

Work Health and Safety

Risk reduction and your workplace



Visit CCIQ's WHS Coaching website [click here](#)



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What is Work Health and Safety?

Work Health and Safety (WHS) involves the management of risks to the health and safety of everyone in the workplace. This includes the health and safety of anyone who does work for your business as well as your customers, visitors, suppliers and contractors.

It may initially cost money and time to implement safe practices and install safety equipment, however it is critical to the success of your business. Not taking action could result in prosecution, fines, loss of skilled workers and potentially, the failure of your business.

Your Work Health and Safety Obligations

If there is a regulation that describes how to manage a risk in the workplace, businesses must follow it. In the case of a code of practice, duty holders must comply with an approved code of practice under the WHS Act. If there is no regulation or code of practice, businesses must take reasonable precautions and choose an appropriate way to manage the hazard and minimise the risk.

WorkSafe QLD is Queensland's regulating agency and administers WHS Laws, monitors WHS in Queensland businesses, enforces WHS laws and conducts inspections and investigation to ensure employers and others are meeting their obligations. Find out more at: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au>



To understand your legal obligations and safety requirements, as a business you need to be familiar with:

- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act)*, which imposes obligation on people at workplaces to ensure work health and safety
- *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011*, which describes what must be done to prevent or control certain hazards which cause injury, illness or death
- *Work Health and Safety Codes of Practice*, which are designed to give practical advice about ways to managed exposure to risks common to industry



What could an unsafe workplace cost you?

It is every employers responsibility to keep their workers safe whilst performing work tasks. The management of safety risks includes those of anyone who performs work tasks for your business – workers, customers, visitors, suppliers and contractors.

‘Risky workplaces’ have the potential to be costly for you as the business owner and your workers.

The safety legislation in Queensland has categories of offences in relation to a business meeting its obligations. Exact penalties are dependent on various contributing factors, here is a quick outline.

	Corporation	Individual as PCBU* or officer	Individual as worker or other
Industrial Manslaughter PCBU* or a senior officer negligently cause the death of a worker	\$10M for a body corporate	20 years imprisonment for an individual	N/A
Category 1 Serious breaches where a duty holder recklessly endangers a person to risk of death or serious injury	\$3 million	\$600,000, 5 years jail or both	\$300,000, 5 years jail or both
Category 2 Failure to comply with a health and safety duty that exposes a person to risk of death or serious injury or illness	\$1.5 million	\$300,000	\$150,000
Category 3 Failure to comply with a health and safety duty	\$500,000	\$100,000	\$50,000

*Person conducting business or undertaking

Why should I care about Work Health and Safety?

Employers have a responsibility to ensure that their employees are safe whilst at work.

Workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths cost the Australian economy more than \$61 billion each year and the cost to families, friends and colleagues is far greater. In most instances, incidents could have been prevented with the right safeguards in place. Investing in safety in your business can prevent long term costs, improve employee satisfaction, and ensure you create a business environment where employees feel safe.

Safety legislation always starts with the people at the top of the business, they are the ones who have the ability to foster change. Directors, board members and CEOs have a responsibility for work health and safety – this does not change whether the business is small or large. Those individuals are vital to the business functioning – they make decisions on finance and available resources which impact sound safety decisions. Directors, board members and CEOs can be significantly penalised both financially and personally for safety shortcomings.

Health and Safety legislation clearly places responsibilities on employers to identify any risks, eliminate or resolve those risks where possible, and to notify workers of the best practice associated with their work tasks. As a result it is important that employers are informed about their obligations.



What must a business do to comply?

A business must put safe practices in place as soon as the business commences.

Under the legislation a Person Conducting a Business of Undertaking (PCBU) must ensure the health and safety of its workers and not put the health and safety of other people at risk, to do this they must:

- Provide a safe work environment
- Provide and maintain safety machinery and structures
- Provide safe ways of working
- Ensure safe use, handling and storage of machinery, structures and substances
- Provide and maintain adequate facilities
- Provide any information, training, instruction or supervision needed for safety
- Monitor the health of workers and conditions at the workplace
- Investigate incidents and take action to avoid something similar happening again
- Provide workers' compensation insurance

One of the duties of an employer in the legislation is to make sure workers are aware of any potential hazards and safe work methods whilst performing work tasks. There are a number of various ways you can share the right information, whichever way is chosen the workers need to clearly understand what is required of them.

What other benefits does being health and safety conscious bring to your business?

- Reduced cost of workers compensation insurance costs
- Reduction in sick leave absences
- Reduced number and severity of injuries
- Increased worker retention
- Increased productivity
- Reduced costs associated with re-training replacement workers.

How to start your business on its Work Health and Safety journey

1. Professional advice

When starting out on your safety obligation journey, you may decide to ask for professional help. A work health and safety specialist can assist with determining the hazards and risk associated with the type of work your business performs – this is called a Risk Assessment.

The specialist will also be able to provide ways to assist you with communicating this knowledge to your workers, which is required by legislation.

2. Hazard and Risk identification

Being proactive with strategies for a safe and healthy workplace doesn't have to be complicated. Knowing your hazards and reducing your risks is the right place to start. This means identifying anything that could harm people; thinking about if someone was exposed to that hazard what might happen and how likely could this happen.

