

July 2019

WORKSAFE POSITION

Use of new technology

Purpose

This position sets out what we expect persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) to do when using new technology. It also outlines how we'll approach and enforce our expectations.

This position focuses on:

- adopting new technology to better manage risk at work
- managing the risks from new technology, and
- when we may recommend or require the use of a new technology.

By 'new technology' we mean any new equipment, processes, or systems, and using existing equipment for new or different tasks.

This includes entirely new equipment, processes, or systems, or when existing technology has been modified in a new way. The technology might be new to your sector or new to your workplace.

What does the law require?

Under section 3 of *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015*, workers and other persons should be given the highest level of protection against harm to their health, safety, and welfare from hazards and risks arising from work so far as is [reasonably practicable](#)¹

As a PCBU, you must eliminate risks so far as is reasonably practicable and if you can't eliminate the risk then you must minimise it. More information about managing risks can be found in the quick guide [Identifying, assessing, and managing work risks](#)

What is reasonably practicable might change as your circumstances change or new technology is developed. You should regularly consider whether your risk control measures still give the highest level of protection and are:

- fit for purpose
- suitable for the nature and duration of the work, and
- installed, set up, and used correctly.

When deciding how to manage a risk, you can use the [hierarchy of controls](#) to help you choose the option that most effectively manages the risk in your circumstances. This includes when you are considering using new technology.

Adopt new technology when it better manages risk

Over time new ways to eliminate or minimise risk may be developed. Keep informed about these developments and, if they can better manage risk, adopt them where reasonably practicable. The best way to manage risk yesterday may not be the best today.

You should regularly review your risk control measures to ensure that the technology you're using remains the best to manage risks. You should adopt a new technology if it better manages risks and it's reasonably practicable for you to do so.

There might be a range of options available. For example, you could completely replace your production system to fully automate a process, or retrofit automation or other controls on existing machinery. You need to assess the risks and benefits when deciding which, if any, new technology should be used in your circumstances.

¹ Deciding what is reasonably practicable involves working out what is possible, then deciding what is reasonable in your circumstances to manage risk. Our fact sheet [What is Reasonably Practicable](#) gives more information about what reasonably practicable means.

You should engage with workers at every step of the process, from identifying risk to choosing and reviewing controls. This includes when thinking about adopting or purchasing new technology that may affect workers' health and safety.

Deciding whether to adopt a new technology

The risks of new technologies may not initially be well identified, understood, or managed. You should take this into account when assessing the risks and benefits of available options.

Before deciding to adopt a new technology you should, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- consider the new technology and whether it's fit for purpose in your circumstances
- check that the [designer, manufacturer, and supplier](#) have considered the health and safety impact of the new technology
- check if the technology is proven and reliable, and
- consider whether the new technology adds additional risks or alters existing risks.

You should also actively engage with workers to discuss any challenges, risks, and opportunities. This will give those who'll be using the new technology an opportunity to provide their views. Working collaboratively helps ensure the highest level of protection for health and safety.

Manage risks when adopting new technology

Once you've decided to adopt a new technology, you need to consider possible risks. This includes risks during installation, use, maintenance, and decommissioning. You must effectively manage risks associated with the new technology and ensure that effective control measures are in place.

You also need to ensure anyone using the new technology is adequately trained and is given sufficient information and instruction about it. You should ask for and expect information from the designer, manufacturer, and supplier of the new technology.

Despite rigorous testing and consideration of potential risks, the use of new technology might introduce unforeseeable risks and consequences. You should have a process in place to assess and manage the actual risks and impacts of changes you make. After implementation you should systematically review your risk management processes to ensure they are working as intended.

WorkSafe may recommend or expect the use of new technology

We may recommend or expect the use of new technology when we believe that:

- the technology is readily available on the market
- there's sufficient evidence that it could eliminate or minimise a risk of harm, or
- the benefit of its use outweighs its risks, in terms of health and safety.

A range of data, insights, research, and other information will inform our decision to recommend or expect the use of a new technology. This includes:

- the risk, degree, and likelihood of harm
- established evidence of effectiveness
- rate of industry uptake
- efficiency or productivity impacts for business, and
- the cost of the new technology.

Sometimes new or updated regulations require the use of new technologies.

We may enforce our expectations

We may enforce our expectations where a PCBU has not appropriately managed risk. This could include where the use, or lack of use, of a new technology has directly contributed to harm or the risk of harm.

We may also follow up issues with the designer, manufacturer, or supplier.

If we're notified of an incident, we'll follow our position [When will WorkSafe intervene](#)

Further information

This document should be read in conjunction with the:

- position [Designers, manufacturers, importers, and suppliers](#)
- quick guide [Identifying, assessing, and managing work risks](#)

More information can be found in the:

- good practice guidelines [Health and safety by design](#)
- fact sheet [What is reasonably practicable](#)
- position [When will WorkSafe intervene](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#)