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Risk assessments - who does them?

Posted by Anonymous on Wed, 2014-07-30 09:52

Risk assessments - who does them? Hi, I have been told that as a lab tech I have to write risk assessments for the teachers for classroom use. I know that they should definitely be writing their own as they're the ones doing the experiment and I am not. Is there any documentation that says that it's THEIR obligation to write them and not someone else? If not, what can I say to change this?

Voting:



No votes yet

Year Level:

Foundation

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Senior Secondary

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

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Answer by labsupport on question Answer by labsupport on question Answer by Dale.Carroll on question Risk assessments - who does them?

Submitted by sat on 13 August 2014

In jurisdictions where written risk assessments are required for science practical activities, the general understanding is that the person performing the activity is the person responsible for the risk assessment. An example confirming this can be found in the Victorian DEECD documents on Chemical management found at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/Pages/chemica...>

In particular, see section 6.4.1 in the Chemical Management Procedure: www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/management/chemical...

The requirement for written risk assessments and the technicality of who is deemed “responsible” to perform risk assessments can vary from jurisdictions (i.e., states and territories) and sectors (e.g., Government, Catholic, Independent). The principal of a school has the overall responsibility for the health and safety of people in their school and may delegate specific tasks to anyone in the school who has an appropriate level of competence to carry out the designated role.

In the Code of Practice on “How to manage the risks associated with hazardous chemicals in the workplace”, Section 3 'Assessing Risks' includes the topic 3.1: 'Decide who should do the assessment'. This speaks of a collaborative approach, depending upon the expertise of the people involved. For complex cases, a number of people may need to be involved.

For example, sometimes a technician may have more knowledge of a chemical than the teacher or vice versa. In the classroom environment, the teacher knows the students in their class best and will need to assess the activity in view of their students' skills and behaviour.

Science ASSIST recommends that the person that has the best knowledge of the particular risks should carry out the risk assessment. Generally, in a classroom, this is the classroom teacher, while in a preparation room, this would be the science technician. However, there may be times when a collaborative approach is most appropriate.

Some other related documents include:

<http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/corp/hr/workplace/Pages/Managing-Risks-with-Ch...>

08/05/2019 edits

Added updated link:

Safe Work Australia. 2018. 'Model Code of Practice: Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace', Safe Work Australia website.

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-code-practice-managing-ri...>

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Submitted by Man Lam on 03 March 2017

According to the Safe Work Australia document:

MANAGING RISKS OF HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS IN THE WORKPLACE from

<http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/SWA/about/Publications/Documen...>

3.1 Decide who should do the assessment

Assessments are based on a thorough understanding of what happens, or might happen, in the workplace and should be carried out by a person or persons who have:

- „a practical understanding of the WHS Regulations, codes of practice and relevant guidance materials,
- an understanding of the work processes involved at the workplace
- „enough resources to gather information, consult the appropriate people, review existing records and examine the workplace.

The person or persons should also have abilities to:

- „interpret the information on the label and SDS of the hazardous chemical
- „ observe the conditions of work and to foresee potential problems
- „ communicate effectively and consult with workers, contract workers, managers and technical specialists
- „draw all the information together in a systematic way to form valid conclusions about exposures and risks
- „accurately report the findings to all parties concerned.

*A single person such as a **supervisor may be suitably** competent to perform simple assessments. In more complex cases, several persons representing a variety of skills may need to be involved in collecting and assessing the information. This may also include workers and their health and safety representatives.*

It does not explicitly say who is responsible for writing the risk assessment. However, it seems the supervisor (the teacher) takes more responsibility. However, I cannot see a reason why a technician should not be asked to do the risk assessment.