
Macleans College - POLICIES & DIRECTIVES

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Hazard Identification

Acknowledgment: Macleans College wishes to acknowledge the assistance of OSH in providing some of the source material used in the preparation of this plan.

AIM:

The Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 (the Act) requires employers to have in place effective methods for:

- a) systematically identifying existing hazards to employees at work;
- b) systematically identifying new hazards;
- c) regularly assessing each hazard identified to determine whether it is a significant hazard.

These systems provide an easy step by step guide for you to identify, evaluate, report and manage any hazards in your workplace and assist the College in meeting its responsibilities as an employer.

Please them in conjunction with this *Health and Safety* document.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Every member of staff has the responsibility to identify, report and monitor hazards in their workplace.

Managers have a responsibility to ensure that their staff are safe while at work and that all hazards in the workplace are identified and managed. The Safety Officer has the responsibility of managing the hazard identification process.

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THE HAZARD IDENTIFICATION PROCESS:

There are seven steps in the process:

- Step 1 Identify the type of hazard.
- Step 2 Describe the hazard.
- Step 3 Record its location in the workplace.
- Step 4 Decide if the hazard is “significant” using the assessment rating sheet provided.
- Step 5 Describe why the hazard is significant or not.
- Step 6 Propose a course of action to eliminate, control or minimise the hazard.
- Step 7 Record the action taken.

Step 1 - Identify the Type of Hazard

The Act defines a hazard as an activity, arrangement, circumstance, event, occurrence, phenomenon, process, situation or substance (whether arising or caused within or outside a place of work) that is an actual or potential cause or source of harm and “hazardous” has a corresponding meaning.

Hazards can be placed into, but are not limited to, one of five categories. These are:

Physical	Chemical	Ergonomic	Psychological	Biological
Noise	Vapour	Repetition	Stress	Animal bites & stings
Temperature	Mists & sprays	Weights	Shift work	Fungi
Vibration	Gases	Posture	Alcohol & other drugs	Bacteria
Light levels	Dust	Work patterns	Harassment	Mites
Manual handling	Fumes	Environmental	Lack of value	Yeasts
Machines	Smoke	Seating		Enzymes
Lifting devices	Solvents	Fitness		Viruses
Energy sources	Acids			Infected Materials
Confined spaces	Pesticides			Blood samples
Tools	Metals			Body fluids
Ventilation	Paints			Animal products
Atmospheric condition	Resins			
Trips, falls, slips	Wastes			
Stairs and ladders	Aerosols			
General housekeeping	Explosives			
People - threats, physical abuse	Corrosives			

Identifying a hazard is the hardest part of the process. While it is easy to put a hazard into one of the categories once it has been identified, the actual process of identifying whether a hazard actually exists or not, takes some thought.

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Some suggestions are:

- 1 Divide the workplace into areas or processes and concentrate on each one in turn.
- 2 Go through the following check list in relation to each work area or process:
 - a) Analyse each work process to identify any areas of activity that could cause injury or harm. Ask the “what if?” question.
 - b) Have previous injuries or incidents occurred - what caused them?
 - c) Do you know of any near misses that have occurred.
 - d) Talk to other staff - have they experienced any injuries or incidents?
 - e) Talk to people working on the job or other safety officers in other schools/workplaces.
 - f) Are there any standards or regulations that apply?

It is quite likely that you will identify hazards in your workplace that are common in schools. There will be others that are unique to your area.

Operational Overuse Syndrome (OOS) is a significant hazard. The treatment of OOS symptoms and reporting of occurrences of OOS are covered in the Ministry’s manual “*Staying Safe at Work*,” page 11.

Step 2 - Describe the Hazard

If the hazard identification process has been thorough, describing the hazard will be a simple task. If this is not the case then it will be necessary to re-visit Step 1.

The description of the hazard must include the following elements:

- 1 The possible injury or damage.
- 2 The possible cause of the injury or damage.

Some examples of simple hazard descriptions are as follows:

- Head and body injuries caused by heavy boxes of stationery falling from upper shelving in storeroom.
- Sprains or broken limbs caused by slipping on wet floors in entrance foyer.

Step 3 - Record the Location of the Hazard in the Workplace

All that is required is to accurately record the location of the hazard in the workplace in such a way that someone other than yourself can locate and identify it easily.

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Step 4 - Decide if the Hazard is Significant

After you have located the hazards and recorded their locations, you must decide whether or not any of them are “significant” as defined by the Act.

- “*Significant Hazard*” is defined by the Act as being an actual or potential cause or source of:
 - Serious harm (also defined in the Act);
 - Harm (being harm that is more than trivial) the severity of whose effects on any person depends on the extent or frequency of the exposure to the hazard;
 - Harm that does not usually occur or is not easily detectable until a significant time after exposure to the hazard.

These last two categories cover issues such as long-term exposure to chemicals, asbestos, some radiation and noise.

Assessment

To assess whether a hazard is significant:

- 1 Decide how often the harm will probably occur, i.e:

happens all the time
happens often
happens occasionally
happens rarely
remotely possible

- 2 Decide the potential severity of the harm i.e. does it result in:

fatality
major injury or illness
minor illness or injury
negligible injury or illness

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- 3 Now go to the following table. You will see that each of the categories relating to likely frequency and the severity of the outcome, have been given a point value. To determine the rating of a hazard, multiply the probability by the severity.

