# Marine Education Society of Australasia

## HAZARD MANAGEMENT POLICY

### Purpose of guidelines

Commitment to workplace health and safety

MESA is committed to ensuring safe and healthy working conditions for all staff. This guideline establishes a policy on managing workplace hazards with MESA.

### Scope

This document applies to any work activity undertaken by employees of the MESA whether within MESA premises or at another work site.

### Legal Framework

The OH & S (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991 requires agencies to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of staff.

This includes ensuring all hazards and incidents are reported and recorded. The records are then to be used to identify potential risks and steps taken to eliminate or reduce those risks within the workplace.

### Definition of a hazard

A hazard is something with the potential to cause harm. Examples of hazards:

- Poor storage practices for example storing heavy items overhead
- Exposure to excessive noise from machines
- Lifting heavy dive equipment

### Definition of a Risk

The risk is the potential for the hazard to actually cause harm. For example, one risk associated with excessive noise is deafness. One hazard can cause many and different risks. To determine the level (or severity) of the risk, the agency must consider:

- **OUTCOME** - for each hazard, what is the worst likely outcome from exposure to the hazard?
- **LIKELYHOOD** - What is the likelihood of harm occurring if the person is exposed to the hazard?
- **EXPOSURE** - how many people are exposed to the hazards and for how long?

### Responsibilities:

MESA must put in place a system to identify, record
### Management

and assess and manage all risks. The two processes – hazard identification and risk assessment – are the key activities in ensuring the overall health and safety of staff.

The organisation’s overall planning and risk management processes should identify the health and safety impacts of any new process, activity, piece of equipment. For example, OHS compliance should be written into tender specification for new services or equipment. Planning and corporate strategy must encompass OHS as part of the risk assessment of all business activities and inputs. Otherwise health and safety will always be an added extra or the thing that stops us doing what we were going to do. When Health and Safety management systems are part of business management, all the costs and impacts of work management are accounted for and controlled. The tools used to account for and control health and safety impacts are hazard identification and risk assessment.

### Employees and volunteers

Employees should be alert to any activity, situation or piece of equipment that might cause injury or illness to another. All hazards must be reported so that remedial action can be taken before an accident is caused. This is different from reporting incidents which can occur long after the hazard that caused the accident has arisen.

Employees must ensure they report any actual incidents to Human Resources by using an Incident Report form. This form is available on the Comcare website [www.comcare.gov.au](http://www.comcare.gov.au) and from HR.
HAZARD MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Identify the hazards

Examples of physical hazards
Examples of mechanical/electrical hazards
Examples of chemical hazards
Examples of biological hazards
Examples of psychosocial hazards

Assess the risks

1. IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS

There are 5 different classes of hazards: physical - floors, stairs, slippery surfaces, lifting, noise, air quality; mechanical/electrical - machinery, pressure vessels, dangerous goods, cranes; chemical - cleaning agents, dust and fumes, acids and other chemicals; biological - bacteria, insects, viruses, vermin, animals; psychosocial - workplace stressors, poor work practices, bullying and other conduct issues.

Methods for identifying the hazards

- Illness and injury records
- Records of near misses
- Formal and informal feedback from Health and Safety reps and other consultative positions and forums
- Hazard audits and assessments
- Workload measurement
- Accessing current research and monitoring health and safety trends
- Repair and maintenance records

2. ASSESS THE RISKS

To gauge the level of risk caused by a hazard, the agency must consider the outcome, likelihood and exposure.

Ask yourself, what could happen? What is the mechanism of injury? How likely is this outcome? What are the consequences and how great is the exposure?

For example, what could happen from the organisation’s use of Formaldehyde to preserve specimens?

There are a number of potential outcomes including inhalation of fumes, spillage on the skin arising from human error, storage practices, laboratory procedures, laboratory fit-out and
Hazard Management Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work out risk level by using the Risk Assessment table</th>
<th>other causes. This chemical may cause short and long term problems some very serious and others more trivial.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 LIKELIHOOD</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Likely Likely Unlikely Highly Unlikely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fatality</td>
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<td>Major injury</td>
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<td>Minor injuries</td>
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<td>Negligible injuries</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH/ MED/ LOW</td>
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Control the Risks

If you have assessed a risk as either high or medium risk, you must put risk control measures in place to reduce or eliminate the risk either by reducing the likelihood or the consequences of an adverse event.

In the case of a low risk, you should continue to monitor the risk – adopt a watching brief.

