



Health and Safety

for congregations


Risk management


How this guide can help you

The way we care for our staff, volunteers and visitors is an expression of God's love. We can demonstrate our care for others by planning for, and addressing issues that might be harmful. To prevent harm a proactive approach to managing risks must be adopted. Risk management involves identifying hazards, assessing and controlling risks.

The practical tools you will find

 Inspection checklist

 Risk assessment tools for high risk activities

 WHS risk register

The risk management cycle

To manage health and safety hazards and risks, congregations need to:

Step 1. Identify hazards and risks associated with the environment or tasks performed for the congregation

Step 2. Assess the risks

Step 3. Control the risks by making the changes necessary to eliminate the hazards or minimise risks, as far as practicable.

Step 4. Monitor and review the effectiveness of the controls.

It is easier to maintain a safe environment when we consult with everyone involved. It is therefore very important to include staff and other workers in each step of the risk management process.



Identify hazards

Step 1

Identify things or 'hazards' that could potentially cause harm to people. Day to day, it is important to stop, step back and think through tasks to ensure they can be performed safely. Think about all the things that can harm people. These could be either physical and psychosocial.

To identify hazards, it can also be important to:

- Inspect facilities under the control of the congregation. This should be completed at least annually. Our inspection tool can be found **here**. An inspection should be completed routinely to identify hazards before they cause harm. This should be tailored to physical environment and activities of your congregation
- Consult with people who perform work for the congregation. Ask them to identify and report any hazards
- Review first aid records and any incident reports
- Think about any safety concerns raised by others

Hazards that are identified and cannot be immediately controlled should be added to the congregation WHS risk register. Our risk register can be found **here**. The risk register should be reviewed by the Church Council regularly to ensure hazards are identified and corrective actions undertaken to minimise the risk of harm. This can also be a helpful step to ensure the controls identified continue to be effective (refer to step 4).

Assess the risk

Step 2

When we assess the risk, it is important to consider what could happen if someone is exposed to the hazard and how likely the risk is to occur. Rating the risk helps to prioritise how much will be done to control the risk and how quickly it is needed. Rate the risk high, medium or low.

Consequence:

- Think about how severe harm could be? Consider what type of injuries or illness may happen and who it could affect.



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Assess the risk cont...

Step 2

Likelihood:

To work out the likelihood of harm occurring, you could consider:

- How often the task is done?
- How close do people get to the hazard?
- Has an injury ever occurred before? How often?

By answering these questions, you can now rate the consequence and the likelihood either high, medium or low. We can use the hazard and risk rating table to calculate the risk rating of the hazard.

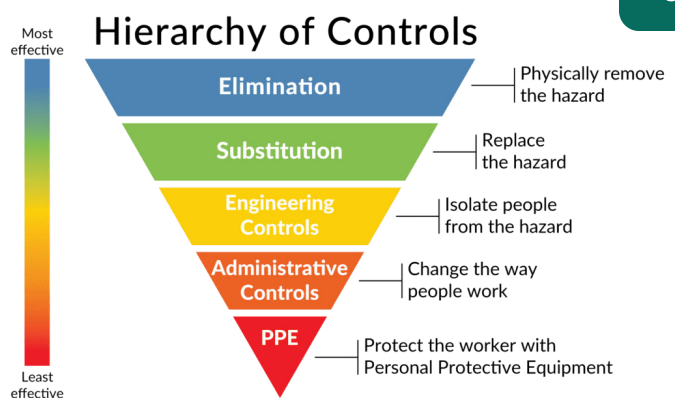
Likelihood rating	Consequence rating				
	Catastrophic	Major	Moderate	Minor	Insignificant
Certain to Occur	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
Very Likely	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Likely	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Possible	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Rare	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low

By going horizontally across from the likelihood score and down from the consequence score, the risk rating is where the lines meet. Risks rated high and medium should be prioritised for action.

Identify controls

You can rank ways of controlling risks from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest. This ranking is known as the hierarchy of risk controls. Always eliminate the hazard where possible. If not, choose the most effective control practicable; pick a control as close to the top of the hierarchy as possible. Once the best control(s) have been determined, check the risk rating has now been reduced to low. After implementing a control, it is important to ask yourself, do I now feel comfortable things are safe? If not, it is important to think about what more can be done.

Step 3



Monitor and review controls

Step 4

Reviewing controls will help you identify if they are effective. The control measures that you put in place should be reviewed regularly to make sure they work as planned. Controls should also be reviewed if something does go wrong. If you find problems, go back through the risk management steps, review your information and make further decisions about risk controls. Reviewing the risk register regularly in Church Council meetings can also be a helpful way to routinely monitor controls.

Risk assessment of special activities

Some special ministries or activities may have higher risks and warrant an individual risk assessment. We have therefore developed specific tools to step you through the risk assessment process. Click **here** to find available resources for soup kitchens, church camps, working groups, youth group and homelessness services.

