



Top Compliance (Pty) Ltd

Occupational Health and Safety

Your business' safety is our concern

Our Services

✓ Auditing ✓ Consulting ✓ Training ✓ Retail

Cell number: 082 442 8521

www.topcompliance.co.za

QSE B-BBEE - Level Four

REGULATIONS
RULES - LAW
REQUIREMENTS
COMPLIANCE
STANDARDS
TRANSPARENCY
POLICIES

August 2025 NEWSLETTER

Contact details:

Pat: 082 442 8521 (08h00 – 16h30)

Email: p.wessels@topcompliance.co.za

Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment – A legal duty

Every employer, regardless of business size, has a legal responsibility to ensure that the workplace is safe and without risks to health. This is not just a moral obligation – it is a requirement of the [Occupational Health and Safety Act, No. 85 of 1993](#) (OHSA).

Section 8(1) of the OHSA states that every employer “shall provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of his employees.” This obligation extends to all work activities and applies to any person who may be affected by those activities – employees, contractors, visitors, and even members of the public.

One of the most effective ways to meet this legal requirement is through a Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) process. This process allows you to proactively spot dangers before they cause harm, assess the potential severity of those dangers, and put control measures in place to reduce or eliminate them.

The OHSA makes it clear that employers must take reasonably practicable steps to eliminate or mitigate hazards before resorting to personal protective equipment (Section 8(2)(b)). This means that identifying and assessing hazards must be the first step in any workplace safety plan.

What is a hazard identification?

Hazard identification is the process of finding and documenting anything in the workplace that has the potential to cause injury, illness, damage to property, or harm to the environment. Hazards can be:

- Physical hazards – noise, heat, unguarded machinery, slippery floors, poor lighting.
- Chemical hazards – cleaning agents, paints, hazardous chemical agents, fumes.
- Biological hazards – bacteria, viruses, moulds.
- Ergonomic hazards – poorly designed workstations, repetitive strain, manual handling risks.
- Psychosocial hazards – stress, fatigue, workplace harassment.

According to Section 8(2)(d) of the OHSA, employers must “establish, as far as is reasonably practicable, what hazards to the health or safety of persons are attached to any work which is performed.”

Hazard identification should not be a one-off exercise. Workplaces change constantly new equipment is brought in, new processes are introduced, and people come and go. This means hazards can arise at any time, and regular inspections, observations, and consultations with employees are essential.

What is a risk assessment?

Once hazards are identified, the next step is to assess the risk they pose. Risk is the likelihood that harm will occur combined with the potential severity of that harm.

A risk assessment involves:

1. Identifying who may be harmed and how.
2. Determining the likelihood of harm occurring.
3. Considering the severity of potential harm.
4. Deciding on control measures using the Hierarchy of Controls (Elimination, Substitution, Isolation, Engineering, Administration, PPE).
5. Documenting the findings and implementing controls.

Under Section 13 of the OHSA, employers must also inform employees of the hazards identified and the precautionary measures in place. A risk assessment is not complete until those who may be exposed are aware of the risks and trained on how to protect themselves.

Different types of risk assessments

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to risk assessment. The type of assessment required depends on the nature of your work activities, your legal requirements, and the hazards present. Common types include:

1. Baseline risk assessment
 - Conducted to identify all potential hazards in a workplace at a given point in time.
 - Provides a comprehensive overview of risks and forms the foundation for all other assessments.
 - Typically done when starting a business, opening a new workplace, or after significant changes to operations.
2. Issue-based risk assessment
 - Focuses on a specific hazard or task.
 - Used when introducing new machinery, equipment, substances, or processes.
 - For example, introducing a new chemical cleaning product would require a specific assessment to determine handling, storage, and PPE needs.
3. Continuous risk assessment
 - An ongoing process of monitoring and evaluating risks during day-to-day operations.
 - Often done informally by supervisors, safety representatives, or employees as part of their normal work routines.
 - Includes regular inspections, housekeeping checks, and near-miss investigations.
4. Task-based risk assessment
 - Looks at the risks associated with a specific job or work task.
 - Often used in high-risk industries such as construction, manufacturing, and mining.
 - Breaks the task into steps and identifies hazards at each stage.

By selecting the correct type of assessment for the situation, you ensure that your workplace risks are understood and controlled in a targeted, effective way.

