AUGUST
SAFETY TALK

THE IMPORTANCE OF RISK ASSESSMENTS

Under the *Workers Compensation Act*, the employer is responsible for:

- Ensuring the health and safety of all workers present at the workplace;
- Remedying any hazards in the workplace;
- Ensuring workers are made aware of hazards

In order to meet these conditions, there must be an effective hazard identification and risk assessment process.

Definitions:

A *hazard* is any condition or circumstance that has the potential to cause injury, illness or disease to workers, or property damage.

Risk is the combination of probability that a hazard could cause harm, and the seriousness of injury or damage if it could cause harm.

A *Risk Assessment* is a process where you identify hazards, analyse or evaluate the risk associated with that hazard and determine the appropriate ways to eliminate or control the hazard.

WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requires formal, written risk assessments for high hazards in the workplace, but since the employer must ensure workers are aware of hazards, risk assessments need to be completed for all work done in order to identify the hazards and establish controls to protect workers.

Workers need to be involved in the risk assessment process; they know the work, and they know the hazards.

Where to start?

1. Identify all work done by employees
2. Identify hazards
3. Rate the hazards
4. Establish controls to protect workers from those hazards

When rating hazards, it is best to quantify numerically, so the most hazardous situation can be addressed first.

Once the risk assessment is completed, controls must be put in place to eliminate or minimize the hazards.

And at some point, the employer and workers may need to say the risk of injury is reduced to as low a level as possible; not all hazards can be completely removed. Being aware that a hazard exists may be the only way it can be avoided.

More information on process can be obtained through the BCMSA course, “Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment”.

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