WORKSAFE
Mahi Haumaru Aotearoa

HSWA

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Managing risks at events

If you are organising an event, it is your responsibility to create a safe environment for everyone who attends. This includes people who work at the event. This guidance provides advice about identifying and managing health and safety risks for your event.

Who should read this guidance?

If you are organising an event, you are likely to be a 'person conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU).

This guidance is for any PCBU that organises events. It might also be useful for:

– PCBUs that own or manage venues where events are held
– PCBUs that are contracted to provide services at events
– health and safety professionals that provide health and safety advice to PCBUs involved with event management.

PCBU duties

PCBUs have duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA). In this guide, 'you' refers to a PCBU.

You can find more information about PCBUs on the WorkSafe website: Who or what is a PCBU?

Most events are workplaces. Workplaces must be clean, healthy, safe, accessible, and well maintained so work can be carried out without risks to worker health and safety. You can read more about workplaces on the WorkSafe website: Workplace and facilities requirements

PCBUs have a primary duty of care, which means they must ensure the health and safety of their workers, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes any other workers that are influenced by their business.

PCBUs must also look after people that could be put at risk by their work, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes customers, visitors, and the public. You can read more about this duty on the WorkSafe website: What is the primary duty of care?

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> **Reasonably practicable**
>
> There are two parts to 'reasonably practicable'.
>
> First, consider what actions are **possible** in your circumstances to ensure health and safety.
>
> Then, consider which of the possible actions are **reasonable** for you to take in your circumstances.
>
> You can read more about 'reasonably practicable' in the WorkSafe fact sheet:
> Reasonably practicable

Working with other PCBUs involved in your event

When you are organising an event, you will probably work with other PCBUs, such as local councils, venue owners, and service providers.

You must, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult, cooperate and coordinate with all other PCBUs who share the same duties. By communicating with other PCBUs involved in your event, you can avoid duplicating efforts to manage health and safety risks and prevent gaps in your risk management approach.

You cannot transfer your duties to another PCBU. Even if you have hired a service provider to help you identify and manage risks, you are still responsible for the health and safety of people at your event.

You can read more about PCBUs working together to manage health and safety risks on the WorkSafe website: Overlapping duties – quick guide and PCBUs working together: advice when contracting

Risk management

As a PCBU, you must manage risks so that the health and safety of workers and other people is not put at risk by the work you do.

Risk management is about:
– identifying hazards and assessing risks
– applying control measures to eliminate or minimise risks
– regularly reviewing control measures.

You must engage with your workers and their representatives, so far as is reasonably practicable, at all steps of the risk management process. You can read more about worker engagement, participation and representation on the WorkSafe website: Good practice for worker engagement, participation and representation

> **Hazards and risks**
>
> A **hazard** is anything that can cause harm.
>
> A hazard includes a person's behaviour, where that behaviour has the potential to cause death, injury, or illness to a person. This includes behaviours caused by physical or mental fatigue, drugs, alcohol, shock, and other things that could cause a temporary change in a person's behaviour.
>
> A **risk** arises from people being exposed to a hazard.
>
> Risk has two components – the likelihood that it will happen and the consequences (degree of harm) if it happens.

Identify the hazards for your event

All events are different. You need to think about all the possible hazards at your event and the harm they could cause. You can then create a strategy to manage risks to health and safety.

To identify the hazards for your event:

– ask your workers for their views

– think about the hazards at the event venue

– think about the environmental hazards that might affect the venue, workers, or attendees

– think about any incidents, accidents, or near misses that have happened at previous events.

> When you are identifying hazards for your event, you need to think about the whole duration of the event. This includes the installation and breakdown phases, and any other time when workers or other people will be on site.
>
> You also need to think about hazards in all areas of your event site, including queues, car parks, backstage areas, and catering areas.

Not all hazards are obvious. Consider hiring a health and safety expert to help you identify the hazards for your event.

Table 1 below outlines some common hazard areas that you should think about in your event planning. This is not a complete list because every event is different, but you could use these as a starting point for identifying hazards at your event.

