

Occupational Health & Safety

All business owners have certain rights and responsibilities regarding health and safety in the workplace.

Whether or not you employ staff, it's your responsibility to ensure that your business does not create any health and safety hazards for your customers and the general public. Understanding the Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) laws relevant to your business will help you avoid the unnecessary costs and damage to your business caused by workplace injury and illness.

OHS Acts and employers' obligations

Workplace health and safety authorities in each state and territory of Australia have the responsibility of making and enforcing OHS laws. Each state and territory has a principal OHS Act and under that legislation, employers are obliged to ensure:

- The workplace premises are safe
- Any machinery, substances and systems of work are safe
- Employees are given proper instruction, training and supervision
- The working environment and facilities are suitable for all employees.

Non-compliance with OHS legislation can result in prosecution and fines!

Getting started with OHS

Designate an employee to be in charge of OHS. Training courses are available to qualify as an OHS officer. Make sure all staff are aware of who is in charge of OHS and how to identify and report any hazards.

Educate team leaders and supervisors on how to keep workers safe and how to ensure workloads are not causing workers too much stress and fatigue.



Reduce risk of injury in the workplace

- Keep the workplace clean, tidy, well-lit and properly ventilated, free of slipping and tripping hazards and things like sharp edges, exposed hot surfaces and excessive noise
- Ensure all equipment, tools and machinery are used only for their specific purpose, are stored properly, regularly

cleaned and maintained and any faults are promptly reported and fixed

- Establish procedures for the protection of staff, customers, clients, visitors and children in the event of an emergency. Basic requirements include a smoke detector, alarm, fire extinguisher and evacuation plan
- Appoint a trained first aid officer who is easily accessible to all employees and who can deal with all possible types of injuries. Maintain first aid supplies and keep a register of all workplace injuries and first aid provided
- Provide training and, if possible, appropriate equipment to assist workers with manual handling and ensure that safe manual handling procedures are followed at all times.

Risk management

Risk management involves a careful examination of things in your workplace that could potentially cause harm to people. Basically, there are five steps you should follow:

1. Proactively look for any hazards; observe, inspect and investigate the workplace and make a list of any hazards identified
2. Assess the level of risk these hazards might create for people; deal with each one in order of priority
3. Determine control measures to either eliminate the hazard altogether, or if that is not possible, then to reduce the risk as much as possible
4. Implement the control measures you've decided upon, communicate them throughout your whole organisation and make arrangements for the maintenance of these measures

5. Regularly review the control measures that have been put in place and make any changes as needed.

Since your workers will be directly affected by any decisions made, it is important that they are actively involved in discussions about health and safety in the workplace. Often, workers see things an employer may overlook. Consultation will enable everyone concerned to share their experiences and views, offer suggestions on improvements or changes. Decisions can then be made that will benefit the whole organisation.

Your Action Plan

- Determine the legal obligations applicable to your business in your state – seek independent expert help if available.
- Contact the relevant OHS agency for advice, training and information on how to implement safety measures into your business.
- Conduct a risk assessment of your workplace (follow the 5 step process).
- Make sure all employees are aware of ways to reduce risk of injury in the workplace.

Contact Prosperity Accountants team today at enquiries@prosperityaccountants.com.au or call +61 8 9443 5199 for assistance with this Action Plan!

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