



Workplace Health & Safety

As a business owner, manager or director you have responsibilities in regard to health and safety in the workplace for your employees, customers and the public.

Under current Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) legislation, business owners, including directors, can be held personally responsible for health and safety in their workplace.

Each state has its own WHS authority that polices and enforces this legislation in order to create a safe work environment. There are two ways of viewing compliance with these WHS regulations, either as a stick which results from being prosecuted and fined if you do not comply, or a carrot where the employers are proactive and communicate with workers which in turn supports their success and helps them to retain staff and maximise productivity.

As a business owner/manager/director you have responsibilities in regard to health and safety in the workplace. You also need to ensure that the business doesn't create health and safety problems for your employees, customers or the public.

A worker can be a direct employee on full-time, part-time or casual basis. They can also be:

- a contractor,
- a volunteer,
- a student (on clinical placement or work experience).

To meet your compliance requirements, employers should take all reasonable, practical steps to ensure there are WHS policies and procedures in place and that workers have access to and training about these policies.

These policies and procedures should consider:

- The provision and maintenance of a safe work environment.
- The safe use, handling and storage of substances. e.g. cleaning products.
- The provision of appropriate information, training, instruction or supervision of all workers to perform their role safely.
- The identification of any hazards and associated risks at workplaces.
- The prompt implementation of risk control strategies to eliminate risks.
- Active participation in raising and resolving WHS issues.

WHS risks apply to small business with two workers as well as large organisations. The risks can pose

physical dangers or emotional distress to workers.

It is important that employers consult with their staff in regard to matters about WHS and also consult with appropriate advisors to ensure risk minimisation.

Like all other WHS risks, employers need to ensure that they have adequate policies and procedures in place and that all staff have been trained and understand the consequences of noncompliance. Don't wait for an issue to escalate. Participate in open and honest consultations with staff in the workplace and be prepared to not only share, but to listen to your staff.

If you have any questions, WorkPlacePlus can provide initial, free advice about WHS for SPA members. For a fee, WorkPlace Plus can support human resources policies by:

- facilitating risk workshops,
- developing or reviewing existing HR policies and procedures,
- conduct customised training, e.g. dealing with bullying and harassment, and
- conducting independent workplace investigations.

These will ensure that you, as the employer, have taken all reasonable and practical steps to identify and mitigate risks within the workplace.

See page 29 for examples of the potential risks.

For more information please contact Anna Pannuzzo on 0419 533 434 or email pannuzzo@workplaceplus.com.au or www.workplaceplus.com.au



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