


# Writing for health and safety

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*GUIDANCE FOR WORKPLACE  
HEALTH AND SAFETY WRITERS*

November 2017



**These guidelines help you to write health and safety documents for your workplace.**

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# Writing workplace health and safety documents

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## KEY POINTS

- Health and safety documents help everybody to understand how your workplace should run.
- Think about the workers who will read your documents - write the documents for them.
- Make sure the information is clear and up to date.
- Review and revise documents regularly.
- Encourage workers to share their ideas about what could go into the documents.
- Health and safety documents can help you to make sure that everyone comes home from work healthy and safe.

**WORKSAFE**

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# 1.0

## Introduction

### **IN THIS SECTION:**

- 1.1** Why have health and safety documents?
- 1.2** If you are a PCBU
- 1.3** Involving workers
- 1.4** Keep it simple
- 1.5** Using documents to build understanding
- 1.6** Common types of health and safety documents

# These guidelines will help anyone in a workplace to write health and safety documents.

## 1.1 Why have health and safety documents?

It is good practice to keep health and safety documents.

Health and safety documents include forms, plans, policies, checklists, posters, signs, training materials, written agreements and other resources that explain to workers:

- how to work safely and protect their health
- how to manage workplace risks
- what to do if something goes wrong.

Documents that everyone at your workplace can read and understand will be:

- written using words that make sense to your workers
- easy to use.

Information in these documents should:

- encourage your workers and others at the workplace to use safe practices
- show that health and safety is important
- be used for continuously improving how you manage the risks arising from your work.

## 1.2 If you are a PCBU

A PCBU is a 'person conducting a business or undertaking'. It's a broad concept used throughout the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) to describe all types of working arrangements.

- Businesses are usually conducted to make a profit - for example, a business run by a retailer or a self-employed person.
- Undertakings are usually not profit-making or commercial - for example, a government agency or a school.

If you are a PCBU you must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers, and that other persons are not put at risk by your work. This is called the 'primary duty of care'. Health and safety documents can help you to make sure that everyone comes home from work healthy and safe.

### 1.3 Involving workers

Everyone at your workplace can help to make it a healthy and safe place to work. If you are a PCBU you must:

- engage with your workers on health and safety matters that may directly affect them, so far as is reasonably practicable
- have worker participation practices that give your workers reasonable opportunities to participate effectively in improving health and safety on an ongoing basis.

Worker engagement can be direct, or through representation if that is what workers prefer.

If workers are represented by a Health and Safety Representative (HSR), engagement must involve that representative. HSRs can ask for information on behalf of workers. If workers are represented by a union, the union can ask for information on behalf of workers.

Engagement includes:

- sharing information about health and safety matters so that workers are well-informed and know what is going on
- giving workers reasonable opportunities to have a say about health and safety matters
- finding out how health and safety issues affect how workers organise, manage and carry out their work
- listening to and considering what workers have to say
- giving workers opportunities to contribute to decision-making about health and safety matters
- keeping workers informed about the results of the engagement process and what will happen next.

Historically some businesses developed worker participation agreements jointly with unions. A worker participation agreement documents how the PCBU and workers will work together to improve health and safety in the workplace. This is one of a number of ways that a PCBU can engage with workers and their representatives.

Encourage workers to share ideas about what should be included or updated in health and safety documents. Seek their views when you are identifying, assessing and deciding how to deal with work risks. Involve people with a range of technical and operational knowledge and experience.

Work together to find solutions – workers' suggestions can lead to better and safer ways of working.

As a PCBU, you also have a duty to provide information, supervision, training and instruction to your workers.<sup>1</sup> Training includes providing information or instruction and must be easy for workers to understand.

For further information about worker engagement, representation and participation, go to WorkSafe's website: [www.worksafe.govt.nz](http://www.worksafe.govt.nz)

### 1.4 Keep it simple

For low-risk work, documents can be simple. For example, when working out how to manage your work risks you could note the main points about the risks you identify and how you plan to manage them. More risky work requires more complex documents.

Table 1 shows how a café owner keeps track of potential hazards within the café, how these hazards are controlled and monitored, and who is responsible for what.

<sup>1</sup> [Health and Safety at Work \(General Risk and Workplace Management\) Regulations 2016: Regulation 9](#)



<b>Example</b>					
<b>HAZARD</b>	<b>POTENTIAL HARM</b>	<b>LIKELIHOOD</b>	<b>CONTROL MEASURES</b>	<b>MONITORING/ACTIONS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
Slippery floors	Sprains/ strains and fractures to arms.	Likely due to grease from food preparation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Floors cleaned with detergent daily.</li> <li>Spills must be cleaned up immediately.</li> <li>Wet floor signs to be placed at entry when floors are wet.</li> <li>Kitchen staff to wear appropriate shoes for kitchen (with grip).</li> </ul>	<p>Morning checks for kitchen cleanliness.</p> <p>Observe for appropriate footwear. No exceptions!</p>	<p>Barb to check footwear and general kitchen cleanliness.</p> <p>All staff have responsibility for spills and wet floor signage.</p>
Tripping	Sprains/ strains and fractures to arms.	Possible due to number of appliances used in food preparation and the layout of the kitchen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install power outlets above each work surface.</li> <li>Impose a "No leads on floor rule".</li> <li>Remove unnecessary clutter.</li> <li>Ensure walkways are kept clear.</li> <li>Maintain the floor in sound condition.</li> </ul>	<p>Morning checks for tidiness.</p> <p>Allocate one hour every Friday for general tidy-up.</p> <p>Inspect floor condition during weekly tidy-up.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Barb to engage electrician to install more power outlets by Sep 2017. Until then, leads should follow the line of the work surface and not cross the main access way.</p>	<p>Barb to ensure that time is allocated.</p> <p>All staff must ensure the area is tidy and that leads do not cross the floor of the kitchen.</p>
Use of chemical cleaning products	Chemical burns/ skin irritation resulting from skin contact or ingestion.	Likely due to quantities stored and frequency of use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Store washing soda and bleach products in a secure cabinet.</li> <li>Only use concentrated washing soda to clean floors and the stainless steel bench when dishwashing detergent and water will not shift the grease.</li> <li>Do not handle washing soda until wearing rubber gloves and safety glasses.</li> </ul>	<p>Observation.</p> <p>Staff should remind each other of the required control measures.</p> <p>Personal protective equipment (PPE) to be checked weekly.</p>	<p>Barb to ensure PPE is in good condition.</p>
Handling certain foods	Allergic reaction of staff to certain food products.	Rare: Current staff do not have known allergies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include allergy health question in employment procedures.</li> <li>Design controls as needed if a new staff member has a known allergy.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action:</b> Barb to amend employment checklist by Oct 2017.</p>	<p>Barb to use revised employment checklist and develop targeted control measures as needed.</p>

TABLE 1: Hazard tracking chart

In most cases it isn't a HSWA requirement to keep written records, although it is good practice to record how work risks are being managed.

Specific documents are required in some situations. For example:

- the Health and Safety at Work (Asbestos) Regulations 2016 require PCBUs to keep written asbestos management plans
- HSWA requires a PCBU to keep a record of each notifiable event for at least five years.

## 1.5 Using documents to build understanding

Health and safety documents help everybody to understand how your workplace should run. As well as providing information, they can explain who is responsible for doing what, when and why – and how to avoid accidents and exposure to health and safety risks.

