

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:

- Health and safety incident reporting <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/health-safety-wellbeing/report-concerns-hazards/injury-incidents-observations-reporting.html>
- Risk assessments page <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/health-safety-wellbeing/health-safety-topics/risk-assessments.html>

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

Quick Reference Guide

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 / coordinator and then reviewed by the line manager. The final review is done by a HSW Manager.
4. Take appropriate action.



If you are unsure please review the Health and safety incident (internal) - notification and management guidelines on the internet page <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/health-safety-wellbeing/report-concerns-hazards/incident-internal-notification-and-management-notifiable-incidents-guidelines.html>

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.

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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
<https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/health-safety-wellbeing/health-safety-topics/risk-assessments/general-information.html>

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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 level	4	Very likely Probably expect the event to occur in most circumstances	Moderate (4)	High (8)	Extreme (12)	Extreme (16)
	3	Likely Event likely to occur at least once over the coming year	Moderate (3)	High (6)	High (9)	Extreme (12)
	2	Possible Event may occur at some time	Low (2)	Moderate (4)	High (6)	High (8)
	1	Unlikely Occurrence is conceivable, but not expected to occur	Low (1)	Low (2)	Moderate (3)	Moderate (4)
			Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
			1	2	3	4
			Consequence level			

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.

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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).

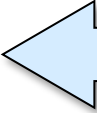
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Incident Level	Consequence Descriptor	Examples	Risk Factors	Risk Level
Business as Usual (BAU) Insignificant / Minor	<u>Personal Injury:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No treatment required First aid injury (FAI) <u>Potential for Harm:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Near miss No significant potential learnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper cut Walked into the corner of a table Cut finger while cutting your lunch Got dust in eye and washed out using first aid Splinter that could be removed with tweezers 	<u>Tasks</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not work-related Risks arising from “everyday living” e.g. using stairs; crossing road <u>Vulnerabilities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision not needed No instruction or training needed Good working environment PPE/specialist equipment not needed 	Low No RA needed
Level 1 Minor Basic Investigation	<u>Personal Injury:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical treatment injury (MTI) <u>Minor Potential for Harm:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for more significant harm (under slightly different circumstances could have resulted in a lost time injury) Some learnings (human errors and/or multiple organisational failures and/or learnings for University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any incident where treatment is sought from a medical practitioner (as defined by ACC) Fall on same height – minor fracture but can return to work Cut that requires stitches from an A&E Treatment of partial or full thickness burns Insertion of sutures Removal of foreign bodies embedded in eye Treatment of infection from an initial injury Surgical debridement 	<u>Tasks</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work-related Mundane/sedentary work exacerbated by requirements – e.g. using stairs carrying large box <u>Vulnerabilities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close supervision not normally necessary General hazard awareness rather than specific training 	Moderate No RA needed but general hazard awareness advised

Something has happened or almost did



Assessing what could happen



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Incident Level	Consequence Descriptor	Examples	Risk Factors	Risk Level
Level 2 Moderate Full Investigation	<u>Personal Injury:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lost time injury (LTI) or Notifiable event <u>Significant Potential for Harm:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for life changing harm (under slightly different circumstances could have resulted in a life changing injury) Significant learnings (multiple human errors and/or multiple organisational failures and/or significant learnings for University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Occupational exposure levels (OEL), i.e. noise - exceeds OEL Any OEL or WEL exceeded 	<u>Tasks</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazardous work requiring specific risk assessment, training and supervision <u>Vulnerabilities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	High Formal RA required
Level 3 Major Independent Full Investigation	<u>Personal Injury:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Death Significant notifiable event <u>Significant Potential for Harm:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for multiple fatalities Potential for public notifiable event Potential for significant harm to University business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<u>Tasks</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazardous work requiring specific RA, training and direct supervision <u>Vulnerabilities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazard-specific training required Work should not commence without specific sanction Consider Permit to Work (PtW) and specific emergency support 	Extreme Peer reviewed formal RA required (normally activity not permitted)