What is risk assessment?
Risk assessment involves considering the severity of consequences if a person is exposed to a hazard, combined with the likelihood of it happening. The level of risk will increase as the likelihood of injury or illness or its severity increases.

How do you control risks?
Once the risks have been assessed, the important step of controlling risks can begin — i.e. fixing the problems. There are a number of ways to control risks. They can be ranked from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest. This is referred to as the hierarchy of control measures.

The most effective way of controlling risks is to **eliminate a hazard**, for example, by removing trip hazards on the floor or disposing of unwanted chemicals from your science lab. If elimination is not possible, the next step is to **minimise the risks** by doing one or more of the following:

» substituting the hazard with something safer – e.g. using non-toxic chemicals in your science lab

» isolating the hazard from people or preventing people from coming into contact with the hazard - this involves physically separating the source of harm from people by putting distance between them or using barriers, e.g. storing hazardous substances in a secure place or roping off a broken swing

» using **engineering controls** (e.g. modifications to tools, plant or equipment) – e.g. placing guards around moving parts of machinery used in technology classrooms

If, after these steps, the risk still remains, it must be minimised by using **administrative controls**. Administrative controls are work methods or procedures that are designed to minimise exposure to a hazard. For example, procedures for the safe use of playground equipment, using signs to warn people of a hazard, or limiting exposure time to a hazard (e.g. organising outdoor activities for cooler part of the day, using sunscreen and covering up in the sun).
How you control risks? (continued)

If the risk still exists after implementing administrative controls, then it must be minimised by using suitable **personal protective equipment** (PPE). Examples of PPE include ear muffs, dust masks, hard hats, gloves, aprons and protective eyewear. PPE limits exposure to the harmful effects of a hazard, but only if workers and other people (e.g. students, visitors, etc) wear and use the PPE correctly.

A combination of controls should be used if a single control is not sufficient for the purpose.

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The Board/ECE must also ensure the control measure is and continues to be:
» fit for purpose
» suitable for the nature and duration of the work, and
» installed, set up, and used correctly
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How do you review control measures?

Controlling health and safety risks in the workplace is an ongoing process that needs to take into account changes in the workplace. This is why procedures and risk controls must be reviewed regularly to ensure they are still effective.

The Board/ECE must review and, if necessary, revise the control measures in the following circumstances:

» when the control measure is not effective in controlling the risk, e.g. when the results of monitoring show the control measure does not control the risk or a notifiable incident occurs because of the risk

» when a change at the workplace is likely to give rise to new or different health and safety risks

» if a new hazard or risk is identified

» if the results of consultation with workers indicate a review is necessary

» if a health and safety representative requests a review

What is a risk register?

Keeping a risk register is not required under the Act. However it is good practice to keep a risk register where you record information from the risk management process.

For each identified hazard the following information should be recorded:

» the harm the hazard could cause

» the likelihood the harm would occur

» the level of risk

» the effectiveness of current controls

» what further controls are needed

» how the controls will be implemented – by whom and by when

» review date