Hazard Assessment Rating Table

Significant Hazard Assessment Rating

	Severity	Fatality	Major injury or illness	Minor injury or illness	Negligible injury or illness
Probable Frequency		8	4	2	1
Happens all the time	5	40	20	10	5
Happens occasionally	3	32	16	8	4
Happens rarely	2	16	8	4	2
Remotely possible	1	8	4	2	1

Any hazard that scores a rating of **16 or greater** is to be assessed as a “**significant hazard**” as it will meet the criteria stated in the Act.

As a general rule, the higher the hazard rating, the higher will be the priority given to its elimination, control or minimisation. **However, it should be remembered that this table should be used more as a logic stimulator than as an absolute.** For instance, it could be argued that a “remotely possible” observed and avoidable hazard, potentially capable of causing a fatality or major injury, should be treated as a major hazard.

Step 5 - Describe Why the Hazard is Significant or Not

This step requires a brief justification of the rating given to the hazard. This is to ensure that the rating has been correctly given and that the proper priority is given to managing the hazard.

Step 6 - Propose a course of action to eliminate, control or minimise the hazard

When a hazard is assessed as being a **significant hazard**, the Act requires employers to take all practicable steps to control it. These steps must be addressed in the following order of priority:

- 1 **Elimination** i.e. remove the particular hazard from the workplace entirely. If elimination is not possible the employer must attempt;
- 2 **Isolation** i.e. placing a barrier between the operator and the source of the hazard. The barriers could be physical separation, isolation or reduction of exposure time so that a significant hazard no longer exists. If isolation is not possible the employer must take step 3, namely;

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- 3 **Minimisation and Protection** i.e. this may involve some reduction in the exposure (e.g. by ventilation in the case of fumes) together with training and the provision of personal protective equipment.

This approach will be used for **every hazard**, not just those identified as being “significant”. This will ensure that we have a consistent approach to hazard management.

Examples of Action Proposals

- Enclose equipment in a safety cabinet or enclosure, or re-locate to an area where there are no staff.
- Training in safe lifting and handling techniques.
- Change cleaner’s hours so that floors are not wet when staff leave work.

When proposing a course of action, the Safety Officer should first consider those measures necessary to eliminate the hazard. If these are not practicable, then measures to control the hazard should be considered. Only if these are impracticable should measures to minimise a hazard be considered. If you are in any doubt as to what may or may not be practicable, seek advice from the Safety Officer or the Health and Safety Co-ordinator.

Step 7 - Record the Action Taken

The elimination, control or minimisation of some hazards will be possible using local resources or initiative.

Where management of a hazard is beyond department means, the proposed course of action will need to be considered by the Safety Committee and senior management, depending on the level of resourcing required.

RECORDING OF HAZARDS:

Hazard Reporting Sheet

The seven steps (refer to “The Hazard Identification Process” on page 1 of this procedure) in the hazard report process must be recorded on the Hazard Reporting Sheet provided with this plan. They are also available from the Safety Officer.

Use a separate sheet to record each hazard you identify in your workplace.

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Give each hazard a unique identification number. A space is provided at the top of the Hazard Reporting Sheet for this purpose. This will enable every hazard to be readily identified, managed and its status determined at any time.

Complete the report sheet as described in the preceding paragraphs, copy and distribute as follows:

Copy 1: Retain in local Hazard Register
Copy 2: Safety Officer
Copy 3: Safety Co-ordinator

Hazard Register

Safety Co-ordinator to place all the completed Hazard Reporting Sheets in an East Light/Lever Arch type binder in numerical order. This is the Hazard Register.

Hazard Register - Legal Requirement

The Act requires that a Hazard Register be maintained.

Hazard Summary Sheet

A convenient way to summarise the contents of your local Hazard Register is to use a summary sheet. This records the key details of each hazard on a few lines and is useful for:

- a) Providing management information required by managers and safety co-ordinators to enable them to consider priorities and allocation of resources.
- b) Showing on one or two pieces of paper the situation in the workplace at any given point in time.
- c) Taking to meetings/conferences instead of the complete file.
- d) Using your work sheet during the routine and regular re-assessment of hazards in your workplace.

HAZARD MANAGEMENT:

The process for identifying and recording hazards that has been described in this plan provides the necessary information to manage hazards in the workplace and meet our obligations under the Act.

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The Safety Officer and Safety Co-ordinator should use this information to:

- 1 Advise managers on priorities for action and resource requirements within their area of responsibility.
- 2 Monitor workplace hazards on a regular basis.
- 3 Identify trends.
- 4 Identify issues for the Health and Safety Committee to consider.
- 5 Keep the Safety Co-ordinator briefed on Hazard issues.

Office Hazards Inspection

The Macleans College Health and Safety Policy and Procedures requires the Safety Officer to carry out a regular check of their workplace and to report any hazards or other situations that require attention. Report forms are provided for this purpose.

If new hazards are identified during one of these checks, record them on the Hazards Reporting Sheet as described in this plan.