Documents help to maintain good practice, aid action planning and provide corporate memory. They are useful for monitoring progress, changes, adherence to agreed ways of working, and compliance.

However, documents are not the only way that you should share important information. Key health and safety control measures need to be explained and demonstrated in person. You should check that workers understand how these controls are used to eliminate or minimise work risks.

You can use documents to build understanding by:

- involving workers in document development and review
- encouraging workers to tell you when changes need to be made to documents
- explaining unfamiliar language and procedures
- showing workers the relevant document when you are talking with them.

Explain to workers why it is good practice to keep a written record of workplace discussions (such as the minutes of a team meeting).

Everyone in your workplace needs to know what is in the documents that affect them. Tell workers about the type of documents used in your workplace and show them examples. Explain what each part of a document is saying.

Review and revise your documents regularly to make sure that information is clear and up to date.

## 1.6 Common types of health and safety documents

TYPE OF DOCUMENT	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Table	Displays information so that it is easy to read and compare. Usually laid out in rows and columns.	Checklist Action list
Flowchart	Diagram or other illustration showing the decisions and activities involved as a process is worked through. Steps and sequences are shown.	Flowchart to identify the right guard for your machine
Policy	Statement that sets out an organisation's approach and intentions. Guides workplace actions by stating what is to be done, who is to do it, and how it is to be done.	Health and safety policy

TYPE OF DOCUMENT	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
<b>Procedure</b>	Series of steps that must be done in order. Each step starts with a command/action word. For example, 'leave', 'walk', 'sound'. Often have a map or images – for example, a map showing an assembly area.	Evacuation procedure Emergency procedure
<b>Information sheet</b>	Describes or provides information about something.	Safety data sheet Information sheet about personal protective equipment to use when working with asbestos or other hazardous materials
<b>Graph</b>	Diagram that uses lines, curves or bars to share information – such as trends or changes over time.	Graph showing injury rates or serious harm notifications over a five-year period
<b>Form</b>	A document that asks for information – the information is written in blank spaces on the form.	Accident or incident report form Accident investigation form Safe work method statement (SWMS)
<b>Sign</b>	Provides information and instructions. Often has words and graphics.  Signs must be relevant and meaningful. On their own, signs rarely provide sufficient control. Make sure that people understand what the sign is saying and what any symbols or images mean.	Danger sign Emergency exit sign Warning sign

**TABLE 2:**  
Common types of health and safety documents

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# 2.0

## Writing the document

### **IN THIS SECTION:**

- 2.1 What is the document for?
- 2.2 Who will read the document?
- 2.3 What are your main messages?
- 2.4 Writing in plain English
- 2.5 Translation
- 2.6 Layout

# Every document needs a clear purpose. Ask yourself what the document is for.

## 2.1 What is the document for?

Most workplace health and safety documents will be an information document, an instruction document, or a form.

DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
Information document	Tells about a specific topic. Explains how something works, special features, parts or components.	Document explaining quad bike features, operating instructions and potential hazards
Instruction document	Outlines steps or actions to be followed. The steps or actions are usually done in a specific order.	Procedure for cleaning a piece of equipment
Form	Asks for specific information.	Incident report form

**TABLE 3:**  
What is the document for?

Some health and safety documents are both information and instruction documents. They tell you about something and what to do. For example, Standard Operating Procedures:

- tell you about the health and safety hazards and risks when operating a piece of equipment, and
- tell you what to do to manage those hazards and risks.

Appendix 1 has guidelines for instruction documents.

Things to consider when you are planning your document:

- How will you share the document with your workers?
- Where will the document be used?
- What is the best way to get your message across?
- What sort of document would work best in your workplace?

## 2.2 Who will read the document?

Think about the workers who will read your document - write the document for them.

Some people at your workplace will find reading easy, others may not. Workers may have trouble reading and understanding a document that uses words they do not know. Encourage workers to tell you what they think the document should cover and how it should look.

Consider your workers' needs and abilities:

- What do they already know about this topic?
- How often and when will they use the document?

- Is English their first language?
- How well can they read?
- Can they read numbers?
- What everyday words can you use?
- What other formats can you use for workers who have difficulty reading regular print? (See Appendix 2)
- Are there other ways to get your message across? (See below)

### 2.3 What are your main messages?

Before you create a document you should be clear what it will cover.

- What do workers need to know?
- What do workers need to do?
- What activities and tasks need to be included?
- What are the risks and hazards involved?
- What is the best way to let people know?

#### Other ways to get your message across

As well as (or instead of) words, consider using other ways to get your message across.

**Flow charts** to explain:

- instructions
- procedures
- processes
- production goals.

**Diagrams, illustrations, line drawings** to explain:

- technology
- procedures.

**Photographs** to show:

- equipment
- worksites.

**Tables, charts, graphs** to explain:

- statistics
- production data
- figures.

**Maps** to explain:

- emergency procedures
- locations
- area layouts.

#### Where can you get information to put into your documents?

There are many places that you can get information to put into your documents.

For example, you can:

- read existing health and safety documents
- talk to workers about the messages that you want to get across
- walk around your workplace and watch what is happening
- ask workers to explain what they are doing and why

- talk to workplace health and safety professionals, such as occupational health nurses and union representatives with health and safety expertise
- talk with people who work in a similar workplace
- read industry-specific guidance, standards and other documents relevant to the work you carry out
- look at guidelines, codes of practice and other resources available on WorkSafe's website: [www.worksafe.govt.nz](http://www.worksafe.govt.nz)

In your documents, only refer to specific resources and publications if they are available and accessible to workers.

## Putting a written document together

Most documents should have:

- an introduction explaining:
  - why the document has been written - its purpose
  - who it has been written for
- key messages - the main points your readers must understand, act on and remember
- instructions.

## 2.4 Writing in plain English

Write the document in 'plain English' (plain language) to make it easy for workers to understand.

Writing in plain English means that you:

- have a clear message
- use short, simple sentences
- use everyday words that workers will understand
- explain technical and legal language
- lay out and format information so that it is easy to read.

### Keep sentences short and clear

Long and complex sentences are hard to read. A sentence should contain only one or two ideas.

### Use everyday words

Use everyday words to make your documents easy to understand. For example, use 'now' rather than 'at this point in time'.

Appendix 3 has a list of everyday words that you can use instead of more complex words and phrases.

Workers, especially if English is not their first language, may not know common health and safety terms.

Appendix 4 has plain English explanations of key health and safety terms.

If you need to introduce a new industry term, or if there is no simple alternative word, explain the concept first in plain English. Then give the new term.

#### Example

You must remove (eliminate) the hazard.

## Write words in full

Write words in full to send a stronger message.

USE	INSTEAD OF
do not	don't

## Avoid unnecessary acronyms and abbreviations

An acronym is a word formed from the initials of words in a phrase or title. For example, PPE stands for personal protective equipment.

An abbreviation is a shortened form of a word or phrase. For example, 'mg' means milligram.

If you use an acronym or abbreviation, explain it the first time you use it in the document.

### Example

Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) recommends that ...

Try not to use an acronym or abbreviation unless you know that your workers already use and understand it.

## Words and numbers

Use the words one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine and ten for numbers up to ten. For numbers over ten, use figures (11, 12, 13 ...)

### Example

We use four methods to identify hazards ...

At least 14 days before you visit the site ...

## Active and passive voice

Try to use active rather than passive voice.

