



# A Guide to the Workplace Safety and Health (Risk Management) Regulations

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# Introduction

In 2005, the Ministry of Manpower unveiled a new occupational safety and health framework to make possible quantum improvements in safety and health standards at the workplace. An underpinning principle under the new framework is to eliminate or mitigate safety and health risks at source.

The risk associated with any work activity depends on the severity of an accident or ill health that may occur, and the likelihood of its occurrence. All risks at work can be controlled, and all accidents or ill health can be prevented. Some methods of control are better than others in a given situation. Some risks require more than one control method to achieve optimum results. Whatever risk control measures we take, the aim is to reduce the likelihood of occurrence and/or the severity of the accident or ill health. Ultimately, the risk must be reduced to an acceptable level before commencement of work.

Risk management is a process by which the management assesses the risks, determines the control measures, and takes appropriate actions to reduce such risks. It is a cornerstone to prevent deaths, injuries and ill health at work. All workplaces need to conduct risk assessments to help identify the source of risks, actions that should be taken, and parties responsible for doing so.

With the emphasis to reduce risk at the workplace, the new Workplace Safety and Health (Risk Management) Regulations detail the steps required to eliminate risk or reduce it to as low as is reasonably practicable.

This booklet provides guidance to the Regulations which come into operation on **1 September 2006**.

# A Guide to the Workplace Safety and Health (Risk Management) Regulations

## Why is there a need for the Workplace Safety and Health (Risk Management) Regulations?

In the new framework for occupational safety and health in Singapore, one of the major means of reducing risks at the workplace is by making stakeholders accountable for managing the risks they create. Risk assessment is a key instrument to reduce risk at the workplace.

Employers, self-employed persons and principals (including contractors and sub-contractors) have the responsibility of identifying safety and health hazards at the workplace and taking appropriate actions to eliminate the hazards or reduce the risks associated with the hazards. These requirements are specified in the Workplace Safety and Health (Risk Management) Regulations.

## What is a hazard?

A **'hazard'** is something that in itself may cause harm or injury. Workplace hazards include moving parts of machinery, working at heights, slippery floors, electric energy, excessive noise, toxic or flammable substances, and lifting heavy objects.

## What is a risk?

A **'risk'** means the likelihood that a hazard will cause a specific harm or injury to persons or damage to property. For example, if a person works at a 40 metre height on a platform without any railing and safety harness, the risk of falling and getting killed is high.

## **What is the difference between risk assessment and risk management?**

**Risk assessment** is the process of identifying safety and health hazards associated with work, assessing the level of risks involved, and prioritizing measures to control the hazards and reduce the risks.

**Risk management**, like risk assessment, involves assessment of risks associated with any work activity or trade. However, it also includes control and monitoring of such risks, as well as communicating these risks.

## **Who needs to conduct risk assessment?**

Every employer, self-employed person and principal (including contractor and sub-contractor) must conduct a risk assessment in relation to the safety and health hazards associated with any routine and non-routine work carried on at the workplace. The risk assessment may be conducted by the employers, self-employed persons or principals themselves or they may engage a risk assessment consultant to carry out the risk assessment.

## **How should this risk assessment be conducted?**

Details of how risk assessment is to be conducted can be found in the Ministry of Manpower Guidelines on Risk Assessment. Please access the following website for the Guidelines:

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/OSHD/Resources/Guides/Guidelines/index.htm>

## **What can be done to control risks at the workplace?**

Every employer, self-employed person and principal (including contractor and sub-contractor) must take all reasonably practicable measures to eliminate any

foreseeable risk to any person who may be affected by their undertaking.

If the risk cannot be eliminated, the employer, self-employed person and principal (including contractor and sub-contractor) must take reasonably practicable measures to minimise the risk. Some measures to minimise risks are listed below. They are listed in decreasing order of preference, i.e. from most preferred to least preferred.

1. Substitution e.g. substituting a hazardous substance or process with a less hazardous one
2. Engineering controls e.g. installing machine guarding or enclosing a noisy machine
3. Administrative controls e.g. implementing a permit-to-work system or lock-out and tag-out procedures
4. Provision and use of suitable personal protective equipment

In addition, safe work procedures must be implemented to control the risk.

### **If the risk cannot be eliminated, how should safe work procedures be implemented?**

If the risk cannot be eliminated, every employer, self-employed person and principal (including contractor and sub-contractor) must establish safe work procedures to minimise the risk. Safe work procedures are step-by-step measures of doing or carrying out work safely. The procedures must include the measures to be taken to safeguard persons in the event of an emergency. The safe work procedure must be communicated to the worker.

Every employer, self-employed person or principal must specify the roles and responsibilities of persons involved in the implementation of the risk control measures and safe work procedures.

### **How often must the risk assessment be reviewed?**

The risk assessment must be reviewed or revised at least once every 3 years.

It must also be reviewed in the event of the following:

- After an accident as a result of exposure to a hazard,
- When there is a significant change in work processes that could affect the safety and health of the workers, for example, the introduction of new machinery or chemicals.

### **How should risk assessment records be maintained?**

A record of risk assessments conducted must be maintained. The record should include:

- the results or findings recorded in risk assessment forms,
- risk control measures taken or to be taken,
- any safe work procedures.

The record must be kept by the employer, self-employed person or principal (including contractor and sub-contractor) for at least 3 years.

### **What steps should be taken to communicate the risks involved?**

Every employer, self-employed person and principal (including contractor and sub-contractor) must take all reasonably practicable steps to inform his employees or any other persons at the workplace who may be exposed to safety and health risk.

They should be informed of the following:

- the nature of the risk involved,
- the measures implemented to control the risk,

- applicable safe work procedures.

Whenever the risk assessment is revised, or when there is a significant change in work practices or procedures, the employees or other persons who may be at risk must be informed accordingly.

### **What are the offences and penalties related to the Workplace Safety and Health (Risk Management) Regulations?**

Any employer, self-employed person or principal (including contractor and sub-contractor) who fails to comply with the following requirements of the Workplace Safety and Health (Risk Management) Regulations is guilty of an offence:

- Conduct a risk assessment for all work in the workplace.
- Take reasonably practicable measures to eliminate or reduce safety and health risks.
- Establish safe work procedures if the risks cannot be eliminated.
- Specify the roles and responsibilities of persons involved in the implementation of risk control measures and safe work procedures.
- Keep records of risk assessment.
- Inform employees of the nature of the risks involved and any risk control measures or safe work procedures implemented.
- Review or revise risk assessment.

The penalty for the first offence is a fine of up to \$10,000.

For a second or subsequent offence, the offender may be fined up to \$20,000 or jailed up to 6 months or both.

Under the **Workplace Safety and Health Act**, the Commissioner for Workplace Safety and Health may issue a Remedial Order to require an employer or any other person to remove any workplace risk or to comply with a safe work procedure. Failure to comply with a Remedial Order is considered an offence and the maximum fine for the offence is \$50,000 or 12 months imprisonment or both.

### **Further information**

For worked examples of risk assessment and templates for risk assessment, please visit our website at:

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/OSHD/Resources/Guides/Guidelines/index.htm>

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