Hierarchy of Controls

There are a number of ways of controlling risks in the workplace. These are known as the **Hierarchy of Controls**. Controls should be selected from as high up in the hierarchy as possible. In many cases a combination of controls may be necessary to reduce the level of risk. Administrative controls and use of personal protective equipment are designated as back up controls, that is they should be used in conjunction with more effective and reliable controls. They cannot be used alone to control risks as they are affected by intangible and uncontrollable factors such as: employees’ awareness of risk; their beliefs that accidents happen to other people; fatigue; a culture of
Hazard Management Policy

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<th>Monitor and Review</th>
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<td>expertise/superiority (that is that only inexperienced employees have accidents); and relying on things staying the same. These factors can be seen to operate in many workplaces where employees might say: “We’ve never had a diving accident” or “I’ve been doing this for years.”</td>
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1. **ELIMINATE THE HAZARD** – is the equipment, activity or practice necessary? Can the hazardous activity be outsourced?
2. **SUBSTITUTE** – find something with a lesser risk eg find less toxic cleaning agents
3. **ISOLATE THE HAZARD** – engineer out the hazard eg use of trolleys from manual handling, guards on equipment, improve laboratory design
4. **ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS** – training, adequate supervision, maintenance schedules, limitation of exposure time, development of safe work procedures
5. **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT** – dust masks, gloves or eye/ hearing protection.

Effective risk controls are those that don’t rely on people alone to make them work.

4. **Monitor and Review**

Once the existing workplace hazards are under control, the process of review must ensure that no new hazards have developed or that existing control methods are effective and have had the desired affects. Risk control measures must lower the risk of injury and a relationship between adoption of the control measure and lowered risk must be established and demonstrated.

Unless elimination is adopted as a risk control measure, there may be a residual risk (the remaining level of risk after all risk control measures are taken). Organisations must be able to define the nature and level of the residual risk.
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<th>Where do we find some advice on appropriate risk control measures?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use of standards, Codes of Practice, Advisory Standards, Australian Standards</td>
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and be prepared to accept risk.

Be aware that adoption of certain risk control measures may also create a secondary hazard that will also need to be controlled. For example, use of earmuffs to control exposure to noise may create a safety hazard if employees cannot hear a fire alarm.

Ask a Human Resources Officer or your Health and Safety Representative for help.

**Legislation**

The OH & S (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991 gives broad advice as to the responsibilities of parties involved in health and safety in the workplace.

Where the Commonwealth is silent, State legislation may apply.

**Regulations**

The Commonwealth legislation has established regulations covering major hazards common to Commonwealth workplaces. Certain health and safety activities are also mandated by this legislation: These are:

- Plant
- Confined Spaces
- Occupational Noise
- Manual Handling (including the prevention of Occupational Overuse Syndrome)
- Hazardous Substances
- Notification of workplace incidents within the prescribed timeframe
- Hazard management
- Certification of Plant operators and plant licenses obtained for specified items
- Safe work procedures are developed for all activities where significant risk exists
- Establishing a consultative and investigation framework with unions.
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<th><strong>Investigation framework with unions.</strong></th>
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Any requirement established under the Act or regulations is compulsory.

**National Standards**

National Standards are developed and declared by the National OHS Commission and deal with specific hazards such as noise or confined spaces. These are intended to be included in the legislative framework of the Commonwealth every State and Territory (see regulations above).

**Codes of Practice**

The National Occupational Health and Safety Commission has developed certain guidelines that are designed to outline ways of meeting the National Standards. If they are included in the legislative framework then these Codes are compulsory. If they are not then they may be used as a standard of best practice in a court of law.

**Australian Standards**

These are standards set by Standards Australia, an independent body founded in 1922. Standards Australia sets design and technical standards which may be relevant to health and safety in the workplace. Some of these include lighting, ventilation, scientific diving, safety signs and emergency control measures in the workplace. Where these are mentioned in legislation, they are compulsory.

**Guidance Notes or Advisory Standards**

Guidance notes are advisory guides relating to Commonwealth standards and/or Codes of Practice. Advisory standards are the State equivalent documents.

Further advice may be obtained on the Comcare website [www.comcare.gov.au](http://www.comcare.gov.au), the website of
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<th>Reporting a hazard</th>
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<td>1. If you notice a hazardous situation, tell someone such as a health and safety representative or supervisor.</td>
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<td>2. Notify MESA formally by writing a hazard report.</td>
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<td>3. The report goes direct to MESA President and will be actioned within 24 hours.</td>
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<td>4. You will be notified of the result of the investigation.</td>
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