- Active voice is more personal and direct and says who must do something.
  - For example: Workers must wear protective gloves.
- Passive voice sounds more formal and uses more words. People often use passive voice to write about something that is to be done by someone.
  - For example: Protective gloves are to be worn by workers.

## Verbs and nouns

Try not to turn verbs into nouns. This makes words longer and uses passive voice. The document will seem formal and be harder to read.

USE	INSTEAD OF
Talk to supervisors before using backhoes on construction sites.	Utilisation of backhoes on construction sites must only be done in consultation with supervisors.



## 2.5 Translation

Translating health and safety documents into other languages is not always easy. Some languages do not have technical words or workplace terms that match the words used in New Zealand workplaces.

Don't assume that a worker who speaks a language other than English can read in that language. Consider sharing information by using photos and other images that explain the key messages.

If you decide to get a document translated use a qualified translator. Although another worker may speak the same language, this does not mean they are able to translate important health and safety documents.

Languages, including te reo Māori, can vary from region to region. This means that words with the same meaning may be spelled and pronounced in different ways. Before a translator works with your document, check which dialects (regional variations) your workers speak and read.

## 2.6 Layout

Plan the layout of the document.

Here are some questions to think about:

- How long will the document be? The shorter, the better.
- How will you use headings and subheadings to organise the information?
- How will the information be displayed?
- Will you need photographs, images, or diagrams to explain key points?

Your document will be easier to read if it has:

- plenty of white space
- headings and subheadings to:
  - break up large chunks of information
  - help the reader to find information more easily
- important headings in a large font, rather than underlined
- short paragraphs with one main message
- left hand justification (text aligned to the left margin)
- a plain easy-to-read font such as Arial, Calibri or Verdana
- the same font throughout the document
- the same layout throughout the document
- photos or illustrations that:
  - are relevant
  - are easy to understand
  - show images that your workers can relate to.

Your document will be harder to read if it has:

- coloured text, because it is harder to read than black and white. Coloured text may not show up well if the document is printed or photocopied in black and white.
- lots of capital letters. Capital letters are okay for headings, but try not to use them in other places as they can LOOK LIKE SHOUTING.
- Too many words in **bold** and *italics* - use **bold** and *italics* only to highlight information.

In Appendix 5, we have written examples of several health and safety documents in plain English to show you what is possible.

The law requires you to keep some long documents at your workplace, such as safety data sheets for hazardous substances.

- Consider putting the most important information from long documents onto one page to make it easier for workers to read and understand.
- Use diagrams and symbols as well as words.
- Attach the one-page summary to the front of the longer document.

WorkSafe's website has forms, templates and other resources to help you.

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# 3.0

## Reviewing the document

### **IN THIS SECTION:**

- 3.1 Testing and revising drafts
- 3.2 Is the document effective?

Ask workers how your draft can be improved. Their feedback will help you write a better document.

### 3.1 Testing and revising drafts

#### First draft

When you have written the first draft, ask for feedback. Invite workers to look at the document. Ask them to tell you how the draft can be improved.

Here are questions you might ask about the document:

- Does it have the information you need?
  - Is the information correct?
  - Is it up-to-date?
  - Are work processes (if included) described accurately?
  - Is the information easy to find?
  - Is anything missing?
  - Is there anything you do not need?
- Can you understand the document?
  - If not, which parts are hard to understand?
  - Why are these parts hard to understand?
- Is the document useful?
  - Why?
  - Why not?
- What are the main points in this document?
  - What have you learned after reading the document?
- Is the information in a logical order?
  - If not, how could it be improved?
- Does the document make you want to read it?

Use the feedback to write another draft.

#### Second draft

Tell workers how and where you have used the feedback they gave you. You may need to explain why some information has been included and other information has not.

If you have added new information, explain why. For example, you might have received more up-to-date information from manufacturers and suppliers.

## Test the document

To find out how well the document works, you could:

- ask people to read the document, and
- watch workers as they follow the process or procedure the document describes, and
- talk about whether or not the document worked well for them.

Appendix 6 suggests how to check whether workers understand your document.

Appendix 7 is a checklist you can use to make sure that your document is clear and does what it is designed to do.

You could test the document with:

- frontline workers
- supervisors
- health and safety representatives
- union representatives.

Add the names of people who gave you feedback if this will make workers more likely to trust the document. Ask permission to use their names.

### Example

Written by Huia Johnson, with information from Sam Nightingale and Bill Asiata.

## Final draft

Decide on the final layout, design and graphics. Then ask someone who has not seen the document to look for spelling mistakes and other errors.

- Use the suggestions in Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 to check the document. Make changes based on the feedback that you get.
- Follow your workplace's processes for quality assurance, document checking, version control and document approval.

### 3.2 Is the document effective?

You need to know whether the document is understood and achieving its purpose.

Work out how you will know and record whether the new document is effective. For example, you could write down whether supervisors and managers have seen all workers using the new procedure correctly, and whether the document enables the PCBU and its workers to manage risks in the workplace.

Look over the document with workers as part of your annual health and safety policy reviews.

You could:

- watch workers as they read the document and do what the document tells them to do
- then talk about whether or not the document worked well for them.

## Questions to ask when reviewing the document

- Has the document been shared with all workers?
- Have workers been trained in the new policy, process or procedure?
- Is the document being used the way that we expected it to be?
  - How is it being used?
  - If it is not being used, why not?
- How have workers reacted to the document?
- What effect has the document had on workers' behaviour?

If you are updating an existing document, first review it using the questions above. Find out about any changes that the updated document should mention.

For example:

- changes to your health and safety system – such as new hazards, controls or practices
- changes to the law
- changes to equipment or products.

Note the date that changes were made, or the version number – or both.

- For example:  
Chainsaw Safety Policy, 2017 Version 3  
Updated February 5, 2015

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# 4.0

## Sharing the document

### **IN THIS SECTION:**

- 4.1 How will you share and use the document?
- 4.2 Keep the document updated

# Think about how you will share and use the document at your workplace.

## 4.1 How will you share and use the document?

Who will you ask to introduce and talk about a new document to workers?

Consider:

- supervisors
- managers
- health and safety representatives
- health and safety committee members
- union representatives
- trainers
- other staff.

How and when will the document be used?

For example:

- on the job
- during meetings and briefings
- during training
- as part of the induction package for new workers.

Will you print the document?

You could:

- add it to health and safety manuals and handbooks
- display the document on notice-boards at your workplace
- leave a copy of the document in your tea-room.

Will you share the document on your intranet?

Putting documents on your intranet makes them easy for workers to find. When a document is updated everyone can access the updated version right away.

## 4.2 Keep the document updated

Make sure that the document is kept up to date. Decide how often you will review it – for example, every three months, or once a year? Let workers know if a new version is available, to ensure that everyone uses the most recent version.



