

This information letter is distributed to those people who are ensuring that their workplace is safe and healthy. This includes members of OHS Committees, OHS Representatives, Safety Officers, Supervisors, Managers and Directors. "Your Safety Matters" was formerly "Committee Member" - a free information letter which has been distributed since 1996.

Risk Assessment

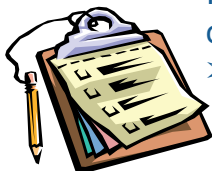


A number of WorkCover prosecutions have highlighted the importance of doing a risk assessment on a work activity. In these cases a risk assessment had not been done or was incomplete.

A **risk assessment** of a work activity is the procedure in which the risks in a work activity are fully identified and the severity of the risks are worked out based on how likely it is that someone will be harmed and the amount of harm that could be suffered. Then the risks can be eliminated or controlled.

Here are some recent examples;

1. An employee was killed when a stack of crates fell on him. A risk assessment of the stacking of crates had not been done and so the maximum safe number of crates in stack had never been established. The employer was fined \$140,000.
2. An employee was unable to walk again after lifting goods at work weighing 20kgs. No formal risk assessment had been done for this activity. The employer was fined \$100,000.
3. A risk assessment failed to identify a serious risk and the resulting fire harmed 2 employees. There were 2 employers involved, one was fined \$185,000 and the other was fined \$125,000.



In a recent case concerning a risk assessment Justice Boland pointed out 2 factors that must be kept in mind when doing a risk assessment;

- what is there in the work activity or in the workplace that could present a risk to the health, safety and welfare of employees or non-employees, and
- what might employees or non-employees do, whether because of inadvertence, inattention, haste or even foolish disregard of personal safety, that might place that person at risk.

This publication provides general information about ohs. It is not a legal opinion and does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law to be applied to a particular problem.