

Children at the workplace

This bulletin outlines how to conduct a risk management process to eliminate or reduce risks to children in the workplace

Employers, self-employed people and those in control of workplaces are responsible for ensuring, as far as practicable, the safety and health of visitors including children at the workplace. Employees are also required to work safely so people are not harmed.

Workplace safety and health planning should address situations where children may:

- be part of the work activity as customers, patients or students;
- be visiting or accompanying their parents; and/or
- live at a workplace that is also their home, eg farms and some shops.

Where relevant, consider also the risks to children in situations where they stray into a workplace or go there to play.

The following are key questions to ask in safety and health planning:

- Is the workplace safe for children? There may be some workplaces that are not suitable for children in any situation.
- Is there adequate supervision of children? According to the circumstances, there may be a need for supervision from parents/guardian and/or staff that is high level and ongoing.
- Is there a clear policy on children at the workplace? The issues to address include access, movement, supervision and instructions to workers and parents/guardian. Refer to the section on control measures at the end of the checklist for more details.

Parents/guardians have a responsibility to ensure children adhere to the employer's policy on the safety of children at the workplace.

This bulletin outlines how to start addressing the risks to children and employees. A checklist is provided on the following pages to assist in carrying out the risk management process.

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Controlling the risks

Step 1: Identify possible hazards that may cause harm to children - identify direct or indirect things or situations that may cause harm.

Step 2: Assess the risks of injury or harm to children - assess the risk of injury or harm to a child or worker that could arise from each hazard identified and decide which needs to be addressed first, ie where there is the highest risk of injury or harm.

Consider the level of understanding about the hazard, and the danger if it is not removed, and whether safety instructions would be understood or followed.

Step 3: Control the risks to children - eliminate or reduce the risks to children and employees by implementing control measures. The preferred way of doing this is to:

1. eliminate the hazard, hazardous work practice or hazardous situation;
2. substitute or replace the hazard, hazardous work practice or hazardous situation with a less hazardous one;
3. isolate or separate the hazard, hazardous work practice or hazardous situation from children, eg installing barricades or gates;
4. re-design the work area to remove the hazard or hazardous situation, eg modifying plant and equipment (engineering control); and
5. introduce safety rules (administrative control).

Sometimes a combination of control measures may be appropriate. Review the three steps regularly to ensure control measures work and no new hazards have been introduced.

Children at the workplace checklist - carry out the three steps			Photocopy for use at the workplace
Step 1. Identify hazards to children & workers	Step 2. Assess the risks of identified hazards	Step 3. Control the risks See control measures at end of document	
Inspect the workplace - check all parts			
Check access to different parts where children may be. Consider how and when children may gain access, with or without staff or parents' knowledge.			
Check access to restricted areas, eg fridges, large freezers, old mine workings and plant and machinery rooms and the potential for children to become locked in.			
Consider different types of activities - consider what children might find or do, both during and after work.			
Check for possible entry to areas with kilns or ovens.			

Step 1. Identify hazards to children & workers	Step 2. Assess the risks of identified hazards	Step 3. Control the risks See control measures at end of document
Check for unprotected excavations and holes.		
Check for other hazards specific to your workplace.		
Inspect employees' work		
Inspect each work activity that may be near children.		
Consider situations where there may be distractions to workers increasing the risks to children, parents and/or workers.		
Consider the level of supervision		
Consider the current level of supervision, its adequacy and the need for it to be ongoing.		
Consider situations that could arise where lapses in parental or guardian supervision mean children could enter working areas, eg food outlets.		
Inspect equipment, plant & machinery		
Consider situations where children may have access.		
Check the storage, location and height of items.		
Check for items children may climb or play on.		
Check for items that might get knocked over.		