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# 5.0

## Where to find more information

**FURTHER INFORMATION – NEW ZEALAND**

<b>Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)</b>	<a href="http://www.acc.co.nz">www.acc.co.nz</a>
<b>Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)</b>	<a href="http://www.epa.govt.nz">www.epa.govt.nz</a> Government agency responsible for regulatory functions concerning New Zealand's environmental management, including hazardous substances and new organisms
<b>Health &amp; Safety Association of NZ (HASANZ)</b>	<a href="http://www.hasanz.org.nz">www.hasanz.org.nz</a> HASANZ is the umbrella organisation representing workplace health and safety professions in New Zealand
<b>Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand</b>	<a href="http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz">www.mentalhealth.org.nz</a> Agency focusing on improving and sustaining mental health and wellbeing
<b>Office for Disability Issues, Ministry of Social Development</b>	<a href="http://www.odi.govt.nz">www.odi.govt.nz</a> Government agency whose resources include advice for writers, communicators, designers and production houses on presenting information in a variety of ways to make it accessible to disabled people as well as to others
<b>WorkSafe New Zealand</b>	<a href="http://www.worksafe.govt.nz">www.worksafe.govt.nz</a> New Zealand's work health and safety regulator. WorkSafe's website has guidance, information, forms, templates and other resources
<b>WorkSafe Contact Centre</b>	Get in touch with WorkSafe's Contact Centre with any questions - 0800 030 040

**FURTHER INFORMATION – INTERNATIONAL**

Many countries have their own health and safety websites; here are a few examples. Each country has its own health and safety legislation - their law may differ from New Zealand law.

<b>Health and Safety Executive (United Kingdom's workplace health and safety regulator)</b>	<a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk">www.hse.gov.uk</a>
<b>Safe Work Australia (Australia)</b>	<a href="http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au">www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au</a>

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# Appendices

## IN THIS SECTION:

**Appendix 1:** Guidelines for instruction documents

**Appendix 2:** Other ways to share information with workers

**Appendix 3:** Simple ways to say things

**Appendix 4:** Key health and safety terms

**Appendix 5:** Examples of plain English documents

**Appendix 6:** How to check workers understand your document

**Appendix 7:** Checklist for health and safety documents

## Appendix 1: Guidelines for instruction documents

An instruction document tells people what to do and in what order

- Write out the procedure step-by-step. If you are not sure about the order of the steps, talk to workers who already know how to do the procedure the right way in your workplace, and ask if you can watch the steps they carry out.
- Start each step with an action word (verb) and give each step a number.

### Example

1. Deliver all ducting to the site.
2. Store in areas set aside by the builder.
3. Clear work area of all obstacles.
4. Join ductwork on floor in lengths less than nine metres.

Outline the steps for each task

- If instructions are for a particular task, put the task first and then use bullet points for the steps.

### Example

When cutting, drilling or shaping fibre insulation:

- **wear** protective clothing (Writer to specify exactly what this should be)
- **use** a suitable dust mask (Writer to specify exactly what this should be)
- **avoid** contact with your eyes

Use a layout that makes the instructions easy to read

- Use headings to help readers find their way through the document.
- Use enough 'white space' so that text and images don't look too crowded.
- Use a similar structure throughout the document.
- Use images to illustrate key actions or objects.
- Put any extra information needed to make an instruction clear into a box, or use italics, or both.

### Example

**Safety Note:** *Effective beam stops have a matte finish to stop reflection. Earth, wood, plywood, brick, mortar, concrete or plasterboard surfaces are suitable. Roughen the surface of metal beam stops.*

## Appendix 2: Other ways to share information with workers

All workers should know what is in your health and safety documents. If workers have difficulty reading regular print, or do not have time to read long documents, you can share information in other formats.

### Why should we provide information in other formats?

Some workers may:

- be blind or have low vision
- have an intellectual or other learning disability
- be unable to hold documents or turn pages because of a physical disability
- have difficulty accessing information on the internet.

### Other formats for sharing health and safety information

Ask workers about the best way for you to share information with them. Here are some other ways to consider.

#### AUDIO FILES

Workers who are unable to read print may be able to listen to digital audio files shared as MP3 files, burned onto a CD or DVD, or downloaded from a website. (But be aware that some workers may have difficulty watching or hearing audio-visual presentations.)

#### BRAILLE

Braille is used by people who are blind or have low vision. Everything that can be read in print can be produced in braille – including labels, forms, signs and documents.

Braille uses raised dots that stand for individual letters, combinations of letters, punctuation signs and other print symbols. Some people use computers that display text on a braille device instead of on a monitor.

#### CAPTIONING

Captioning translates sound (such as speech and sound effects) into captions that appear on a screen. Captions make information accessible to people who are deaf or hearing impaired.

#### LARGE PRINT

Large print materials are one way to share written information with workers who have low vision (partial sight). Large print materials should be prepared with a font (print) size that is between 16 and 22 points.

#### NEW ZEALAND SIGN LANGUAGE

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is an official language of New Zealand, alongside English and Māori. Work with NZSL interpreters, or use NZSL DVDs, to share health and safety information. Written information is not a suitable or reliable way to communicate with all deaf people.

#### POSTERS, PHOTOS AND SIGNS

Illustrations and photos can be an excellent way to get a message across – for example, posters or signs to warn workers about a trip hazard. Signs should be relevant and meaningful. Make sure that everyone can understand what a sign says and what any symbols or images mean. Reminder: a sign on its own may not provide sufficient control.

## **SCREEN READERS**

Screen-reading software converts text that is displayed on a computer monitor to voice (using a speech-synthesiser) or to braille.

## **SPECIALISED EQUIPMENT**

Some disabled people use specialised equipment (sometimes called 'assistive equipment' or 'assistive technology') to communicate and to get information.

This equipment includes:

- speech synthesisers and speech recognition software
- screen readers, screen magnifiers, screen projectors
- amplified or volume control telephones
- hands-free data entry and response selection
- word prediction software
- keyboard controllers
- book holders and page turners
- standardised icons.

For more information:

[www.odi.govt.nz](http://www.odi.govt.nz)

Office for Disability Issues, Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand.

### Appendix 3: Simple ways to say things

<b>COMPLEX WORDS AND PHRASES</b>	<b>WORDS TO USE INSTEAD</b>
absence of	no
accomplish	do
accordingly, therefore	so
additional	extra; more
adhere to	follow
adjustments	changes
administer	manage
allocate	give; divide
apparent	clear; plain
appropriate	right; suitable; best fit
as applicable	when necessary
at a later time	later
at all times	always
at the present time	now
because of the fact that	because
by means of	by
calculate	work out
caustic	burning; corrosive
comfortably	easily
commence	start; begin
competence	know-how; skill; ability
complete in all respects	complete
comply	meet (law or instructions); you must (do this); this must be followed/done
concepts	ideas
condemned	unusable; removed from use; not allowed to be used
consume	use; eat and drink
contain	has
culture	beliefs; attitudes; behaviour; the way we do things around here
currently	now
designated place	chosen place; right place; (name of) place
despite the fact that	even though
described herein	shown
discontinue	stop; end

<b>COMPLEX WORDS AND PHRASES</b>	<b>WORDS TO USE INSTEAD</b>
dispatch	send
due to the fact that	because; since
duration of	length of
egress	exit
encase	inside; within
enquire	ask
ensure	make sure
estimate	work out
examine	check
exclude	leave out
forbidden	must not; not allowed
for the purpose of	for
for this reason	because
fragments	pieces; bits
further down the track	later
good practice	doing (something) well; the way something should be done
giving rise to	causing
hinder	get in the way of; restrict
horseplay	mucking about; playing; fooling around
identical	same
immediately	at once
in accordance with	according to
in addition	and
in conjunction with	with
in reference to	about
in the event that	if
inadequate	not (good/fast/safe) enough; incorrect; not suitable
incident	event; happening
indicate	show
inspect	look at; check
legislation	law; structure; rule
limbs	arms and legs; branches (of a tree)
litter	rubbish; leave/drop rubbish
maintenance	care; repairs; keeping it working; looking after
mindset	attitude
minimise	reduce; limit



