

Approach to managing risk

Risks to health and safety arise from people being exposed to a hazard (a source or cause of harm).

A PCBU must first try to **eliminate** a risk if this is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, it must be **minimised** so far as is reasonably practicable.

Small PCBUs (fewer than 20 workers)

Small PCBUs are only required to meet specified HSWA duties in relation to critical risks, including sections 36–43 (excluding section 36(3)(e)) and regulations 9, 15(2), and 19 of the Health and Safety at Work (General Risk and Workplace Management) Regulations 2016.

When complying with other duties, small PCBUs must manage critical risks first. Where PCBUs have the same duty, small PCBUs are required to cooperate with other PCBUs for critical risks. Small PCBUs may choose to cooperate in relation to risks other than critical risks.

Large PCBUs (20 or more workers)

Large PCBUs must manage both critical and other risks, but are required to give priority to critical risks. Where PCBUs have the same duty, large PCBUs are required to cooperate with other PCBUs for all relevant risks.

For more information about small and large PCBUs and critical risks, see our guidance:

- [Am I a small or large PCBU?](#)
- [What is a critical risk?](#)
- [Managing critical risks for small PCBUs](#)
- [Prioritising critical risks for large PCBUs](#)

A PCBU must engage with workers and their representatives:

- when identifying and assessing risks, and
- when making decisions about how to eliminate or minimise the risks using appropriate control measures.

Follow the steps below to identify, assess and manage work health and safety risks.

Blue shading is used to denote content based on the changes to the Health and Safety at Work Act that come into effect on 1 April 2027.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY HAZARDS THAT COULD GIVE RISE TO WORK RISKS

With your workers, identify what could harm the health or endanger the safety of one or more workers or others (such as visitors, or bystanders).

STEP 2: ASSESS WORK RISKS

With your workers, identify and assess the risks arising from each work hazard.

Ask:

- Who might be exposed to the hazard?
- What could happen?
 - How severe could the resulting injuries be?
 - How could people's health be affected?
 - How likely are these consequences?
 - Is the hazard associated with a critical risk?
- Decide which risks to deal with immediately prioritising critical risks.

STEP 3: DECIDE HOW TO MANAGE EACH RISK

With your workers, decide how to manage work risks.

Multiple control measures may be needed to deal with a given risk. Give preference to control measures that protect many workers at the same time (for example, safety barriers, safety nets).

Use the following hierarchy of control measures (Figure 1) to work out the most effective control measures to use.