HAZARD AREA	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Event location There may be several physical hazards to consider that are determined by the location of your event. The location of your event can also affect how safely people can evacuate the area, how quickly emergency services can attend, and how quickly a person can be transferred to hospital in an emergency.	– Is the event location remote, isolated, or exposed? – Are there existing structures (for example, bridges, streetlights, or fences) that could be hazardous? – Is there phone reception at the event location? Is it stable and reliable? – How far away is the nearest hospital and fire station? – How accessible is the event site from the nearest road? – Are there areas where visibility is low (for example, areas where there is not enough lighting, or areas where the view of a hazard might be obstructed)? – How will emergency services access the event site in an emergency?
Event duration Longer events can cause fatigue and exhaustion for attendees and workers, which can increase the risk of accidents and injuries.	– Will attendees and workers be staying at the event site overnight? – What policies will be in place to prevent worker fatigue? – Will there be enough lighting for people to get around the event site safely at night? – What medical and welfare services will be needed to cover the whole event?
Physical layout The layout of the event site can affect the movement and behaviour of attendees, workers, and emergency responders. A poor site layout can cause overcrowding and bottlenecks.	– How many emergency exits are there? Are they accessible? – How will people enter the venue? How many entry points will be needed? – Are there any tripping hazards on the event site (for example, slopes, potholes, boulders, or cables)? – Are there areas that people could fall from (for example, cliffs, unguarded stairs, platforms, or rooftops)? – Are there bodies of water that people could fall into (for example, swimming pools, lakes, culverts, or rivers)? – Are there any obstructions that could delay access for an emergency vehicle, or delay an evacuation?

HAZARD AREA	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Event activities The activities that might take place at events can be split into two broad groups: – activities that workers (including performers) might do to install, run, and breakdown an event, and – activities that attendees might do or use during the event. The injuries that might happen from activities will vary depending on the event. For example, the injuries that could happen at an outdoor obstacle course race event are likely to be different to the injuries that could happen at an indoor wine festival.	– What activities will workers and attendees be doing at the event? – What temporary structures will be needed? What will workers need to do to build, maintain, and dismantle them? – What types of injuries or health problems could event activities cause? – How likely is it that event activities could cause an injury to workers or attendees? – Will there be activities that could cause problems for people with certain health conditions (for example, high frequency strobe lighting)? – How close will attendees be to activities that could cause harm? – Are amusement devices safe to use? Are they registered?
Crowds Large crowds can be hazardous, causing a risk of crushing, trampling, or stampedes. If crowds are not properly managed, access to key areas of the event site can be blocked.	– What is the capacity of the event site? Is there enough space for the planned number of attendees and workers? – How many people are expected to attend the event? – How freely can attendees and workers move around the event site? – What information will people have to find their way around the event site? – Will there be areas of the event site where people are more likely to group together in crowds? – Will there be days (or times of day) that are expected to be especially busy? – How will emergency responders reach a person who needs medical attention in a crowd?
Weather conditions Weather conditions can be hazardous, especially for events that are held outdoors, or for indoor events that have outdoor areas (for example, entry queues). More extreme weather conditions are more hazardous.	– What is the weather forecast for the duration of the event? – How will the temperature of indoor spaces be controlled? – Are there areas of the event site that could be slippery in wet or icy conditions? – Where can attendees go to warm up if they are too cold, or cool down if they are too hot? – How visible will event signs be (for example, first aid stations) if conditions are foggy? – Will there be structures or barriers that could fall over in high winds? – How will emergency services access the event site if main roads are not accessible (for example, if roads are flooded, or damaged in an earthquake)?
Tools and equipment Most events will use tools and equipment. This might include audio and visual equipment, staging and rigging equipment, furniture and barriers, power tools, and catering equipment. Tools and equipment can be hazardous to workers and attendees, especially if they are not used properly, or if they are misused.	– Have workers received training to use tools and equipment safely? – Are there specific hazards associated with the tools and equipment that will be used (for example, electric shock or entanglement)? – Are tools and equipment maintained properly and safe to use? – What hazards could workers be exposed to when using tools and equipment (for example, fumes or noise)? – How will tools and equipment be stored? Will they be secure from unauthorised access?
Vehicles Vehicles may be essential to the smooth running of some events, but they can be hazardous to workers, attendees, and other people (for example, emergency responders).	– What types of vehicles are likely to be present? – How will traffic enter and exit the event site? What effect will this have on nearby roads? – Will there be areas where vehicles could collide with another vehicle, or with an attendee or worker? – Will there be areas where it would be unsafe to drive a vehicle (for example, uneven ground or a concealed slope)? – How will speed restrictions be communicated on or around the event site? – Will there be areas where a parked vehicle could cause an obstruction? – Are event vehicles maintained properly and safe to use?