The [importance of a trained risk assessor](#)

While all employees should be involved in hazard identification, a formal risk assessment must be done by a competent person someone who has the necessary training, knowledge, and experience to identify hazards and evaluate risks accurately.

The OHSA defines a competent person (in relation to any duty) as someone who:

- Has the required qualifications and experience of the specific work.
- Is familiar with the relevant health and safety legislation.

- Has the knowledge to identify potential or existing dangers in the workplace.

This is critical because an untrained person may overlook hazards, underestimate risks, or fail to apply the correct control measures. A competent risk assessor knows how to:

- Analyse work processes and environments systematically.
- Apply the hierarchy of controls effectively.
- Use risk-rating tools to prioritise hazards.
- Ensure compliance with legislation and industry best practices.

Investing in a trained risk assessor is not just about ticking a compliance box it ensures your workplace is genuinely safer, and it protects you from legal liability if something goes wrong.

Why HIRA's matter

Beyond legal compliance, the benefits of a thorough HIRA process are far-reaching. Businesses that actively identify hazards and assess risks typically experience:

- Fewer workplace incidents – prevention is more effective than reaction.
- Lower absenteeism – employees are less likely to be injured or fall ill.
- Higher morale – staff feel valued when their safety is taken seriously.
- Improved productivity – safe workplaces operate more efficiently.
- Lower costs – fewer claims, lower insurance premiums, less downtime.

Conversely, failing to conduct proper HIRA's can result in:

- Enforcement notices and fines from the Department of Employment and Labour.
- Increased workers' compensation claims.
- Criminal, personal and vicarious liability in terms of Section 38 of the OHSA.
- Damage to your business reputation.

HIRA are not just compliance requirements they are the backbone of an effective workplace safety culture. The OHSA makes it clear: employers must take all reasonably practicable measures to eliminate or control hazards and inform employees about them. This process must be ongoing, systematic, and led by competent people.

By investing the time and resources into proper HIRA, you are not only meeting your legal duties but also building a safer, more productive, and more resilient business.

[Get your HIRA template on our website.](#)

Should you require further assistance or advice feel free to email us on info@topcompliance.co.za

Yours in Health and Safety

 A hand holding a magnifying glass over the text 'Safety Auditing'. To the right, a list of terms: SAFETY & HEALTH, BEST PRACTICE, RESPONSIBILITY, AWARENESS, COMPLIANCE, STANDARDS, COMMITTEE. To the left, a list of terms: AUDIT, POLICY, GUIDELINES, REGULATION.	 A red shopping cart icon next to the text 'SHOP ONLINE' with a mouse cursor arrow pointing at it.			
<u>Occupational health and safety auditing and consulting</u>	<u>Online safety shop</u>			
				

Appointments, checklists and templates	First aid equipment	Signage	Legal posters	Safety Equipment
--	-------------------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------------------

Courses offered by Top Compliance (Pty) Ltd

ONLINE ACADEMY - https://academy.topcompliance.co.za/		
Occupational Health and Safety Courses	Online	Onsite Excluding travel
Safety representative – Legal Liability	R980.00	R1300.00
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability	R1250.00	R 1730.00
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	R735.00	R875.00
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638	R735.00	R875.00
Basic Ladder Safety Course	R735.00	R810.00
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses		
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting	R735.00	R875.00
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning	R810.00	R950.00

ONLINE ACADEMY - https://academy.topcompliance.co.za/	
Occupational Health and Safety Courses	
Safety representative – Legal Liability	
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability	
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638	
Basic Ladder Safety Course	
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses	
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting	
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning	

ONSITE TRAINING	
First Aid Courses:	
Level 1 - US 119567 - Perform basic life support and first aid procedures	2 days
Level 2 - US 120496 - Provide risk-based primary emergency care/first aid in the workplace	3 days
Level 3 - US 376480 - Provide first aid as an advanced first responder	3 days
Level 1 & 2 - US 119567 & 120496	3 days
Level 1, 2 & 3 - US 119567, 120496 & 376480	5 days
Level 2 & 3 - US 120496 & 376480	3 days
Child and infant CPR & choking	6 hours
Adult CPR & choking	6 hours
Adult CPR & choking and AED	1 day
Occupational Health and Safety Courses	
Safety representative – Legal Liability	1 day
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability	1 day
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	1 day

Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638	6 hours
Basic Ladder Safety	6 hours
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses	
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting	6 hours
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning	1 day