



# Health and Safety for congregations

## Risk Management Guide

### How this guide can help you

The way we care for our staff, volunteers and visitors is an expression of God's love. We can demonstrate our care for others by planning for, and addressing issues that might be harmful. To prevent harm a proactive approach to managing risks must be adopted. Risk management involves identifying hazards, assessing and controlling risks. Congregations also have a legal responsibility to manage risks to health and safety. Put simply, from a moral, ethical and financial perspective, managing risks to health and safety is of utmost importance.

#### The practical tools you will find:

● *First Aid, Hazard, Incident and Injury Record*

● *WHS Risk Register*

### The risk management cycle

To manage health and safety hazards and risks, congregations need to:

**Step 1.** Identify hazards and risks associated with the environment or tasks performed for the congregation.

**Step 2.** Assess the risks.

**Step 3.** Control the risks by making the changes necessary to eliminate the hazards or minimise risks, as far as practicable.

**Step 4.** Monitor and review the effectiveness of the controls.

It is easier to maintain a safe environment when we consult with everyone involved. It is therefore very important to include staff and others involved in each step of the risk management process.



### Step 1 Identify hazards

Identify things or 'hazards' that could potentially cause harm to people. Day to day, it is important to stop, step back and think through tasks to ensure they can be performed safely. Think about all the things that can harm people. These could be either physical and psychosocial.

To identify hazards, it can also be important to:

- Inspect facilities under the control of the congregation. An inspection should be completed routinely to identify hazards before they cause harm. This should be tailored to physical environment and activities of your congregation



Uniting Church in Australia  
Western Australia



A CHRISTIAN  
COMMUNITY  
FOR EVERYONE



# Health and Safety for congregations

## Risk Management Guide

### Step 1 Identify hazards (continued)

To identify hazards, it can also be important to:

- Consult with people who perform work for the congregation. Ask them to identify and report any hazards.
- Review first aid records and any incident reports.
- Think about any safety concerns raised by others.

Hazards that are identified and cannot be immediately controlled should be added to the congregation WHS risk register (template available for download). The risk register should be reviewed by the Church Council regularly to ensure hazards are identified and corrective actions undertaken to minimise the risk of harm. This can also be a helpful step to ensure the controls identified continue to be effective (refer to step 4).

### Step 2 Assess the risk

When we assess the risk, it is important to consider what could happen if someone is exposed to the hazard and how likely the risk is to occur. Rating the risk helps to prioritise how much will be done to control the risk and how quickly it is needed. Rate the risk high, medium or low.

#### Consequence:

Think about how severe harm could be? Consider what type of injuries or illness may happen and who it could affect.

#### Likelihood:

To work out the likelihood of harm occurring, you could consider:

- How often the task is done?
- How close do people get to the hazard?
- Has an injury ever occurred before? How often?

By answering these questions, you can now rate the consequence and the likelihood either high, medium or low. We can use the hazard and risk rating table to calculate the risk rating of the hazard.

Likelihood rating	Consequence rating				
	Catastrophic	Major	Moderate	Minor	Insignificant
Certain to Occur	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
Very Likely	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Likely	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Possible	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Rare	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low

By going horizontally across from the likelihood score and down from the consequence score, the risk rating is where the lines meet. Risks rated high and medium should be prioritised for action.





## Health and Safety for congregations

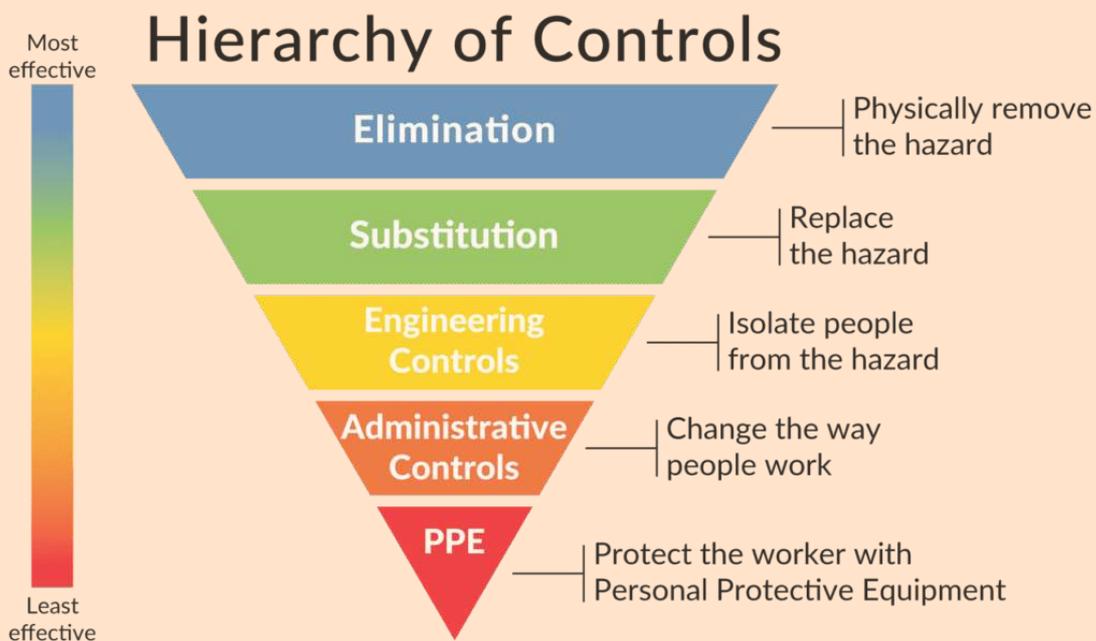
# Risk Management Guide

### Step 3

## Identify controls

You can rank ways of controlling risks from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest. This ranking is known as the **hierarchy of risk controls**.

Always eliminate the hazard where possible. If not, choose the most effective control practicable; pick a control as close to the top of the hierarchy as possible.



Once the best control(s) have been determined, check the risk rating has now been reduced to low. After implementing a control, it is important to ask yourself, do I now feel comfortable things are safe? If not, it is important to think about what more can be done.

### Step 4

## Monitor and review controls

Risk control measures are actions taken to eliminate, prevent or reduce the occurrence of a hazard that you have identified. By adopting risk control measures, you are aiming to reduce the risks to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable. Risk control measures must be designed so they are fit for purpose, put in place, used and maintained to ensure the control measures work when required.

The control measures that you put in place should be reviewed regularly to make sure they work as planned and are effective. Controls should also be reviewed if something does go wrong. If you find problems, go back through the risk management steps, review your information and make further decisions about risk controls. Reviewing the risk register regularly in Church Council meetings can also be a helpful way to routinely monitor controls.

