**Safe Work Australia**

Virtual Seminar Series

§ (Music Playing) §

**Ben:**

My name’s Ben. I’m an inspector with Worksafe, and I work out of the Dandenong office.

The first thing about a Worksafe inspection would be to find the hazards in your workplace. It could be really obvious as part of your industry, or they could be less obvious. A hazard is any source of potential harm or injury. So by identifying those upfront, we know where we stand and where we need to move to reduce those and make it a safer workplace.

Talk with your workers directly. They’re probably your biggest asset. They can have a wealth of experience, and you really need to tap into that. It could be formally, so you could schedule meetings, have them booked in on calendars and get representatives from your work group and your team leaders together, or it could be casual where you walk around or have a barbecue on Friday and have a good chat.

So once you’ve identified the hazards in your work area, the next step is to formalise those with a safety action plan for example. We have a tool available on our website that can help with getting those down on paper. So some hazards that you can identify might be obvious. They could be something sharp or some exposed gears. Those things are generally quite obvious, but there are other ones that are harder to identify that might be less immediate. Things like exposure to chemicals and noise is something that we see regularly.

A good way to identify hazards that are affecting your workplace in particular would be to look through your records of injury. These should be reported by your employees, and it can be as simple as a diary for the employees to record what’s happened, and it can cover near misses. This is going to identify any trends that are occurring in your workplace, and can let you get ahead and become proactive of the more serious injuries.

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**Cheryl**:

My name’s Cheryl and I’m an inspector at Worksafe based at our Essendon Fields office. Once you’ve identified your potential hazards, then what you should be doing is an assessment of those hazards. So when you’re doing your assessment you need to consider all of the things involved in the task. So what’s the potential injury? Could it be a scratch or a bruise or could it be as serious as somebody being killed at work?

You also need to consider how often the job is being done. So is it done on a daily basis, numerous times a day? Is it done on a weekly basis or is it done on a monthly basis or even less often? So you need to consider all of those factors before you move on to the next step.

Once you’ve done that part of the assessment, then you need to put them in to a priority order. So the ones that have the highest risk, you need to implement some controls around those in the first instance, and the ones with the least amount of risk, then you would start looking at what are some of the controls that you could put in place.

And once you’ve got your list of hazards, then you should review that on a regular basis, and that can be up to the workplace to determine. It might be that you do it monthly. It might be that you do it every six months or on an annual basis. But you need to make sure that when you introduce new tasks that you also address and assess those tasks as well.

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**Damian:**

My name’s Damian. I’m a Worksafe inspector based out of the Geelong office. Identify what the hazards are and then go through a risk matrix if you like to determine where that attention is going to be put to first.

Once you’ve identified those hazards and you’ve identified where that attention needs to be addressed if you like, how we’re going to prioritise it, engage the staff, get the staff engaged in the process. Get the feedback from them in terms of how they think things should look. A lot of the times the best suggestions come from the employees. They’re the ones dealing with the hazards day in, day out. That’s really key through the process.

In terms of the way the risk is eliminated, that’s what we look for firstly. Can this risk be eliminated? Is this task required to be done? From there, if we determine that this process needs to take place, it can’t be eliminated because this is the process that needs to be done, we look in terms of substitutes, so alternative methods in terms of how the task can be achieved.

Often those solutions won’t be there right at the forefront during those discussions with the employer. Those things may take a bit of time. I tend to promote Worksafe’s website as much as I can. I find it very good just even internally in terms of sources of reference. I direct the employers there wherever I can.

A lot of the times when you do talk to the employer representatives, a lot of them have had previous experience outside their current workplace, and obviously that experience is quite relevant to what they’re doing, hence why they’re in that role. So you can offer some suggestions at times, and they will help you sort of tease that out a little bit more. So they’ll say ‘At our previous job we did A, B or C’. So they’ve already got that industry experience and they’ve already got some exposure in terms of some potential better practices that have been developed. There may be some networks already established within that industry where they can get that information from.

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