

Reasonably practicable

'Reasonably practicable' means doing what is effective and possible to ensure the health and safety of workers and others.

All people must be given the highest level of health and safety protection from hazards arising from work, so far as is reasonably practicable.

A [person conducting a business or undertaking](#) (PCBU - the new term that includes employers) should always seek to eliminate, so far as is reasonably practicable, any health and safety risks. If a risk cannot be eliminated, the PCBU must minimise the risk, so far as is reasonably practicable, by:

- substituting (wholly or partly) the hazard with something with a lesser risk
- isolating the hazard from any person exposed to it
- implementing engineering controls.

If these controls do not fully eliminate or minimise the risk, the PCBU must implement administrative controls and then, if appropriate, ensure the provision of suitable personal protective equipment.

A combination of controls may be used to minimise a risk if a single control is not sufficient.

In determining control measures, the PCBU should identify and consider everything that may be relevant to the hazards and risks and the means of eliminating or minimising the risks.

The PCBU, when determining what is reasonably practicable, should take into account:

1. [the likelihood of the hazard or risk occurring](#)
2. [the degree of harm from the hazard or risk](#)
3. [knowledge about ways of eliminating or minimising the hazard or risk](#)
4. [the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk.](#)

The more likely the hazard or risk is, or the greater the harm that may result from the hazard, the less weight should be given to the [cost of eliminating or minimising the risk](#).

1. Likelihood of the risk or hazard causing harm

Where there is greater likelihood of the hazard or risk causing harm, the PCBU must give greater attention and effort to eliminate or minimise the risk.

2. Degree of harm if the hazard or risk is not controlled

Where the degree of harm from a hazard or risk is significant, such as the risk of death or serious injury, then more is required from the PCBU to eliminate or minimise the risk.

3. Knowledge about ways of eliminating or minimising the hazard or risk

The PCBU must consider and understand the risks associated with their business or undertaking. Examples include:

- the potential failure of plant, equipment, systems of work or risk control measures
- the impact of exposure to hazardous chemicals and materials
- the potential interaction between multiple hazards that may, together, cause different risks
- the impact of unusual or infrequent events
- the impact of human inadvertence or error, misuse, spontaneity, panic, fatigue or stress that may affect health and safety.

[Talking to workers](#), identifying hazards and analysing previous incidents provides a critical source of information about risks.

Knowledge can also be obtained from the *WHS Regulations* as well as relevant codes of practice and [WorkCover publications](#). Further information about controlling hazards and risks can be gained from other sources, such as:

- technical standards
- material published by other work health and safety regulators
- industry practice and publications
- published scientific and technical literature.

4. Availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise risks

A PCBU must consider what is available and what is suitable for the elimination or minimisation of risk.

For example, an effective work process is regarded as available if it can be implemented.

Likewise, equipment that can be purchased or made is regarded as available.

5. Cost of eliminating or minimising the risk

Cost will not be the key factor in determining what a PCBU should do to eliminate or minimise a risk unless it can be shown to be grossly disproportionate to the risk.

If the risk is particularly severe, a PCBU will need to demonstrate that costly safety measures are not reasonably practicable due to their expense and that other less

costly measures could effectively minimise the risk.

A PCBU cannot expose people to a lower level of protection simply because it is in a lesser financial position than another PCBU.

The costs of implementing a particular control can also take into account any savings arising from fewer incidents, injuries and illnesses, potentially improved productivity and reduced turnover of staff.

Note: A PCBU cannot avoid responsibility by attempting to contract out their obligations by giving control to someone else.

Call 13 10 50 for more information about determining what is reasonably practicable.