and the amount of substance that enters the body.

Harm to health may occur suddenly (acute), such as dizziness, nausea and itchy eyes or skin. Or it may occur gradually over years (chronic), such as dermatitis or cancer. Some people can be more affected than others.

It is the responsibility of your employer to assess hazardous substances in the work place, and to select for use those which present least risk. In addition, your employer must establish safe work procedures for handling hazardous substances and dangerous goods, and provide you with information, training and supervision. The arrangements for first aid treatment in the event of an incident involving hazardous substances or dangerous goods should be part of your training.



Teachers can use the Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods activities in the Resource Section.

Material Safety Data Sheet

A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) provides detailed information about a hazardous substance or dangerous good. It gives more details than a label. Manufacturers and suppliers of hazardous substances and dangerous goods are legally required to provide MSDSs for use by your employer.

It is important that hazardous substances and dangerous goods in work places are used strictly according to the manufacturer's or supplier's written instructions, any risk controls specified by the MSDS and the procedures developed by the work place.

Noise

As a general rule, if the noise around you forces you to raise your voice to make yourself heard a metre away your hearing may be at risk.

Noise levels are measured in decibels (dB). The scale used to measure noise as it is heard by the human ear is dB(A).

Normal conversation is about 60 dB(A) to 65 dB (A). 85 dB(A) is the level at which you have to raise your voice, whilst at 90 dB(A) you will have to shout to make yourself heard.

Long lasting exposure to noise above the level of 85 dB(A) significantly damages hearing. This is the level at which noise control measures must be taken by employers.

If noise cannot be reduced or removed at its source, and there is no other way to separate people from damaging noise exposure, personal protective hearing equipment (PPE) must be worn. It is the responsibility of your employer to provide the correct personal hearing protection (earmuffs or earplugs).

Hearing protection may be used in combination with other noise reduction measures (such as reducing the time over which an employee is exposed to noise). Employees must make sure that no employee's exposure to noise exceeds the prescribed 'exposure standard'.

Teachers can use the Noise activities in the Resource Section.

Electricity

Electric shock occurs when a person becomes part of an electrical circuit and the current flows through their body. A fatal shock is called electrocution.

Accidents and deaths can also result from equipment becoming "live" due to electrical faults, lack of maintenance, or short circuit.

Electrical accidents are most often caused by a combination of factors, such as a lack of training; lack of supervision; inadequate work practices; poorly maintained equipment or



installation; and a hazardous work place environment.

Only licensed electrical workers can legally perform electrical work. An unqualified person must not be employed to undertake electrical work.

Employees who use portable electric equipment at work must be protected against earth leakage by a Residual Current Device (RCD), also known as a safety switch.

Teachers can use the Electricity activities in the Resource Section.

Mechanical Equipment

Mechanical equipment ('plant', machinery and hand-held power tools) can cause serious injuries, including sprains and strains, open wounds, fractures and amputations. Some injuries can result in death.

The most common mechanical equipment injuries are to hands and fingers, which may be cut, sprained, dislocated, broken, crushed or severed by machinery or tools. A large number of eye injuries are due to mechanical equipment.

Key Point

Your work place must have a maintenance program to ensure that all equipment and machines are in safe working order.

Guards are attached to mechanical equipment and must be used to protect you from the moving parts of machines. Machine guards must never be removed by the operator, and if a guard is damaged or missing, the machine must be taken out of service until it can be repaired or replaced.

Locking out of equipment is one way of preventing machinery or electrical current becoming operational during maintenance. A lock is attached to the machine switch so that it can't be turned on.

Red and black "DANGER" tags are used to warn workers about hazards associated with equipment and machinery maintenance.

Yellow and black "OUT OF SERVICE" tags are used to prevent accidents or damage to machinery that is out of service for repairs.

Any faulty equipment should be tagged so that it cannot be used until it is repaired or replaced.

Teachers can use the Mechanical Equipment activity in the Resource Section.

Personal Safety

Working Alone

Employers should provide adequate information, instruction and training for people who work alone. It is also essential that the person knows the work well and the work procedures that must be followed. Students must be supervised at all times and must not be expected to work alone.



Work Related Stress

Stress is usually described as the reaction in people to excessive demands, pressures and expectations. Usually people who are stressed feel a sense of loss of control over their lives, or that they cannot cope.

Key Point

You should talk to your supervisor if you feel stressed at work for long periods of time.

There will always be times at work when you experience some stress. Talking to others about your concerns often eases the pressure. Keeping fit and healthy will increase your ability to deal with stress.

Violence and Bullying at Work

Employers must take steps to protect employees and other people in the work place from violent and bullying incidents that may injure or harm them.

People who work alone or at night may face added risks in terms of violent incidents.

Employees who handle such items as cash or drugs are more likely to face the threat of robbery or attack.

If you experience bullying, it is important that you talk to someone in your work place. Bullying can only continue where it is not reported. When employers become aware that it may be happening, they must take immediate action.