HAZARD AREA	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Alcohol and other drugs People who are intoxicated can be hazardous to themselves or to other people. As well as causing harm from illness, alcohol can increase the chance of disorderly behaviour (including crime and violence).	– Will alcohol be served at the event? – What procedures will be in place to control how much alcohol is brought into the venue? – How many bars will there be? Where will they be located? – What processes will be in place to test or restrict drugs at the event? – What procedures will be in place to manage people who are intoxicated? – Where can intoxicated people go to get medical treatment or support? – How will intoxicated people be safely isolated from others if their behaviour is hazardous?
Worker and attendee welfare Events can be physically and mentally demanding for workers and attendees. People may be standing for long periods of time, working in extreme weather conditions, or doing activities that could cause injury.	– What groups of people are likely to attend the event? What types of support might they need? – Where can people go if they feel distressed? – Are event areas accessible for people with disabilities? – Is the event controversial? Is there a security risk? – What types of security measures are needed? – Will there be enough access to shade and drinking water for workers and attendees? – Where can attendees find information or get help? – Where can workers or attendees go to get treatment if they are injured or unwell?

TABLE 1: Examples of things to consider for common hazard areas at events

Assess the risks for your event

When you have identified the hazards for your event, you will need to carry out a risk assessment for each hazard.

To assess the risk from hazards at your event, think about:

– who might be exposed to the hazard
– how often the hazard is likely to cause a risk (for example, whether the hazard is present all the time, only at certain times, or rarely)
– what the possible consequences of the hazard are (for example, how severely might someone be harmed if the hazard happens)
– how likely the consequence of the risk is.

Involve your workers and their representatives in the risk assessment process. They will have operational day-to-day knowledge that will help you make sure that risks are fully assessed.

Keep in mind that it can be easy to underestimate how likely a risk is, or how severe its consequences might be if it happens. Consider hiring a health and safety expert to help you assess the risks for your event.

Hazards and risks can interact with each other

Events can be complex working environments with many risks that can interact with each other, and many people that could be affected by a risk.

When you are assessing the risks for your event, think about how hazards and risks might interact each other.

Some risks or hazards might make other risks or hazards more likely, more severe, or both.

Example 1

There will be a risk of fire at an event that uses indoor pyrotechnics. The consequences of a fire are likely to be more severe if emergency exits are blocked by equipment that has not been stored properly. The consequences are also likely to be more severe if more people attend the event than the venue can safely hold, causing a tightly packed crowd.

Example 2

There will be a risk of tripping at an event that has cables that run across a walkway that attendees will use. The likelihood of someone tripping is likely to be higher if alcohol is served at the event because alcohol can impair judgement and balance. The likelihood of tripping will be even higher if the walkway is in an area that is not well lit.

Prioritising risks

Decide which risks to deal with first. Your risk assessment should help you to determine which risks could cause potentially significant, life changing consequences such as serious injury or death.

Prioritise managing these risks first, then move on to managing risks that could cause less serious injury or harm.

Manage the risks for your event

You must take reasonably practicable steps to eliminate risks to health and safety.

If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate a risk, you must minimise the risk so far as is reasonably practicable. This means using control measures to:

– reduce how severe the harm is if people interact with a hazard

– reduce the chance of people interacting with a hazard.

Ideally, the control measures you use should reduce the severity of a risk **and** the chance of it happening.

Hierarchy of control measures

The ways of managing risks are ranked from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest. This ranking is known as the hierarchy of control measures (Figure 1).
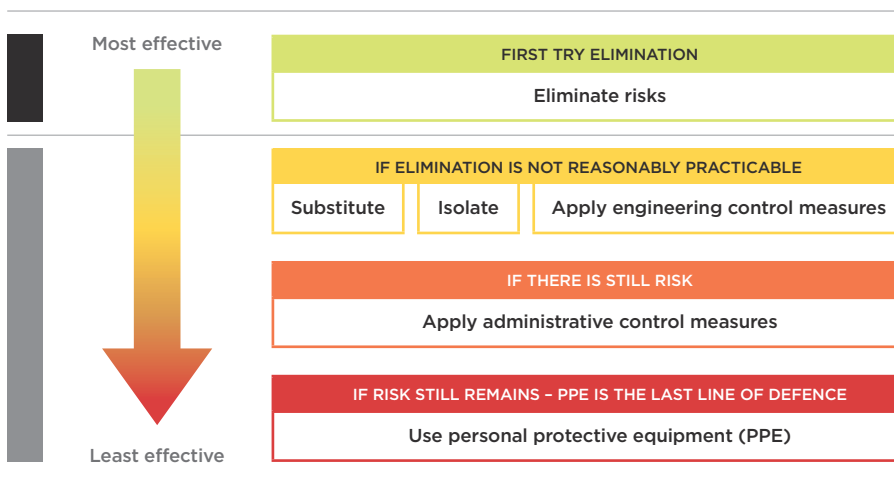

Most effective

FIRST TRY ELIMINATION

Eliminate risks

IF ELIMINATION IS NOT REASONABLY PRACTICABLE

Substitute | **Isolate** | **Apply engineering control measures**

IF THERE IS STILL RISK

Apply administrative control measures

IF RISK STILL REMAINS – PPE IS THE LAST LINE OF DEFENCE

Use personal protective equipment (PPE)

Least effective

● Elimination   ● Minimisation

FIGURE 1:
Hierarchy of control measures

Using the hierarchy of control measures to manage risks will help you make sure you are using the most effective control measures first. Table 2 below provides examples of control measures that might be used to manage risks at events.