<b>COMPLEX WORDS AND PHRASES</b>	<b>WORDS TO USE INSTEAD</b>
multiple	many
not adversely affect	not harm/damage/hurt you
notification	alert; notice; report
notify	tell; let (someone) know what happened
observe	see; notice; obey
on a regular basis	regularly
operationalise	do
obstruct	get in the way; block
orifice	hole; opening
outcome	result
participate	involve; join in; take part
particle	bit; piece; dust
practicable	practical; doable; able to be done
prevent	stop; don't allow
prime consideration	most important thing
prohibit	ban; stop; make illegal
protection	safety measure
prior to	before
portion	part
procedures	rules; ways
reason for	why
recognise	know; be aware of
rectify	fix
regarding	about
regulation	rule
relocate	move
repetitive	repeated; again and again
required to	must
rough handling	careless handling; moving something and not caring whether you damage it
shall	must
so as to	to
spillage	spill; leak; mess; waste
stationary	still; not moving; fixed in position
subsequent to	after
sustain	keep going

<b>COMPLEX WORDS AND PHRASES</b>	<b>WORDS TO USE INSTEAD</b>
sustain an injury	injured
task to be performed	job
the nature of	the kind of
utilise	use
unauthorised	not allowed
undertaken	done
vandalised	tagged; broken/destroyed on purpose; defaced
visible	seen
whilst, while	at the same time; when
with a potential to	could; might
without further delay	right now; right away; immediately

### Where did the list of complex words come from?

Some of the words in the ‘complex’ columns came from the many plain English lists on the internet. Other words came from research with 466 workers carried out by Workbase (2013).<sup>2</sup>

Workbase found that unfamiliar words and formal language confused many workers. Some people could read basic information but did not know words such as ‘maintenance’, ‘horseplay’ and ‘rough handling’.

Workers who did not have strong reading and writing skills:

- did not understand the purpose of health and safety documents
- could not identify the important points in long or complex documents
- could not accurately explain what the documents meant
- would be unlikely to have the confidence or language skills to ask for an explanation when they did not understand something.

### Make documents easy to understand

Making health and safety documents easier to understand will help our combined efforts to reduce New Zealand’s unacceptably high rates of workplace fatalities, serious harm injuries and work-related disease and ill-health.

<sup>2</sup> Workbase (2013): *Complex health and safety paperwork and literacy skills gaps put employees at risk.*

## Appendix 4: Key health and safety terms

You can use these terms and explanations to help build worker understanding.

For more information about these and other terms, visit WorkSafe’s website:

[www.worksafe.govt.nz](http://www.worksafe.govt.nz)

TERM	EXPLANATION
<b>Accident</b>	An event that (a) causes any person to be harmed; or (b) in different circumstances, might have caused any person to be harmed.
<b>Business or undertaking</b>	The usual meanings are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- business: an activity carried out with the intention of making a profit or gain</li> <li>- undertaking: an activity that is non-commercial in nature (eg certain activities of a local authority).</li> </ul>
<b>Competent person</b>	Generally this means a person who has the relevant knowledge, experience and skill to carry out a particular task, and has a relevant qualification (or their employer has evidence demonstrating that the person has the required knowledge, experience, and skill).
<b>Contractor</b>	Someone a person pays to do a job but who is not employed by that person.
<b>Control measure</b>	A way of eliminating or minimising risks to health and safety.
<b>Designated agency</b>	A government agency other than WorkSafe designated to carry out certain health and safety functions.
<b>Duty holder</b>	A person who has a duty under HSWA (see explanation below). There are four types of duty holders – PCBUs (see explanation below), officers, workers and other persons at workplaces.
<b>Eliminate</b>	Remove the sources of harm (eg equipment, substances or work processes).
<b>Enforcement tools</b>	Prosecutions or infringement notices used to impose a penalty. Inspectors also use prohibition notices, improvement notices and written warnings to require improved safety standards.
<b>Engagement</b>	A PCBU (see explanation below) has to engage with its workers on matters that may affect workers’ health and safety. A PCBU engages by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sharing information about health and safety matters so that workers are well-informed, know what is going on and can have a real say in decision-making</li> <li>- giving workers reasonable opportunities to have a say about health and safety matters</li> <li>- listening to and considering what workers have to say</li> <li>- giving workers opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process relating to a health and safety matter</li> <li>- considering workers’ views when decisions are being made</li> <li>- updating workers about what decisions have been made</li> <li>- involving any Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs).</li> </ul> If workers are represented by an HSR, engagement must involve that representative.
<b>Good faith</b>	Acting in good faith is an important legal concept. Employers, employees and unions have a duty of good faith. This includes the need to be active and constructive in maintaining an employment relationship that is honest and communicative. Treating each other with mutual respect reduces the risk of conflict and problems.
<b>Guarding</b>	Using something (such as a screen) to stop someone being harmed by a machine.
<b>Hazard</b>	An actual or potential cause of harm, including an object, activity or event. Includes a person’s behaviour where that behaviour has the potential to cause death, injury, or illness to a person (whether or not that behaviour results from physical or mental fatigue, drugs, alcohol, traumatic shock, or another temporary condition that affects a person’s behaviour).
<b>Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA)</b>	HSWA is the key work health and safety law in New Zealand. All work and workplaces are covered by HSWA unless specifically excluded.

TERM	EXPLANATION
<b>Health and Safety at Work (Worker Engagement, Participation and Representation) Regulations 2016 (the Regulations)</b>	The Health and Safety at Work (Worker Engagement, Participation and Representation) Regulations 2016 outline additional requirements for businesses or undertakings with Health and Safety Committees (HSCs) and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs). The Regulations prescribe matters relating to work groups, HSRs and HSCs.
<b>Health and safety committee (HSC)</b>	A Health and Safety Committee (HSC) supports the ongoing improvement of health and safety at work. An HSC enables PCBU representatives, workers and other HSC members to meet regularly and work co-operatively to ensure workers' health and safety.
<b>Health and safety representative (HSR)</b>	Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) are workers elected by members of their work group to represent them in health and safety matters.
<b>Health monitoring</b>	Monitoring workers' health to see if their work is harming their health and to assess ongoing effects.
<b>Injury</b>	Damage or hurt to someone.
<b>Investigation</b>	A process of gathering information about an accident or incident to find out why the accident or incident happened and how to stop it from happening again.
<b>Isolate</b>	Isolate the hazard giving risk to the risk to prevent any person coming into contact with it (eg by separating people from the hazard).
<b>Job safety analysis; safe work method statement; safe operating procedures</b>	Step-by-step descriptions of how to do a task, job or activity safely.
<b>Minimise</b>	Take steps that protect the health and safety of people by either reducing the likelihood of an event occurring, or reducing the level of harm to people if it does occur.
<b>Near miss</b>	An incident which did not result in injury, illness or damage, but potentially could have.
<b>Notifiable event</b>	A notifiable event is when any of the following occurs as a result of work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a death</li> <li>- notifiable illness or injury (see below)</li> <li>- a notifiable incident (see below).</li> </ul> Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) you must notify WorkSafe when a notifiable event occurs.
<b>Notifiable injury or illness</b>	An injury or illness that requires the person to have immediate treatment (other than first aid). For example, a serious head injury, a serious burn, an injury or illness that requires, or would usually require, the person to be admitted to a hospital for immediate treatment or to have medical treatment within 48 hours of exposure to a substance.
<b>Notifiable incident</b>	A notifiable incident means that someone has been immediately exposed to a serious risk to their health and safety because of an unplanned or uncontrolled work incident. For example, exposure to a leaked substance, an electric shock, or the collapse/partial collapse of a structure.
<b>Officer</b>	An officer is a person who has the ability to significantly influence the management of a PCBU. This includes, for example, company directors and chief executives.  Officers must exercise due diligence to ensure the PCBU meets its health and safety obligations.  See WorkSafe's special guide <i>Introduction to the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015</i> for a detailed explanation of an officer's role and duties.
<b>Other person at workplace</b>	Other persons include workplace visitors and casual volunteers (who are not volunteer workers).  Other persons at workplaces have their own health and safety duties to take reasonable care to keep themselves safe and to not harm others at a workplace.
<b>Overlapping PCBU duties</b>	A PCBU's duties may overlap with those of other PCBUs. When two or more PCBUs are working together at the same location or through a contracting chain, they must work together to fulfil their duties of care and manage risks. Where those duties overlap, the PCBUs must consult, co-operate and co-ordinate with each other to meet their health and safety responsibilities to workers and others.