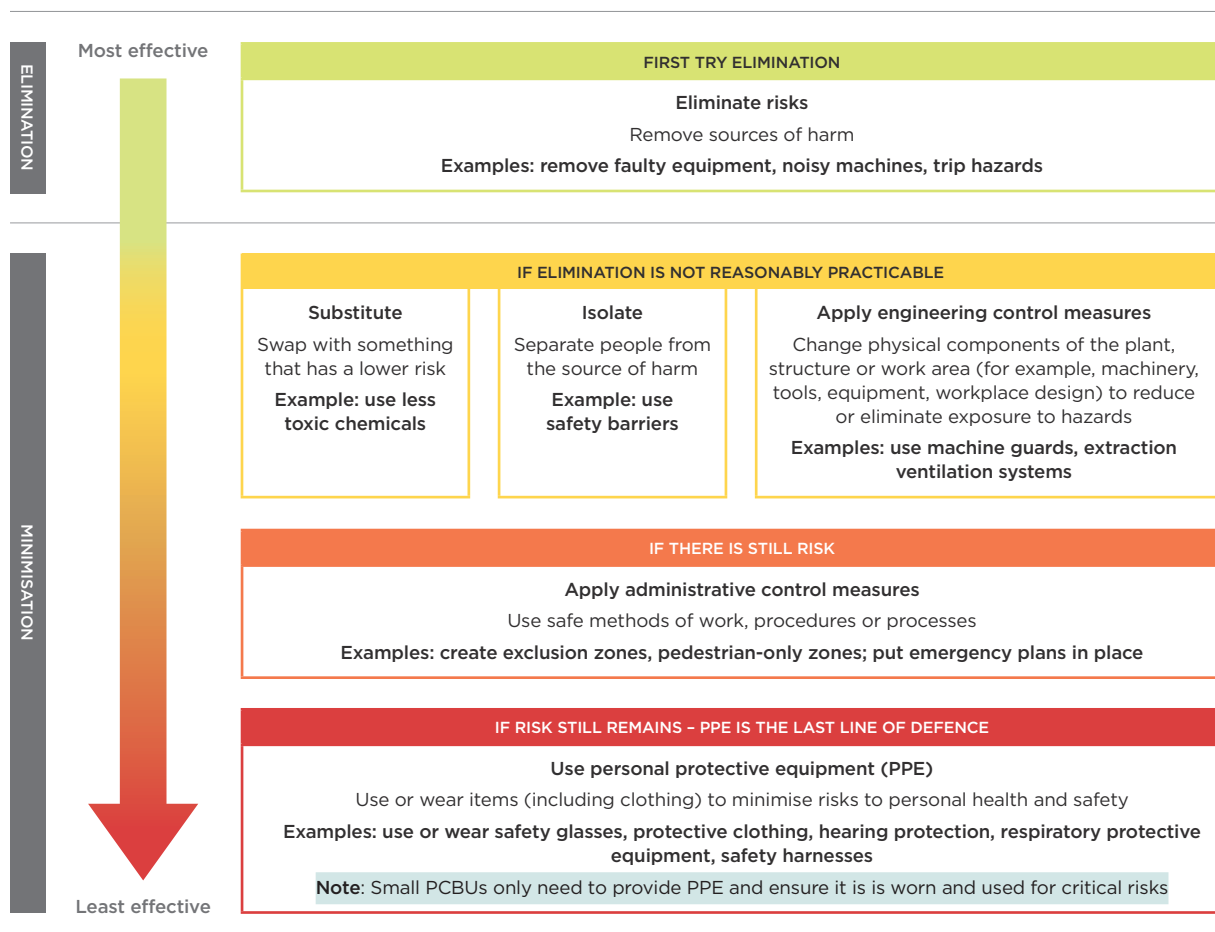


FIGURE 1: Hierarchy of control measures

First try to eliminate

First try to eliminate the risk, if this is reasonably practicable. This can be done by removing the source or cause of harm (such as faulty equipment, a noisy machine or a trip hazard).

Then try to minimise

If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, the risk must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

Minimise the risk using one or more of the following actions:

- substitute/swap with something that has a lower risk
- isolate the hazard by separating people from the source of harm
- apply engineering control measures (where physical components of the plant, structure or work area are changed to reduce or eliminate exposure to hazards).

If the risk still remains after taking one or more of the actions above, try to minimise the risk with administrative control measures (safe methods of work, procedures or processes).

If there is still risk, use personal protective equipment (PPE) to minimise the risk. PPE is the least effective control measure, and should only be used when other control measures alone cannot adequately manage the risk.

STEP 4: PUT CONTROL MEASURES IN PLACE

As soon as possible after a decision is made about the control measures, a PCBU should:

- put the control measures in place
- instruct and train workers (including new workers) about the control measures, including why it is important to use them and how to apply them.

STEP 5: REVIEW AND IMPROVE CONTROL MEASURES

Make sure control measures remain effective, fit-for-purpose, suitable for the nature and duration of the work, and used correctly.

With your workers, regularly monitor control measures to confirm that the measures are effective.

Review control measures:

- when a new risk is identified
- when there is a change at the workplace or to the work
- when workers or their health and safety representative ask for a review
- when there is evidence that control measures may not be working effectively to manage the risk (for example, when you receive monitoring results or a report following an incident investigation).

Use guidance from WorkSafe or others (for example, industry associations) to help to identify, assess, and manage risks, and review control measures. If you need help, WorkSafe recommends getting advice from a suitably qualified and experienced health and safety professional.

For more information, see our guidance [Identifying, assessing and managing work risks](#)