Personal Protective Equipment

When hazards in the work place cannot be eliminated or reduced sufficiently by other risk controls, employers are required to provide personal protective equipment and clothing (PPE).

Employees must be instructed and trained in the correct use of any personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing provided by the employer. The employer has a duty to provide this training.

Key Point

If personal protective equipment and clothing is provided you must wear it and use it correctly.

Dealing with an Emergency

Employers must give you information about work place arrangements for emergencies. Incidents and accidents do sometimes happen in work places, so you must know how to respond to them.

Every work place is different, so it is important that you are told where to find trained first aiders, who your fire wardens are, and the emergency evacuation procedures for



your work location.

If a fire or other emergency does occur, there will be an alarm of some kind. You must be able to identify the alarm signals so you know what they mean. Your employer must provide training so you know what to do and where to go if there is an emergency.

Health and Safety Laws

The Legal Responsibilities of Employers and Employees

Victoria's occupational health and safety laws aim to make work places safer, eliminate fatalities and prevent worker injury and disease.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* was developed by government, employers and unions working together in consultation.

The Act allows employers and employees to deal with work place health and safety through consultation (discussion) and cooperation (teamwork).

The Regulations supporting the Act provide more specific requirements for managing different hazards and health and safety issues.

Duty of Care

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* contains sections that describe the responsibilities, or duties of care, of employers; employees; self employed persons; persons who have control of work places; persons who manufacture or supply machinery, equipment and substances used at work; and persons who design or construct buildings.

These duties of care apply "*as far as is practicable*".

"Practicable" means reasonable measures must be taken, bearing in mind:

- the severity of any injury or harm to health that may occur
- the likelihood of the injury or harm occurring
- how much is known about the hazard and the ways of reducing, removing or controlling risks, and
- the availability, suitability and cost of safeguards.

Duties of Employers

An employer's main duty of care (responsibility) is to ensure employees are not exposed to hazards at work.

Employers are required to provide you with information, instruction, training (including induction training, to introduce you to the work place, its hazards and their risk controls) and supervision, so you are able to work safely. You should also receive instruction to assist you to respond to emergency situations.

Duties of Employees

As an employee you must take care for your own health and safety at work, and not put



other workers at risk.

You must follow your employer's instructions, use personal protective equipment and clothing where provided, and use machinery and equipment safely and for its intended purpose.

Key Point

Employers and employees should talk to each other and work together to solve health and safety issues at work.

Health and Safety Representatives

Health and safety representatives are people elected by co-workers to act on their behalf, in resolving health and safety issues in the work place and maintaining safe conditions.

Key Point

Young employees should be introduced to their health and safety representative as part of their health and safety training when they first start their job.

You can ask the health and safety representative to help you recognise and avoid health and safety hazards and risks in areas where you will be working.

Health and Safety Committees

Any employee may request that a health and safety committee is set up. Once an employee has asked for a committee, the employer is required by law to take steps to establish one. Employers may also establish a health and safety committee on their own initiative.

Committees are useful as they help employers and employees to work together to make the work place safe.

The Role of WorkSafe Inspectors

WorkSafe has inspectors who are responsible for enforcing health and safety legislation (Acts and Regulations). They have powers to enter, inspect and examine work places, to conduct examinations and enquiries. They can take samples and photographs, and can require that the work place is left undisturbed after an incident and interview any one at the work place.

Inspectors may issue **Improvement** or **Prohibition** notices.

An **Improvement notice** is a written direction requiring a person to fix a health and safety problem in the work place, within an agreed period of time.

A **Prohibition notice** is a written direction that stops at once any activity where the inspector thinks someone may be at risk of immediate and serious harm.



Resolving Health and Safety Issues

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* and the *Occupational Health and Safety (Issue Resolution) Regulations 1999* require employers, health and safety representatives and employees to attempt to resolve (work out) health and safety issues.

If you are working on a task you believe is unsafe or unhealthy, you should first talk to your supervisor and health and safety representative about the problem. If the issue cannot be resolved on the spot, they should then go to the employer whose responsibility it is to assess and control any risk. Together, you should agree on ways to resolve the problem.

If you are in immediate danger, then you should be given alternative work until the risk has been effectively addressed.

If an issue remains unresolved, either the employer or the health and safety representative may request a WorkSafe Inspector to attend the work place. This should be viewed as a last resort, where discussion and consultation have failed to result in agreed action.

Teachers can use the Falls and Working Safely activities in the Resource Section.

The Right to Refuse Work

If you believe the work you are doing is dangerous and there is an immediate risk of serious injury or harm to yourself or others, then you can refuse to do this work.

You must tell your supervisor (or employer) and your health and safety representative of your concerns.

If these people cannot resolve the matter together, they may request a WorkSafe Victoria Inspector to attend the work place.

Teachers who wish to provide students with additional activities should look at the Links Section of the website. This section contains hyper links to a number of interactive applications.

Industry Modules

Now choose one of the industry modules. There will be some questions based on information in this Review Module in each of the industry module multiple-choice tests.