You then need to work out the most effective way to control the hazard and its potential to harm people. Monitoring this process is also necessary to ensure that the control methods are doing their job. Keeping a record of this risk management process is a great way to find issues and improve the safety in your workplace.

3. Record and report safety Issues and incidents

Depending on your industry, you may also need to keep records in relation to certain hazards e.g. energised electrical work, diving work, hazardous chemicals, plant and equipment.

If a worker is injured or something dangerous happens at a workplace, the first priority responsibility is to help and protect workers. This means making sure no one else can be hurt, providing first aid and calling emergency services.

Reporting any workplace deaths, serious injuries or illnesses, or dangerous incidents to the Queensland Regulator is also a legal requirement.

If a business has workers, it must have a current workers' compensation insurance policy and a return to work program. In Queensland this is provided through WorkCover Queensland.

An accident record must include:

- Name of the injured person
- Brief description of what happened
- Date and time of injury
- Where it happened and its cause



Using a **Hazard Identification Checklist** is a great place to start. Recording your risk and how they will be controlled via a **Work Health and Safety Risk Assessment** means you are starting to ensure a safer workplace.

4. Safety training and supervision

Employers are legally required to provide workers with adequate supervision to ensure their personal safety in the workplace, and health and safety training in order to keep the workplace safe for all workers and any visitors and customers.

Determining your business needs with regards to safety training is an essential step in continuing to meet your safety obligations. Determine what training is needed when starting work with the business; if workers need further training; which roles need specific training; and the timing and occurrence of the training. This can be done in-house or via an external safety professional. It is important to record all types of training undertaken by your workers and ensure they sign to say they participated and understood the training.

5. Safety meetings

These are called all sorts of different titles depending on the industry you are in – ‘tool box talks’ ‘safety briefings’ or ‘safety meetings’ are just a few.

These meetings serve the purpose of informing the workers of their safety obligations at the work site or work place. Legislation states that records need to be kept of these and who was present at the meetings.

6. Monitor and review

Employers should regularly review their safety processes to ensure they are working effectively and identify any required improvements.



Defining your Work Health and Safety requirements

There are three key steps to defining the health and safety requirements of your business:

1. Use a **WHS Business Profile Template** to summarise the key aspects for your business

2. Use the **Hazard Checklist** to identify the main hazards and risks for your business

3. Use the **Risk Assessment** to accurately capture the hazards and ways you are going to control the risks they present

Commitment to WHS starts with understanding and identifying issues that could lead to incident, injury or harm to health.

Here are some examples to consider:

- **Physical hazards** such as falls from heights, electricity, manual tasks, noise, heat, cold or ventilation.
- **Plant and machinery operation hazards** such as might arise from cutting, grinding, pressing or rolling.
- **Biological/health hazards** such as contact dermatitis, infectious diseases including handling syringes containing contaminated blood, allergens e.g. that cause asthma and other illnesses.
- **Radiation hazards**, such as welding flash.
- **Psychological hazards**, such as fatigue and stress.
Inadequate training or supervision can contribute to stress
- **Ergonomic hazards**, such as carrying or moving heavy objects, or the height and position of workbenches.



Creating a Work Health and Safety Policy

The specific health and safety obligations for business owners vary depending on the type of work performed. For example: the safety hazards faced by a construction company are very different to those encountered by a law firm, which again are very different to a truck delivery business.

Despite those differences there are **four fundamental aspects of work health and safety** that apply to every workplace regardless of industry:

1. **Identify hazards in the workplace** that may harm workers

2. **Create and implement a written policy** with clear guidelines about what is expected from all persons

This policy should be signed and dated by the employer; and easily available to all workers at all times. e.g. displayed at the workplace or on the website.

3. **Include workers in consultation** about safety in the workplace to ensure awareness of safety issues and improve safety culture in the workplace

4. **Manage hazards** that have been identified to ensure risk reduction is ongoing



Use a **Work Health and Safety Policy Template** and apply the risk factors of your business as appropriate.

How to formulate a Work Health and Safety Action Plan

Using a **Work Health and Safety Action Plan** to list the action that will be taken to address the individualised hazards and risks at your business is a critical aspect of business WHS Management. After assessing work activities and hazards, use the WHS Action Plan to record the actions your business will take to improve health and safety in your workplace. Consult with workers when developing and review the WHS Action Plan regularly.



Prioritise actions – work on the most important issues first

Make actions specific and concrete e.g. write “include WHS as a regular item in every weekly team meeting” rather than “improve communication”

If the list is getting too long, **break it down into smaller sections** and work on it over time e.g. complete 5 actions per week

Ensure that your business has allocated **sufficient resources** to complete the actions in the **Work Health and Safety Action Plan**



Additional Resources

CCIQ is working to make Queensland the best place in Australia for business. We have a WHS advisory team that is able to provide accurate and honest health and safety advice, that is applicable to your business, industry and needs.

To access additional resources click [here](#)

- Hazard Identification Checklist
- Work Health and Safety Risk Assessment
- Work Health and Safety Business Profile Template
- Work Health and Safety Policy Template
- Work Health and Safety Action Plan

You will need a CCIQ membership login to access these files.
Please contact CCIQ if you require assistance.

Connect with CCIQ

 www.cciq.com.au

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