



Risk Assessment Guide

Risk assessments are a systematic examination of the safety in the workplace.

What is a Risk Assessment?

A risk assessment is a systematic examination of your workplace to:

1. Identify significant hazards
2. Assess injury severity and likelihood
3. Implement control measures to reduce workplace risks

Beyond complying with legislative requirements, it is the purpose of risk assessments to improve the overall health and safety of our workers.

Risk assessments assess safety hazards across the entire workplace and are often accompanied with a risk matrix to prioritize hazards and controls.

If a risk is identified in the Home Visit Checklist, or an overall risk assessment is conducted for a home visit, follow the instructions below to identify the severity of the risk in the Risk Matrix.

How to use a Risk Matrix

		Likelihood			
		Very likely	Likely	Unlikely	Highly Unlikely
Consequences	Fatality	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM
	Major injuries	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
	Minor injuries	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
	Negligible injuries	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW

A risk matrix is often used during a risk assessment to measure the level of risk by considering the consequence/ severity and likelihood of injury to a worker after being exposed to a hazard. The two measures can then help determine the overall risk rating of the hazard.

Two key questions to ask when using a risk matrix should be:

1. Consequences
How bad would the most severe injury be if exposed to the hazard?
2. Likelihood
How likely is the person to be injured if exposed to the hazard?

How to Assess Consequences

In assessing the consequences of a hazard, the first question should be asked “If a worker is exposed to this hazard, how bad would the most probable severe injury be?”.

For this consideration we are presuming that a hazard and injury is inevitable and we are only concerned with its severity.

It is common to group the injury severity and consequence into the following four categories:

Category	Description
Fatality	Leads to death
Major or serious injury	Serious damage to health which may be irreversible, requiring medical attention and ongoing treatment
Minor injury	Reversible health damage which may require medical attention but limited ongoing treatment. This is less likely to involve significant time off work.
Negligible injuries	First aid only with little or no lost time

To illustrate how this can be used in the workplace we will use the example of a metal shearing task:

- A hazard involved could include a piece of metal flying out of the equipment while in use.
- In this example the probable most severe injury would be “Major or Serious Injury” with the possibility of bruising, breakage or finger amputation.

How to Assess Likelihood

In assessing the likelihood, the question should be asked “If the hazard occurs, how likely is it that the worker will be injured?”. This should not be confused with how likely the hazard is to occur.

It is common to group the likelihood of a hazard causing worker injury into the following four categories:

Category	Description
Very likely	Exposed to hazard continuously
Likely	Exposed to hazard occasionally
Unlikely	Could happen but only rarely
Highly unlikely	Could happen but probably never will

In our metal shearing example the question should not be “How likely is the machine expected to fail?” but instead “When the machine fails and causes metal to fly out, how likely is the worker expected to be injured?”.

If in our example we observe a safe distance between the machine and worker and proper PPE being worn, we could rate it as “Unlikely” given our observations.