TERM	EXPLANATION
<b>PCBU</b>	<p>PCBU stands for 'Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking'. In most cases a PCBU will be a business entity, such as a company. However, an individual carrying out business as a sole trader or self-employed person is also a PCBU.</p> <p>A PCBU does not include workers or officers of a PCBU, volunteer associations with no employees, or home occupiers that employ or engage a tradesperson to carry out residential work.</p>
<b>Personal protective equipment (PPE)</b>	<p>Anything used or worn by a person (including clothing) to minimise risks to the person's health and safety; this includes air-supplied respiratory equipment. PCBUs have a duty to provide PPE, and also related duties covering selecting, using/wearing, maintaining, repairing and replacing PPE.</p>
<b>Plant</b>	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- any machinery, vehicle, vessel, aircraft, equipment (including personal protective equipment), appliance, container, implement, or tool; and</li> <li>- any component of any of those things, and</li> <li>- anything fitted or connected to any of those things.</li> </ul>
<b>Primary duty of care</b>	<p>A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers, and that other persons are not put at risk by its work.</p> <p>See WorkSafe's special guide <i>Introduction to the Health and Safety Act 2015</i> for further details.</p>
<b>Reasonably practicable</b>	<p>'Reasonably practicable' means what is or was reasonably able to be done to ensure health and safety taking into account and weighing up relevant matters including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the likelihood of the risk concerned occurring or workers being exposed to the hazard</li> <li>- the degree of harm that might result</li> <li>- what the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know, about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the hazard or risk</li> <li>- ways of eliminating or minimising the risk</li> </ul> </li> <li>- the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk</li> <li>- after assessing the extent of the risk and the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, the cost associated with available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, including whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the risk. Control measures can only not be implemented where cost is grossly disproportionate.</li> </ul> <p>See WorkSafe's <i>Reasonably Practicable</i> fact sheet for more information.</p>
<b>Regulator</b>	<p>WorkSafe New Zealand, or the relevant designated agency.</p>
<b>Risk</b>	<p>Risks arise from people being exposed to a hazard (a source of harm).</p>
<b>Safety data sheet</b>	<p>Information about how a product could harm people and how to safely store, use and handle that product.</p>
<b>Serious harm</b>	<p>An injury or an illness created by work-related activity that causes permanent or temporary severe loss of bodily function, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- amputation</li> <li>- burns requiring specialist attention</li> <li>- loss of consciousness - from lack of oxygen, or from absorbing, inhaling or eating/drinking a substance</li> <li>- damage to hearing or eyesight</li> <li>- poisoning</li> <li>- respiratory disease or cancer</li> <li>- death.</li> </ul> <p>Any injury or illness that causes a person to be in hospital for 48 hours or more is also considered 'serious harm'.</p>
<b>Structure</b>	<p>Anything that is constructed, whether fixed, moveable, temporary, or permanent; includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- buildings, masts, towers, frameworks, pipelines, quarries, bridges, and underground works (including shafts or tunnels)</li> <li>- any component of a structure, and</li> <li>- part of a structure.</li> </ul>
<b>Toolbox talk</b>	<p>A short informal group meeting or discussion about a specific health or safety issue or topic. It's a good way to provide information to workers and to start health and safety conversations.</p>

TERM	EXPLANATION
<b>Union</b>	<p>An organisation that supports its membership by advocating on their behalf. The Employment Relations Act 2000 gives employees the freedom to join unions and bargain collectively without discrimination. Workers can choose whether or not to join a union.</p> <p>A union is entitled to represent members' employment interests, including health and safety matters.</p>
<b>Upstream PCBUs</b>	<p>PCBUs who design, manufacture, import or supply plant, substances or structures, or who install, construct or commission plant or structures.</p> <p>'Design' is defined in HSWA as including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the design of part of the plant, substance, or structure, and</li> <li>- the redesign or modification of a design.</li> </ul>
<b>Volunteer</b>	<p>A person who is acting on a voluntary basis (whether or not the person receives out-of-pocket expenses).</p>
<b>Volunteer association</b>	<p>A group of volunteers (whether incorporated or unincorporated) working together for one or more community purposes where none of the volunteers, whether alone or jointly with any other volunteers, employs any person to carry out work for the volunteer association.</p>
<b>Volunteer worker</b>	<p>A volunteer who carries out work in any capacity for a PCBU:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- with the knowledge or consent of the PCBU, and</li> <li>- on an ongoing and regular basis, and</li> <li>- that is an integral part of the business or undertaking.</li> </ul> <p>Does not include a volunteer undertaking any of the following voluntary work activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- participating in a fund-raising activity</li> <li>- assisting with sports or recreation for an educational institute, sports club, or recreation club</li> <li>- assisting with activities for an educational institute outside the premises of the educational institution</li> <li>- providing care for another person in the volunteer's home.</li> </ul>
<b>Worker</b>	<p>An individual who carries out work in any capacity for a PCBU. A worker may be an employee, a contractor or sub-contractor, an employee of a contractor or sub-contractor, an employee of a labour hire company, an outworker (including a homeworker), an apprentice or a trainee, a person gaining work experience or on a work trial, or a volunteer worker. Workers can be at any level (eg managers are workers too). A PCBU is also a worker if the PCBU is an individual who carries out work in that business or undertaking.</p> <p>Although workers don't have specific duties for worker participation or engagement, they do have duties to keep themselves and others safe.</p>
<b>Workplace</b>	<p>A workplace is any place where a worker goes or is likely to be while at work, or where work is being carried out or is customarily carried out.</p> <p>Most duties under HSWA relate to the conduct of work. However some duties are linked to workplaces.</p>
<b>Worker participation practices</b>	<p>Worker participation practices are what the PCBU puts in place so that workers can help to improve work health and safety on an ongoing basis. These practices make it possible for workers to share ideas and information, raise issues, and contribute to decision-making on an ongoing basis.</p>
<b>Worker representative</b>	<p>In relation to a worker, means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the Health and Safety Representative for the worker</li> <li>b. a union representing the worker, or</li> <li>c. any other person the worker authorises to represent them (eg community or church leaders, lawyers, occupational physicians, nurses, respected members of ethnic communities).</li> </ol> <p>Workers can ask a worker representative to raise health and safety issues with a PCBU on their behalf.</p>
<b>Workplace monitoring</b>	<p>Involves measuring exposure to a hazard arising from work (eg noise, vibration).</p>
<b>WorkSafe New Zealand (WorkSafe)</b>	<p>WorkSafe is the government agency that is the work health and safety regulator. WorkSafe collaborates with PCBUs, workers and other duty holders to embed and promote good work health and safety practices, and enforce health and safety law.</p> <p>Other government agencies can be designated to carry out certain health and safety functions, for example, Maritime New Zealand and the Civil Aviation Authority.</p>

## Appendix 5: Examples of plain English documents

### Example: Eye protection policy

#### EYE PROTECTION (SAFETY GLASSES) POLICY

This policy tells you what you must do to protect your eyes in our workplace.

