Health and Safety Risk and Incidents Severity Assessment

This document provides guidance for University of Auckland staff, line managers and incident triage / coordinators who assess risks and categorise health and safety incidents. The following information provides some guidance around incident severity and appropriate response as defined in the Health and Safety Incident Reporting and Management standard and guidance. It also gives guidance on risk severity for assessment purposes.

For further information please refer to the Intranet pages:


Please refer to the prompts below to assist with the actions that must be taken during this guide;

**Steps**
Steps to complete a task

**Tip**
A useful piece of information

**Further information**
References to further sources of information

**Important point**
Highlighting an important point or area of caution
Process for Assessing Incident Severity and Credible Risk Outcomes

You can access Damstra Safety (formally Vault) by entering the website below into your browser

https://akluni-02.vaultgrc.com/

The process for assessing incident and risk severity is important as it helps determine what happens next.

For incidents, it is a simple four-step process as follows:

1. Determine actual consequence of incident.
2. Determine likelihood of recurrence.
3. Allocate maximum potential consequence severity level. This is usually done initially by the incident triage/officer and then reviewed by the line manager. The final review is done by a HSW Manager.
4. Take appropriate action.


The process for assessing the most likely and “worst case” exposures to risk is equally important as it helps focus effort into making meaningful health and safety improvements, i.e. predicting, and preventing incidents.
Quick Reference Guide

It is a simple five step process as follows:

1. Determine the most likely consequence of risk exposure.
2. Predict likelihood of its occurrence.
3. Allocate maximum potential consequence severity level and its likelihood.
4. Escalate for sign-off: Where the combination of consequence and likelihood is calculated as:
   a. High or extreme, this should be escalated to the HSW Manager for review.
   b. Moderate, this should be escalated to the line manager.
   c. Low – note the finding and stop assessing.
5. Take appropriate action.

Further guidance on the risk assessment process is available at the following internet page
**Guidance for Assessing Incident and Risk Severity**

Just as assessing risks proactively allows us to take preventative action, categorising an incident severity level allows for the appropriate action to take following an incident to prevent its recurrence – the consequences of which might be worse next time! Each incident needs to be assessed for the actual consequence and the potential consequence, which is the worst-case scenario for the incident being assessed.

The following four by four matrix provides a useful tool for considering the likelihood and consequence.

![Likelihood and Consequence Matrix](image)

Using the likelihood and consequence guidance on the matrix, which although has a degree of subjectivity to it, does provide a way to consistently assess risks and the worst potential consequence on an incident.
Quick Reference Guide

Using the criteria and considering maximum potential consequence, for example if someone slips and falls the severity of the incident would be quite different if it were from the same level, even if they don't suffer a fracture, the maximum potential consequence would be moderate. However, the consequences depend both on height and other hazards below, so the risk of fractures increases with height; above 2m the risk of head injuries becomes more likely; falling from a roof both the likelihood and consequence would inform more robust controls.

This guidance supports judgement to ensure appropriate and consistent management of risks and incidents, and is particularly valuable for proactive risk assessment and non-injury (near miss) incidents.

Incidents that are assessed as either Level 2 or 3 must be verified by an HSW Manager.

Risks assessed as High or Extreme must also be escalated to senior management in the Faculty/Service Division: it is recommended that you involve your HSW Manager before escalating.

This is just a tool to help for professional judgement – risks and incidents will be open to review and reclassification up until the incident is closed or the assessment is approved.

Examples for Assessing Incident Severity

The following table provides examples to help determine the consequence and therefore categorise the incident at the appropriate level of severity.

The final two columns of the table address other factors and vulnerabilities often misunderstood in risk assessment (RA).
## Quick Reference Guide

### Incident Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business as Usual (BAU)</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Consequence Descriptor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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#### Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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#### Risk Factors

<table>
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#### Risk Level

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**Something has happened or almost did**

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**Assessing what could happen**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident Level</th>
<th>Consequence Descriptor</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Risk Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Moderate      | Personal Injury:       | • Fall from height - fracture  
• Hit by vehicle under 60kmh  
• Hit by falling object  
• Machinery hazards - crush, shear, entangle, draw in, trap, impact, puncture, abrasion...  
• Threats of violence - assault  
• Vehicle/mobile equipment - roll over, overturn, unauthorised use, speed  
• Fatigue related  
• Significant learnings (multiple human errors and/or multiple organisational failures and/or significant learnings for University)  
• Occupational exposure levels (OEL), i.e. noise - exceeds OEL  
• Any OEL or WEL exceeded | Tasks  
• Hazardous work requiring specific risk assessment, training and supervision | High |
| Full Investigation | Significant Potential for Harm: | • Live electricity - electrocution  
• Falling into water - drowning  
• Hit by moving vehicle over 60kmh - fatal  
• Fall from height - fatal  
• Hit by falling object - fatal  
• Fire - fatal  
• Machinery hazards crush, shear, entangle, draw in, trip, impact, puncture, abrasion, etc.  
• Hit Vehicle/mobile equipment non road  
• Exposure to flammable/explosive atmosphere  
• Exposure to heat extremes  
• Exposure to gas, fumes, vapours or lack of oxygen  
• Drowning  
• Earthworks/ trench collapse | Vulnerabilities  
• Need for supervision/check-in as a minimum  
• Lone working advised against  
• Training in specific hazards  
• General emergency support available, i.e. first aid/wardens | Formal RA required |
| **Level 3**   | Personal Injury:       | • Death  
• Significant notifiable event | Tasks  
• Hazardous work requiring specific RA, training and direct supervision | Extreme |
| Major         | Significant Potential for Harm: | • Potential for multiple fatalities  
• Potential for public notifiable event  
• Potential for significant harm to University business | Vulnerabilities  
• Hazard-specific training required  
• Work should not commence without specific sanction  
• Consider Permit to Work (PtW) and specific emergency support | Peer reviewed formal RA required (normally activity not permitted) |
| Independent   |                        |          |             |            |
| Full Investigation |                        |          |             |            |