ACTION		WHAT IS THIS?	EXAMPLE
Elimination		Removing the source of harm.	Postponing an event if severe weather conditions are forecast, such as extreme temperatures, high winds, or a risk of flooding. Designing an event to be pedestrian-only to eliminate the risk of vehicle collisions with workers or attendees. Limiting the number of tickets sold to an event to eliminate the risk of venue overcrowding.
MINIMISATION	Substituting (wholly or partly)	Swapping the hazard with something that has a lower risk.	Replacing high intensity lighting equipment with lower intensity lighting to minimise the risk of eye strain for performers. Using a lightweight lithium-ion generator instead of a fuel generator to minimise the risk of fire.
	Isolating or preventing contact	Separating people from the source of harm.	Storing machinery and tools in a lockable area to prevent unauthorised access. Providing a safe area for intoxicated people to wait in to minimise the risk of harm to others. Using barriers to separate crowded areas to minimising the risk of crushing.
	Using engineering control measures	Using physical control measures to reduce exposure to a hazard.	Installing slip-resistant flooring to reduce the risk of slips and falls in wet conditions. Using ramped cable protectors to reduce the risk of people tripping over loose or exposed cables.
	Using administrative control measures	Using safe methods of work, procedures, or processes.	Putting a policy in place that requires workers to take regular rest breaks to minimise the risk of heat exhaustion in hot weather. Putting an evacuation plan in place that clearly shows how the venue will be evacuated in an emergency. Providing attendees with a site map that clearly shows any hazardous areas that they should avoid.
	Using personal protective equipment (PPE)	Using or wearing items (including) to minimise risks to personal health and safety.	Providing workers with noise-reducing ear protection to minimise the risk of hearing damage from loud music or tools. Providing sunscreen to workers and attendees to minimise the risk of sunburn.

TABLE 2: Examples of control measures for events

Managing risks across a system

Instead of managing each risk in isolation, think about:
– whether using a particular control measure could create a risk somewhere else, or
– how using a particular control measure could affect other risks.

Weigh up the benefits of using a control measure against any risks that it could create somewhere else. For example:
– providing workers with noise-reducing ear protection could reduce their ability to hear approaching vehicles
– installing fencing around an event site could prevent unauthorised access but could create a risk of crowd congestion or bottlenecks at entry and exit points.

You should use the control measure that provides the least total risk. You can use the hierarchy of control measures to deal with risks that remain (residual risks).

Record how you manage risks

You should keep written records about how you manage the risks for your event. The larger, complex, or high-risk events are likely to need more detailed risk assessments.

Written records allow you to review how you are dealing with risks if something changes. You can also use these records to:

– share your risk management approach with other PCBUs involved in your event (such as venue owners, local councils, and contractors)
– share your risk management approach with emergency services (for example, police, fire, coastguard, and ambulance services) before your event
– train your workers about work risks and the control measures in place to manage them.

Monitor the control measures for your event

You are responsible for making sure that:
– control measures to manage risks are being applied
– control measures are effectively managing risks
– new risks that need to be managed are identified and controlled.

Monitoring how well your control measures are performing will show you if your control measures are effective. You should have a suitable process in place to allow workers to report incidents, near misses, or health and safety concerns.

Involve your workers or their representatives whenever you review your control measures. Where it is reasonably practicable, you should also consult with other PCBUs that are involved with your event.

Responding to changes

You need to check that your existing control measures are still suitable to use whenever there is a change in your event (for example, an unexpected change in weather conditions, the arrival of more attendees than expected, or a change to work processes).

You also need to review your control measures after any incident (for example, if a control measure does not control the risk it was supposed to control, so far as is reasonably practicable).

Act on lessons learned

Regularly review your performance and identify lessons from previous events. Learning from accidents, incidents, errors, and audits can help you to develop your risk management approach and make future events safer.

More information

WorkSafe guidance

Identifying, assessing and managing work risks

Providing a health service for an event – quick guide

Amusement devices

What events need to be notified?

Websites

worksafe.govt.nz