#### WHY IS EYE PROTECTION IMPORTANT?

Wearing eye protection keeps your eyes safe. In our workplace, 'eye protection' means 'safety glasses'.

Most eye injuries in our workplace are caused by things you cannot see, such as dust and very small pieces of grit. You can easily hurt your eyes. Sometimes the damage lasts for the rest of your life.

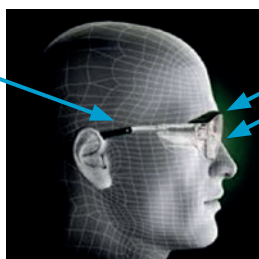
#### WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF YOU DO NOT WEAR SAFETY GLASSES?

- If you have a bad injury to your eyes, you could go blind in one eye or both.
- You may not be able to see properly.
- You may not be able to do your job.
- Your eyes may get very sore and red.
- You may need to take time off work.
- An eye injury could make it hard for you to do things that you enjoy, such as playing sport, reading, or watching television.

#### WEARING SAFETY GLASSES AT WORK

- Our workplace must provide safety glasses if you need them to carry out your work.
- You must always wear your safety glasses in the manufacturing area.
- Your safety glasses must fit you properly. You will be taught how to wear and use them, and how to look after them.

The arms of your safety glasses should fit over your ears and not slide off.



Safety glasses must fit close to your face so dust, grit and other things can't get into your eyes.

- Look after your safety glasses. Clean your safety glasses at least once a day using cold water and a drop of dishwashing liquid. Dry with a clean soft cloth. Keep your safety glasses in a case.
- If you need to take your safety glasses off (for cleaning, or to wipe your face) leave the manufacturing area first. Then take your safety glasses off in an area where no work is being carried out (for example, the lunch room).
- Tell your supervisor right away if you lose your safety glasses or if they get scratched or broken. Your supervisor will get you another pair.

#### REPORTING ACCIDENTS OR INCIDENTS

Always tell your supervisor about accidents or incidents. For example, if your safety glasses are hit by a piece of wood or metal, or if your eyes get sore even if you are wearing safety glasses.

Version:

Date updated: 21/12/20XX

Approved by:

Next review: 21/06/20XX

## Example: Health and Safety Policy

At our workplace everyone must look after their own safety and the safety of other people.

This is what we will do to keep everyone safe and healthy at work.

**To keep healthy and safe, everyone at our workplace will:**

- follow all instructions, rules, procedures and safe ways of working. For example, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) if required
- report any pain or discomfort
- report accidents and near misses
- if injured, work with a manager to get better and come back to work.

**To keep people healthy and safe at work, our managers (on behalf of the PCBU\*) will:**

- engage with all workers (including contractors) to improve health and safety:
  - engage with workers and their representatives on health and safety matters that may directly affect them
  - have worker participation practices that give workers reasonable opportunities to participate effectively in improving health and safety on an ongoing basis
- find out what caused incidents and injuries and prevent them from happening again
- make sure all accidents and near misses are written down in the Accident Register
- keep improving the health and safety system in our workplace
- help people who are injured to get better and come back to work
- make sure contractors and sub-contractors have safe ways of working.

**To keep people healthy and safe, our managers (on behalf of the PCBU) will:**

- know about and follow all health and safety laws
- identify what could harm the health or endanger the safety of workers or others (eg visitors, bystanders)
- assess work risks and identify control measures together with workers and their representatives
- develop and review health and safety goals
- review our workplace's health and safety system every year
- help us to get health and safety representatives elected, if requested.

Our **Health and Safety Committee includes** workers, unions and managers. Everyone on the committee works together to improve health and safety in our workplace.

Approved by CEO/General Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\* PCBU stands for 'person conducting a business or undertaking'. XYZ is the PCBU.



## Example: Brief cover page for a safety data sheet



The law requires you to keep some long documents at your workplace, such as safety data sheets. Encourage workers to read safety data sheets that apply to their work. Make sure they know where to find the relevant sheets. You could also write a summary of the most important information from long documents – the things that all workers must know.

- If you put the most important information onto one page it will be easier for workers to read and understand.
- Use diagrams and symbols as well as words.
- Make sure that the one-page summary is attached to the longer document.

Here is Page 1 (of 8 pages) of the nitric acid 98% safety data sheet. On the next page is a one-page summary of the most important information.

<b>Safety Data Sheet</b>		<b>IXOM</b>
<b>1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE MATERIAL AND SUPPLIER</b>		
<b>Product Name:</b>	<b>NITRIC ACID 98%</b>	
<b>Other name(s):</b>	White Fuming Nitric Acid; Fuming Nitric Acid, White; Nitric Acid 98.5%.	
<b>Recommended use of the chemical and restrictions on use:</b>	General chemical/ingredient.	
<b>Supplier:</b>	Ixom Operations Pty Ltd (Incorporated in Australia)	
<b>NZBN:</b>	9429041465226	
<b>Street Address:</b>	166 Totara Street Mt Maunganui South New Zealand	
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	+64 9 368 2700	
<b>Facsimile:</b>	+64 9 368 2710	
<b>Emergency Telephone:</b>	<b>0 800 734 607 (ALL HOURS)</b>	
Please ensure you refer to the limitations of this Safety Data Sheet as set out in the "Other Information" section at the end of this Data Sheet.		
<b>2. HAZARDS IDENTIFICATION</b>		
Classified as a Dangerous Good according to NZS 5433:2012 Transport of Dangerous Goods on Land.		
Classified as hazardous according to criteria in the HS (Minimum Degrees of Hazard) Regulations 2001.		
<b>SIGNAL WORD: DANGER</b>		
<b>Subclasses:</b>		
Subclass 5.1.1 Category C (Oxidising Substances that are solids or liquids: low hazard) - Oxidising Substances.		
Subclass 6.1 Category D - Substances which are acutely toxic.		
Subclass 6.9 Category B - Substances that are harmful to human target organs or systems.		
Subclass 8.1 Category A - Substances that are corrosive to metals.		
Subclass 8.2 Category A - Substances that are corrosive to dermal tissue.		
Subclass 8.3 Category A - Substances that are corrosive to ocular tissue.		
Subclass 9.1 Category D - Substances that are slightly harmful to the aquatic environment or are otherwise designed for biocidal action.		
Approval number: HSR001515		
		
<b>Hazard Statement(s):</b>		
H272 May intensify fire; oxidizer.		
H290 May be corrosive to metals.		
H314 Causes severe skin burns and eye damage.		
H332 Harmful if inhaled.		
H373 May cause damage to organs through prolonged or repeated exposure.		
<b>Product Name:</b>	<b>NITRIC ACID 98%</b>	<b>Issued: 23/03/2015</b>
<b>Substance No:</b>	<b>000031051501</b>	<b>Version: 6</b>
<b>Page 1 of 8</b>		

You could attach this summary page to the front of the safety data sheet.

