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Risk assessments

Posted by Anonymous on Fri, 2014-11-14 09:36

Risk assessments: The teachers at my school are wondering if they have to fill out risk assessments for household items like bicarb and vinegar or boiling water in a beaker over a Bunsen burner? These are things that are done in food technology as well as science. Does food tech have to fill out risk assessments for these things and if not then why do they have to for science.

I have tried to tell them that they should always fill out a risk assessment and that it is to cover them and the school legally in case something should go wrong.

Voting:



No votes yet

Year Level:

Foundation

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Senior Secondary

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

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Answer by ASTA_admin on question Answer by ASTA_admin on question Answer by ASTA_admin on question Answer by ASTA_admin on question Risk assessments

Submitted by sat on 26 November 2014

Schools have a general 'duty of care' to provide a safe environment for staff, students and visitors. Therefore schools have policies in place that apply to all activities conducted in the school including, but not limited to, excursions, sporting activities, student supervision and classroom activities. These policies should take into account areas of potential harm or injury. It is important for school science departments to follow the policies and guidelines of their individual school or controlling body for managing risks. The concept of 'duty of care' is contained in workplace health and safety legislation throughout Australia. For links to the health and safety legislation that covers your school, see the ASSIST information sheet [AIS: Links — Workplace Health and Safety \(WHS\)](#) and for links to support materials regarding risk assessment and risk management see [AIS: Links — Risk assessment and hazard management](#). School science departments, in delivering the science curriculum, run practical activities, which can potentially have a range of different hazards. It is important that hazards are identified and risk assessments are conducted so that relevant control measures can be put in place to reduce the level of risk.

It is good practice that a risk assessment is conducted for all activities that are performed in the science curriculum. The AS/NZS 2243 2005 Safety in laboratories Part 1: 'Planning and operational aspects'^[1] states:

Section 3: Laboratory Safety and Emergency Management

3.1 LABORATORY SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

3.1.1 General

To manage occupational health and safety in a laboratory, laboratory safety systems shall be implemented. A laboratory safety system shall address the assessment and management of all risks and the provision of training, including hazard identification, for personnel. This system shall also address access to, and operations in, the laboratory pertaining to students, maintenance staff, contractors, visitors (including children), cleaners, security staff and animals (experimental and companion).

3.1.2 Risk assessment

Risk assessments of all operations in the laboratory shall be carried out. Risk assessment can be described as a systematic use of the available information to identify hazards and to

estimate the risks to staff, property or the environment and to take appropriate steps to avoid or mitigate identified consequences of those risks. For further information on risk identification, control and management see AS/NZS 4801.

A risk assessment for the apparently simple exercises of using household items like bicarb and vinegar or boiling water would be different when being performed in a home economics room rather than a science laboratory. The layout of the room, form of heat source, water vessel, utensils and equipment used, quantities and types of ingredients and the students involved must all be considered and are different. For example, heating water in a saucepan on a hotplate has different hazards to heating water in a glass beaker on a tripod over a Bunsen burner.

It is important for all areas within the school to follow the policies and guidelines of their individual school or controlling body for managing risks. With regard specifically to assisting the science department, Science ASSIST has developed a Risk Assessment Template see [Risk Assessment Template](#).

The following links are also provided as examples of risk management:

The Department for Education, Training and Employment (DETE) in Queensland have a document “Managing Risks with Chemicals in Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) Workplaces”:

[http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/corp/hr/workplace/Pages/Managing-Risks-with-Chemicals-in-Department-of-Education,-Training-and-Employment-\(DETE\)-Workplaces.aspx](http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/corp/hr/workplace/Pages/Managing-Risks-with-Chemicals-in-Department-of-Education,-Training-and-Employment-(DETE)-Workplaces.aspx)

The Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) in South Australia has information regarding management of hazards:

<https://myintranet.learnlink.sa.edu.au/library/document-library/procedure/hr/health-and-safety/hazards/hazardous-chemicals.pdf> (login required)

<https://www.decd.sa.gov.au/hrhealthsafety/pages/hazards/managehazards>

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in Victoria has a policy titled “Safety in Science”:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/safescience.aspx>

[i] These extracts are from AS/NZS 2243 2005 Safety in laboratories Part 1: ‘Planning and operational aspects’ reproduced with permission from SAI Global Ltd under Licence 1407-c117

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