



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY “HOT SPOTS” IN OOSH

This Factsheet provides an overview of areas (hot spots) that OOSH services need to consider in relation to Occupational Health and Safety. This Factsheet is not however, intended to be exhaustive, restrictive or absolute.

Employers need to ensure that they establish safe work policies and procedures and that all workers follow them. Safe work procedures help to ensure the workers are aware of the risks in their work tasks, and outline how to avoid injury or illness while doing these tasks.

The workers should be involved in the development of a safety reporting procedure – consider:

- ★ **What matters to report** – e.g. faulty equipment, hazardous spills, housekeeping issues, injuries, near misses
- ★ **How to report them** – for those work tasks that pose a serious risk, a written reporting procedure for major safety issues is appropriate so that you are able to better identify trends, and develop prevention strategies
- ★ **To whom to report them** – nominate someone to have authority to act upon the safety reports, such as the coordinator

Many workplace safety issues will be minor and can be resolved without the need for documentation, particularly if the issue can be addressed immediately. In some situations, however, where there is a significant safety issue that cannot be resolved immediately, you are well advised to make a record of the following:

- ★ who made the report
- ★ when the report was made
- ★ to whom the report was made
- ★ nature of the problem
- ★ action taken to resolve the problem
- ★ further action required – what, when and by whom.

■ OHS “HOT SPOTS” IN OOSH

The following areas have been identified as areas that require safe work policies and procedures:

★ **Infectious diseases** – Centres need to adopt the best standards of hygiene in their centres to avoid the spread of infectious diseases. Careful hand washing and regular cleaning of equipment and food preparation areas are vital for this.

A written policy on infectious diseases is essential so that all staff understands and adheres to preventative measures.

★ **Electrical Safety** – All electrical equipment needs to be checked regularly to ensure it is safe to use. Once warranties have expired centres need to have all electrical equipment inspected, tested and tagged by a licensed electrician. Centres need to take a risk assessment approach to tagging and how often items need to be checked – further information on this is available in the WorkCover publication “Electrical Equipment Inspection Check List”.

Electrical sockets, extension cords, equipment etc. needs to be undamaged and care taken when using appliances. Staff should be trained in the use of new equipment.

★ **Hazardous substances** – Chemicals need to be labelled, stored and used correctly. A hazardous substance register should be drawn up containing Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for chemicals, which are available from product suppliers/manufacturers.

Staff need to be trained in dealing with chemical spills and mishaps.

★ **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – Adequate shade and sun protection needs to be provided to all staff that work outside. This includes factor 30 sunscreen, wide brimmed hats, sunglasses and protective clothing that covers a minimum of half way between shoulder and elbow and to the knee. All shirts should be collared. Closed in footwear should be worn. Gloves, masks and safety glasses need to be supplied where appropriate to the task being undertaken by staff.

Access to Hepatitis A & B vaccinations is also the responsibility of the employer.

★ **Manual Handling** – Moving heavy objects should be done as a team, all equipment should be easily accessible and workers should not have to stretch to reach equipment. The need to bend and lift should be minimised by not storing materials above head height.

All awkward and heavy objects needing to be moved regularly should be colour coded to indicate how many people are needed to lift them. When using portable ladders, instructions and weight limits need to be followed. Staff need to be careful not to twist their backs when lifting.

★ **Emergency Evacuation** – Employers are required to have documented evacuation procedures in place in case of emergencies. This involves having plans appropriate to a variety of situations - e.g. bomb scare, chemical fire, (which may require two possible meeting points dependant on wind direction on the day), fire, hostage situation, intruder, etc. that are posted in all rooms; training staff so they know how to follow plans and ensuring the plans are kept up to date. Evacuation plans need to be practised and evaluated. The dates of these drills need to be recorded.

★ **Violence in the Workplace** – It is the employer's responsibility to maintain a place of work that is safe and without risk to the employees' health. Violence can occur between colleagues, parents, guardians and children. Policies and procedures are required to cover this issue and may require the suspension of families/children who are violent. Staff who are violent towards each other may also be liable for dismissal.

★ **Staff Amenities** – When working outdoors workers must be supplied with drinking water stored at or below 24 degrees (if on excursions it is the centre's responsibility to purchase chilled water if it cannot be kept cold). Minimum toilet requirements for staff need to be met. A free staff amenities publication is available from WorkCover NSW. The Staff Handbook should include information on safe work practices, reporting requirements, etc.

★ **Stress** – Working in OOSH can be very stressful and often leads to burnout. Many factors can lead to stress at work, such as communication difficulties between staff and management or new demands being placed on staff. Stress can be reduced through recognition, improving social interaction between staff, staff training and participation. Having accurate staff job descriptions can also reduce the likelihood of burnout related to stress.

★ **First Aid** – A qualified first aider should be on site at all times to minimise immediate risks from injuries. The risks associated with giving first aid should be assessed (such as exposure to infected bodily fluids etc) and managed accordingly.

First Aid kits need to be readily available and fully stocked. Records of first aid should be kept and regularly evaluated at OHS meetings. Staff need to be able to access First Aid in a private setting away from clients. An injury register is required and a report may need to be made. Check with your Workers Compensation insurer and then develop a procedure for reporting staff injuries.

■ ESSENTIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM NETWORK:

★ *Policies in Practice: A Handbook of day-to-day Policies for OOSH Centres*

■ OTHER RELEVANT OOSH DEVELOPMENT FACTSHEETS:

★ *Occupational Health and Safety – Overview (9A)*

★ *Risk Assessment and Management (9B)*

■ REFERENCE

WorkCover NSW - www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

THIS FACTSHEET LINKS TO

QA 6 'HEALTH, NUTRITION AND WELL-BEING',

QA 7 'PROTECTIVE CARE AND SAFETY' AND

QA 8 'MANAGING TO SUPPORT QUALITY'.



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