



Why is health and safety important in the working environment?

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Have you ever spent some time in your workplace and identified the hazards that could cause possible injury or harm to your employees. If not, I suggest you do this immediately as you are at great risk.

What are the Hazards at Work?

Whatever line of business you are in, there is always a possibility of accidents and or damages occurring that has an impact on the business. All work that is conducted on a day-to-day basis exposes people to hazards be they: manually handling, machinery, toxic substances, electricity, working with display screen equipment or even psychological hazards such as stress and alone work. These are just a few to mention.

What is the cost of Health and Safety?

Whenever one mentions the implementation of a safety programme, companies automatically jump to the conclusion that it is going to cost mega money. One always must think beyond that point, sit back, and have a look at what is the cost of an incident or damages that occur on the day-to-day basis.

If you link a death of an employee and see what the cost is, you will soon find that it could escalate beyond a million rand, not that any person's life should be linked to a rand value that is totally unacceptable. But the reality is that accidents **do** cost money, and these can be prevented thus saving unnecessary cost and loss to the business.

For some companies the reason that there are no accidents and damages that occur within the working environment because they have systems in place which have been built up over generations. Safety does not come about by accident and should not be the case: most accidents happen because there **were** no preventative measures in place. Yet despite all the precautions that are taken, there are still thousands of workplace injuries every month as well as damages that occur which is a financial loss to the business.

Even small businesses have accidents. Accident rates in small businesses can be higher than in large operations for instance the fatality rate in SME manufacturers is twice that of large ones.

What are the Underlying Principles?

Health and safety is not just about being socially responsible and the enforcement of a health and safety programme. It needs to start at management the implementation of a safety programme makes good business sense, and you should regard this just as important as the achievement of any other key business objectives.

Of course, working with the health and safety act can be quite a headache and frustrating. But don't be put off, this is where DF SHERQ Solutions can be of assistance to you and your business looking after your best interest in health and safety. Yes, on the face of it there do seem to be a lot

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of regulations and there is a lot of supporting guidance and by laws, but the underlying principles are quite straightforward.

Essentially you must ensure absence of risk to safety and health of employees and others ‘so far as is reasonably practicable’.

1. **Do you have system in place to Manage Health & Safety?**

You need to have a system in place to manage and maintain health and safety. It is required from you to be able to show how you plan, organise, control, monitor and review preventative measures. You need to appoint competent and trained person(s) in key role positions to help you comply with your legal obligations.

2. **Identifying hazards**

You must identify your main hazards, things that could cause harm to people. All employees in the working environment need to be made aware of the risks and hazards they are exposed too and needs to receive relevant training on this.

3. **Assess all the Risks**

It is required of you to assess your risks and the probability that significantly could cause harm or that injuries could occur.

Conducting a full risk assessment of the entire workplace is the key to working out what needs to be done - but don't make it over-complicated. Remember, although it is required by law, it is really only of any use if it can be used as a working document that makes sense to others. To help you prove to yourself and your employees that you have identified the main risks in your business which could cause harm and that you are doing everything you should to prevent that harm may occur from these risks.

4. **Risk Control Measures**

Once all the risks have been identified we need to make sure that these risks have control measures. Ensure that they are adequately implemented, maintained, and reassessed. You must put in place any back up measures that may be needed like health surveillance or emergency procedures. You must inform, train, and supervise all employees.

For the most part the Health and Safety Act it sets out certain health and safety goals to be achieved and indicates appropriate ‘benchmarks’ to help you work out whether your controls are up to ‘reasonably practicable’ standards.

There are underlying requirement to reduce or eliminate hazards at the source, or isolate people from them. For example, the guarding machinery before using personal protective clothing. Relying on the use of personal protective equipment - like respirators or protective clothing – should be your last resort and is only acceptable when all other options have failed.

Contact us for assistance.

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