<b>Name:</b>	Nitric Acid 98%
<b>Use:</b>	General chemical/ingredient
<b>PPE to be worn:</b>	
<b>Eye/face:</b>	Wear chemical goggles/full face shield.
<b>Hands:</b>	Wear elbow-length watertight gloves.
<b>Body:</b>	Wear overalls, splash apron and rubber boots.
<b>Breathing:</b>	If there is a risk of breathing in (inhaling) nitric acid, wear an air-supplied mask.
<b>HSNO CLASSIFICATION</b>	
5.1.C	Oxidising substances that are liquids or solids.
6.1.D	Substances that are acutely toxic.
6.9.B	Substances that are harmful to human target organs or systems.
8.1.A	Substances that are corrosive to metals.
8.2.A	Substances that are corrosive to skin.
8.3.A	Substances that are corrosive to eyes.
9.1.D	Substances that are slightly harmful to the aquatic environment.
<b>Health effects:</b>	Exposure to nitric acid causes severe skin burns and eye damage. Harmful if breathed in (inhaled). Prolonged or repeated contact may cause damage to organs.
<b>Spill/leak:</b>	Clear area of all unprotected personnel. Increase ventilation. Advise local emergency services if nitric acid gets into sewers or waterways.
<b>Eyes:</b>	Hold eyelids apart and immediately flush eyes with lukewarm water for 15 minutes. Get help immediately from a medical professional such as a doctor or nurse. Continue to wash eyes with large amounts of water until medical help is available.
<b>If eaten or drunk:</b>	Immediately wash out mouth with large amounts of water. If swallowed, do NOT make person throw up (vomit). Give water to drink. Get help immediately from a medical professional such as a doctor or nurse.
<b>Skin:</b>	If spilt on large areas of skin or hair, immediately drench with running water and remove clothing. Continue to wash skin and hair with plenty of water and soap until the National Poisons Centre or a doctor says to stop. Cover skin burns with a clean, dry dressing until medical help is available.
<b>Clean up:</b>	Clean up immediately. Wear protective equipment to prevent skin and eye contact and breathing in fumes (vapours). Work upwind or increase fresh air. Contain: prevent runoff into drains and waterways by using absorbent (soil, sand or other inert material). Neutralise with lime or soda ash. Collect and seal in properly labelled containers or drums for disposal. Wash area down with excess water.

## Appendix 6: How to check workers understand your document

You want your document to be clear so that workers can understand it. When you give a document to a worker to check, say something like this:

*Here is a new document. I'd like you to read it to check the document is clear.  
If you don't understand the document then I need your help please to show me where the document is not clear so I can fix it.*

Here are a couple of other ways to check that people understand the document.

### Demonstration

Ask a worker to show you the steps as they read through the document. If what they do does not match what you have written, the document is not clear. Talk to the person about their understanding of each step so you understand where and how you need to rewrite the document.

### Thinking aloud

Ask a worker to read the document a short piece at a time. After they have read each piece get them to tell you what they think the document is saying. This is called 'thinking aloud'.

Say something like this:

*Please read this part of the document and then tell me what you think it is saying.  
For example, this part is about pre-start checks for your forklift. When you get to that part I need you to say to me - this says I have to do these things ...*

If what the worker tells you does not match what your document says then the document is not clear.

Explain to the person what you were trying to say in the document and ask them what they would say instead of what you have written.

## Appendix 7: Checklist for health and safety documents

Make sure that you have consulted with workers when developing a health and safety document. Use this checklist to check that your document is clear and does what it is designed to do.

If you answer 'no' to any question, write down what you need to change – or explain why no change is needed.

---

### PURPOSE

---

Is it clear what the document is for?

Yes  No

IF NO: what can you change?

Is it clear who needs to read the document?

Yes  No

IF NO: what can you change?

---

### WORKER INPUT

---

Have you discussed with workers:

– what they like about the document?

Yes  No

– what they do not like about the document?

Yes  No

Have you confirmed with workers that the document covers what they need to know?

Yes  No

IF NO: what can you change?

---

**TESTING AND FEEDBACK**

---

- Have you tested the document with:
- people who will need to read and use it?  Yes  No
  - others involved with/interested in workplace health and safety, such as the Health and Safety Committee?  Yes  No
- 
- Have you asked managers to read the document and provide comments?  Yes  No
- 
- Have you carefully considered all feedback received and made any changes required?  Yes  No

IF NO: what can you change?

---

**ACCURACY**

---

- Is the document accurate in relation to:
- your workplace health and safety system?  Yes  No
  - the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015?  Yes  No
  - the regulations that apply to your workplace?  Yes  No
  - Good Practice Guidelines or other guidance products?  Yes  No
  - industry standards, guidelines and/or manuals?  Yes  No
  - work risks and how to manage those risks (eg control measures to effectively eliminate or minimise a risk)?  Yes  No
  - the activities and tasks at your workplace?  Yes  No

IF NO: what can you change?

---

**LAYOUT AND LANGUAGE**

---

- Have you made it clear which parts of the document are instructions and which parts are information?  Yes  No
- 
- Have you used a verb (eg 'stop') at the beginning of each instruction?  Yes  No
- 
- Have you used:
- simple, everyday words – especially to explain technical terms?  Yes  No

---

  - examples to explain difficult ideas, processes or procedures?  Yes  No

---

  - explanations of abbreviations or acronyms (eg ACC)?  Yes  No

---

  - short sentences?  Yes  No

---

  - active voice?  Yes  No

---

  - short paragraphs with one main message?  Yes  No

---

  - bullets or simple tables for key points?  Yes  No

---

  - a clear logical order?  Yes  No

---

  - subheadings so readers can easily find what they need to know?  Yes  No

---

  - a plain font such as Arial, Calibri or Verdana?  Yes  No

---

  - different font sizes for headings and subheadings?  Yes  No

---

  - bold for emphasis (not underlining or block capitals)?  Yes  No

---

  - plenty of space between lines?  Yes  No

---

  - white space so the document does not appear too cluttered?  Yes  No

---

  - relevant visuals such as clearly labelled photographs, diagrams, graphs or charts?  Yes  No

---

  - limited colour, especially if the document will be printed or photocopied in black and white?  Yes  No

IF NO: what can you change?

---

**QUALITY CONTROL**

---

Has more than one person checked the document for spelling mistakes and other errors?  Yes  No

---

Have you followed your workplace's processes for:  
- quality assurance?  Yes  No

---

- version control (to keep track of changes to the document)?  Yes  No

---

- approval and sign-off?  Yes  No

IF NO: what can you change?

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**USING THE DOCUMENT**

---

Have you decided how you will:  
- introduce the document?  Yes  No

- train workers to use the document?  Yes  No

- find out whether workers understand the document?  Yes  No

- know whether workers are using what they have learned from the document?  Yes  No

IF NO: what can you change?

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**OTHER COMMENTS**





## Disclaimer

WorkSafe New Zealand has made every effort to ensure the information contained in this publication is reliable, but makes no guarantee of its completeness. WorkSafe may change the contents of this guide at any time without notice.

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