



When is a Risk Assessment Not Necessary?

It is well known that assessing the risks of a hazard is an important step in the process of managing risks to health and safety in a workplace. It may seem strange but sometimes it is not necessary to do a formal risk assessment.

This article refers to the *Code of Practice: How to Manage WHS Risks* to explain when the risk assessment step should be done and when it is not necessary.

The *Code of Practice: How to Manage WHS Risks* (page 9) advises that a risk assessment of a hazard in your workplace is not necessary in the following situations:

- If legislation requires that the risks of that hazard must be controlled in a specific way then those requirements must be complied with.
- If a code of practice or other guidance sets out a way of controlling the risks of a hazard that is applicable to your situation then you can choose to follow the guidance and use the recommended controls.
- If there are well-known and effective controls that are in use in your particular industry, that are suited to the circumstances in your workplace then these controls can simply be implemented.

However before deciding that you do not need to do a risk assessment you should be sure that you do know all the risks associated with that hazard in your workplace that you want to control.

Keep in mind that section 9 of the WHS Act requires the PCBU to do everything reasonably practicable to minimise the risks of a hazard in your workplace. As the Code of Practice says at page 4:

“You have to think about what could go wrong at your workplace and what the consequences could be. Then you must do whatever you can (in other words, whatever is ‘reasonably practicable’) to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks arising from your business or undertaking.”

And also bear in mind what the Code says about when a risk assessment should be carried out.

At page 9 the Code tells us that a risk assessment should be done when:

- *“There is uncertainty about how a hazard may result in injury or illness*
- *The work activity involves a number of different hazards and there is a lack of understanding about how the hazards may interact with each other to produce new or greater risks*
- *Changes at the workplace occur that may impact on the effectiveness of control measures.*
- *A risk assessment is mandatory under the WHS Regulations for high-risk activities such as entry into confined spaces, diving work and live electrical work.*
- *Some hazards that have exposure standards, such as noise and airborne contaminants, may require scientific testing or measurement by a competent person to accurately assess the risk and to check that the relevant exposure standard is not being exceeded (for example, by using noise meters to measure noise levels and using gas detectors to analyse oxygen levels in confined spaces).”*

This Code of Practice on managing WHS risks is an approved code of practice under section 274 of the Work Health and Safety Act (the WHS Act).

An approved code of practice is a practical guide to achieving the standards of health, safety and welfare required under the WHS Act and the Work Health and Safety Regulations (the WHS Regulations).