

SAFETY MANAGEMENT

Guide to Assessing Risk

Employers are required under Workplace Health and Safety legislation to identify, assess and control hazards and risks in their workplace. This information bulletin outlines one method that employers can use to complete this assessment to assess risks in their workplace and to prioritise the necessary actions they should take.

What are you trying to do?

Where a hazard has been identified, there is a need to assess the level of risk associated with it. Risk is a function of how likely an accident is to happen and how bad the outcome could be. Assessing the severity will enable the risks to be prioritised so that action can be taken to prevent accidents from happening.

There are many techniques for carrying out risk assessments ranging from complex techniques such as fault tree analysis and reliability studies through to using simple tables such as the one in this bulletin. Given the needs of most employers, the method shown in this bulletin is suitable for most situations and provides a structured way of assessing risks to reduce the level of individual subjectivity.

The Risk Table method given below is one of a variety of similar methods based on the same principle. You may wish to investigate other methods to assess their suitability for your organisation.

How to use the risk table

The assessment is carried out in three steps. For each hazard –

1) Determine the most likely worst outcome from the exposure hazard:

<u>Outcome</u>	<u>Description</u>
Catastrophic	Serious process breakdown that prevents the achievement of a mission critical objectives. Multiple severe injuries, including fatalities
Major	Serious process breakdown that substantially impedes the achievement of a core objective. Multiple severe injuries, or a single fatality
Moderate	Process breakdown that impedes the achievement of an important objective or extensive inefficiencies in key processes. Multiple casualties requiring hospital attention
Minor	Process breakdown that impedes the achievement of an important objective or extensive inefficiencies in key processes. Minor injuries requiring medical attention
Minimal	Process breakdown or inefficiencies that have a limited impact on the achievement of an objective. Minor injury requiring first aid only

2) Determine what the likelihood is of the event occurring

Next ask the question, “How likely is it that someone will be exposed to the hazard?” and select the most appropriate answer from the list below:

<u>Likelihood / Probability</u>	<u>Description</u>
Almost Certain	Occurs repeatedly, expected to happen, happens all the time.
Likely	Will occur several times, not surprised if it happened.
Possible	Could occur sometimes.
Unlikely	Unlikely to occur, but conceivable, has been known to happen in the past somewhere.
Rare	So unlikely that the probability is close to zero. If the likelihood is determined to be very unlikely, double check the assessment, as in reality this does not occur very often.

When determining the likelihood you need to take into account any control measures that are already in place.

3) Determine the risk

For simplicity, the risk is assessed into one of 4 priority groups which helps identify the necessary action that you should take. They are:

<u>Priority Groups</u>	<u>Necessary Action</u>
Extreme	Meaning there is imminent danger – stop work
High	Stop work -action immediately
Significant	Action immediately
Moderate	Action as soon as possible
Low	Further action to be scheduled. Look for ways for continual improvement

Consequence Likelihood					
	Minimal (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Major (4)	Catastrophic (5)
Almost Certain (5)	Significant	Significant	High	Extreme	Extreme
Likely (4)	Moderate	Significant	Significant	High	Extreme
Possible (3)	Low	Moderate	Significant	High	High
Unlikely (2)	Low	Low	Moderate	Significant	High
Rare (1)	Low	Low	Moderate	Significant	Significant

Further details on the requirement to identify hazards and assessing risks can be found in Regulation 38 of the [Workplace Health and Safety Regulations](#). This regulation also outlines requirement to keep records of all assessments carried out. This is generally for 5 years after the last review or 30 years in regard to exposure to a hazardous substance.

For further information please contact NT Worksafe on 1800 019 115 or visit worksafe.nt.gov.au