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Check for situations where children may be struck or have clothing caught.		
Check machinery for gaps in which children may put their hands or fingers.		
Consider situations where children may not be seen by operators of machinery or vehicles.		
Check whether children may be able to switch on vehicles or machines.		
Check for situations where children may not be aware a vehicle or machine is moving or working.		
Check for other hazards involving equipment, plant or machinery that are specific to your workplace.		
Check storage of materials		
Consider locations and situations where children may come into contact with dangerous materials.		
Check for other hazards involving materials that are specific to your workplace.		
Check hazardous substances		
Check storage and locations and consider situations where children may interfere or experiment with substances.		

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Check for other hazards involving hazardous substances specific to your workplace.		
Inspect for electrical hazards		
Check for situations where children may interfere with electrical installations.		
Check for switches that children may turn on.		
Check for situations where children may pour water on electrical equipment.		
Check for situations where children may poke things into holes where there may be live wires.		
Check for warning tags that can be removed.		
Check for live cables that children may discover.		
Check for situations where children may crawl into small spaces where there are electrical hazards.		
Check for other electrical hazards specific to your workplace.		
Check safety near animals		
Check for situations where children may come into contact with animals.		
Check for situations where children may provoke animals.		

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Check for situations where children may come into contact with infection and diseases if hygiene precautions are not followed.		
Check access to watering troughs, tanks and dams.		
Check for other hazards involving animals that are specific to your workplace.		
Consult employees and safety and health representatives		
Ask about any issues that have arisen involving children.		
Talk to competent people		
Where applicable, consult those with experience in dealing with children at the particular type of workplace and/or the types of hazards, eg machinery and hazardous substances.		

Examples of control measures to control risks to children and workers

Develop a workplace policy on children at the workplace

The policy should include, for example:

- clear safety rules that everyone knows and follows on the entry of children into the workplace and their access to parts of it;
- a means of communicating the rules to all at the workplace, including supervisors, employees and visitors;
- a system to ensure the rules are followed, eg using high level supervision and/or preventing or restricting access to certain areas;
- instructions to employees on safe work procedures where there may be children; and
- instructions to parents and guardians on necessary supervision of children to ensure safety at the workplace.

Control access and movement

For example:

- installing physical barriers, such as locked cupboards/storage areas, guards, gates and fences;
- setting up separate areas for children, eg safe play areas;
- planning for unexpected or unplanned entry to the workplace or parts of it; and
- safely storing heavy goods and equipment.

Ensure adequate supervision of children.

- In some instances, supervision may need to be of high level and ongoing. Where potentially hazardous situations to workers could arise that involve children, request parents ensure adequate supervision.

Introduce safer equipment or procedures for children, particularly where there are very small children at the workplace.

Remove any slips or trips hazards, eg power cords.

Address the safe exit of children in emergency evacuation procedures.

In situations where the workplace is also a home, eg farms and some shops, in addition to the above recommendations:

- set up a safe play areas;
- have a set of safety rules that everyone knows and follows that addresses issues such as:
 - when to stay in safe play areas;
 - which areas and equipment are out of bounds;
 - wearing seatbelts and restraints in vehicles;
 - banned activities, eg riding on tractors, ATVs or back of utes; and
 - wearing helmets; and
- ensure hazardous areas, eg dams and workshops, are securely fenced or locked where practicable.

Regional offices

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- For farms, see also the practical suggestions in:**
 - *Child safety on rural properties*, published by Farmsafe Australia Inc. available at www.farmsafe.org.au/images/pdfs/child_safety_farm_checklist.pdf
 - *Family farm safety kit*, available at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au
 - *Family farm safety*, brochure for parents, available at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au
 - *RIPPER II: Growing kids on farms: An education resource for primary schools*, published by Farmsafe Australia's Child Safety on Farms Program. Available at: www.farmsafe.org.au
- For old mine sites, see:** *Old mine workings: Stay out and stay alive*, available from www.docep.wa.gov.au/resourcessafety

FURTHER INFORMATION

Children and Community Services Act 2004 Information sheets, published by the Department for Community Development and the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection.

The first step: Managing safety and health hazards in your workplace, available from WorkSafe and www.worksafe.wa.gov.au