

THIS GUIDANCE APPLIES FROM 1 APRIL 2027

Managing critical risks for small PCBU

This guide helps small PCBUs understand how to manage critical risks under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA)

KEY POINTS

- Small PCBUs' main HSWA duties are limited to managing critical risks, though they can choose to manage other risks.
- A critical risk is a risk that is likely to result in:
 - death
 - a notifiable injury
 - a notifiable illness
 - a notifiable incident
 - a specified occupational disease¹or,
 - is managed by regulations under HSWA.²

See our guidance [What is critical risk?](#) for more information on identifying critical risks.

See our guidance [Am I a small or large PCBU?](#) for more information on how to work out if you are a small PCBU.

Managing critical risks

You must manage your critical risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

For more information on managing risk see [How to manage work risks](#)

¹ As listed under Schedule 2 [Accident Compensation Act 2001](#)

² As listed under [Schedule 1A HSWA](#)

Duties that are limited to critical risks for small PCBU's

For small PCBU's your main duties are limited to managing critical risks. This means you are not required to manage other risks. The duties that are limited to critical risks are listed below.

DUTIES	DETAILS
The primary duty of care	Small PCBU's must ensure the health and safety of workers and other people who may be affected by critical risks arising from their work.
Duty of a PCBU who manages or controls a workplace	This duty for small PCBU's only applies to critical risks .
Duty of a PCBU who manages or controls fixtures, fittings, or plant at a workplace	This duty for small PCBU's only applies to critical risks .
Duties related to training, supervision, and information	When a small PCBU's work is affected by a hazard associated with a critical risk , so far as is reasonably practicable, it must make sure workers have adequate knowledge and experience or are adequately supervised and adequately trained. For more information about training, supervision, information, see Providing information, training, instruction or supervision for workers
Duties related to personal protective equipment (PPE)	When managing a critical risk includes providing PPE to workers or other persons, a small PCBU must: - provide them with the appropriate PPE, unless another PCBU has provided the PPE - make sure the PPE provided is suitable, maintained and cleaned.
Officer duties	Officers of small PCBU's must exercise due diligence to make sure the small PCBU is complying with its duty to identify and manage critical risks .
Upstream duties: - Duty of a PCBU who designs plant, substances, or structures - Duty of a PCBU who manufactures plant, substances, or structures - Duty of a PCBU who imports plant, substances, or structures - Duty of a PCBU who supplies plant, substances, or structures - Duty of a PCBU who installs, constructs, or commissions plant or structures	These duties for small PCBU's only apply to critical risks . For more information about these upstream duties, see WorkSafe's guidance on Upstream duties

There are some other things that you have to do

Worker welfare duties apply in all workplaces because these duties are about basic working conditions, not risk levels.

So far as is reasonably practicable, you must still ensure that adequate facilities are provided for workers at your workplace including:

- toilets
- drinking water
- hand washing facilities
- first aid
- emergency planning

For more information see [General risk and workplace management – part 1](#)

What does all this mean in practice?

The main HSWA duties apply to small PCBU's only for critical risks. Small PCBU's do not have to manage other risks under these duties.

This means:

- the first thing you have to do is identify your critical risks
- you must use what you know, and what you ought reasonably to know, about your work and the hazards involved, to assess your critical risks
- you should take a practical, common-sense approach to identifying and assessing your critical risks
- critical risks must be managed, not just identified
- critical risks must be managed 'so far as is reasonably practicable'
- monitor, review and revise controls related to critical risks.

See [What is critical risk?](#) for steps detailing how to identify critical risks.

Example: small farm or orchard

A small farm must manage hazards relating to critical risks such as:

- machinery and vehicles (rollovers, crushing)
- working at height (falls)
- hazardous substances (poisoning, burns, long-term illness)
- electricity (electrocution)
- heat and sun exposure (heat stroke, dehydration)
- noise (hearing loss).

The small farm must provide for worker welfare (toilets, water, hand washing facilities).

The farm is not required to manage other risks such as:

- sprains or strains from lifting boxes, or slips and trips in the home office of the farm.

They might choose to manage these risks voluntarily to keep workers safe and avoid lost productivity.

Example: small retail shop or dairy

A small shop must provide for worker welfare (such as toilets, water, hand washing facilities).

They are not required to manage other risks such as:

- minor manual handling injuries
- slips and trips that will likely only cause minor injuries
- minor cuts.

Whether violence and aggression in retail are a critical risk will depend on the particular circumstances. For example, a late-night dairy or liquor store may decide robbery is a critical risk and must manage it, such as through security measures.

Working with other PCBU's

If you have the same health and safety duties as another PCBU you are working with, you must consult, cooperate, and coordinate with them, so far as is reasonably practicable.

For more information about working with other PCBU's to manage the same health and safety duties, and how this works for small PCBU's (including how risks can be managed differently through contracting arrangements with large PCBU's), see *Working with other PCBU's to manage work risks* (guidance to be released soon).