



INFORMATION SHEET

Reasonably practicable

A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) must do what is 'reasonably practicable' to keep workers and other people at the workplace healthy and safe.

PCBUs must eliminate risks to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate a risk, it must be minimised.

What does reasonably practicable mean?

What can you reasonably do to eliminate hazards and eliminate, manage or control risks, considering:

- Is the hazard likely to happen?
- Would an injury be mild or serious?
- What do you know – or what should you know- about the hazard and how to eliminate or minimise the risk?
- Are suitable ways to eliminate or minimise the risk available?
- How much will it cost to eliminate or minimise the risk?

Hazards and risks

Hazard – a hazard is any situation or thing that could harm a person. Hazards can be identified by talking with workers, inspecting the workplace and reviewing previous incidents.

Risk – risk is the likelihood that harm – death, injury or illness – will happen.

Risk management

You should use risk management to eliminate hazards and eliminate or control risks. The WHS Regulations require PCBUs to use a risk management approach when managing certain risks.

Risk management is a process to:

1. identify hazards
2. assess the risk:
 - how likely could someone be injured?
 - how serious could the injury be?
3. identify and implement control measures to eliminate or control the risk
4. review the control measures to make sure they work.

Where reasonably practicable, hazards and risks must be eliminated. If it is not practicable to eliminate risks to health and safety, they must be minimised by using one or more control measures. You must use one or more of the following to minimise the risk so far as is reasonably practicable:

- substitute the hazard with something safer (such as swapping a dangerous chemical for a safer one)
- isolate the person from the hazard (such as using barriers)
- use engineering controls, or physical control measures (such as machine guards).

If a risk still remains, administrative controls (such as training, checklist and standard operating procedures) must be used to minimise risk. To control any remaining risk, the PCBU must give workers personal protective equipment (such as goggles or safety boots) and teach workers how to use them safely.

Consultation

A PCBU must consult with workers who could be impacted by work health and safety.

Talking to workers can help you identify hazards and consider ways to minimise risk. You can also consult with health and safety representatives and a health and safety committee if the workplace has one.

A PCBU must also consult with other duty holders and work together to eliminate hazards and reduce risks. This includes everyone at the workplace who share a work health and safety duty such as other PCBUs, suppliers of chemicals and manufacturers of plant.

What is reasonably practicable?

Is it possible to eliminate the hazard? If the hazard can't be eliminated, use the highest level of control measure possible to minimise risk. The higher the risk, the more you should do to eliminate or minimise it.

The hierarchy of control identifies the various types of control measures that should be used and is set out in the following diagram.

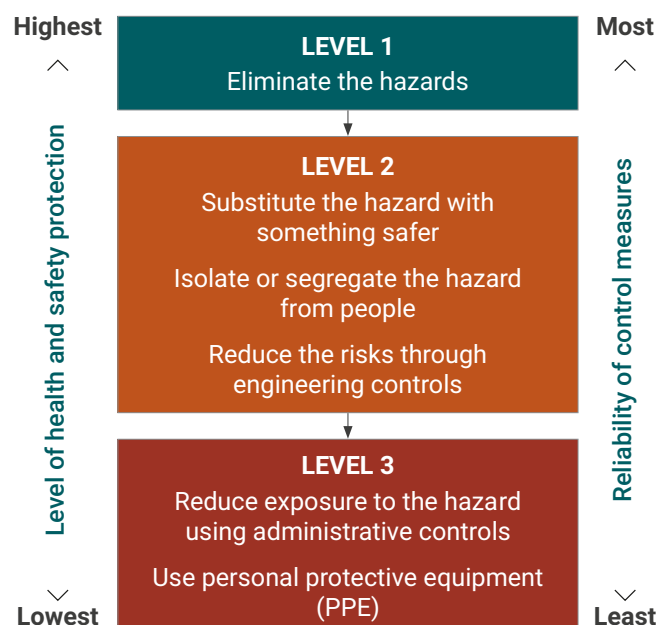


Figure 1 Hierarchy of control

What is reasonable?

The greater the risk, the more the PCBU must do to eliminate or minimise it. The PCBU must consider:

- Would a reasonable person in the same situation would make the same choice?
- How much does each control measure reduce the risk of injury?
- Is it be better to use more than one control?
- How much can you change the activity?
- Is there more you (or someone else) can do to reduce the risk?

The cost should only be considered if it is grossly disproportionate to the risk.

Review risk controls

The PCBU should regularly review control measures and consider:

- Does the control measure still control the risk?
- Have the risks at work changed?
- Are there any new hazards?
- Have you consulted with workers to find out if they think the controls are working?
- Has a health and safety representative asked for a review?
- Is there a new or better way to reduce the risk?

More information

The WHS Regulations and codes of practice can give you more information about controlling risks.