THE NORTHCOTT SOCIETY

POLICY ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT

| VOLUME: | 2 | Policy on Management and Organisational Issues |
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| SECTION: | В | Occupational Health & Safety & Workers' Compensation |
| SUB-SECTION: NEXT REVIEW DATE: BOARD APPROVAL: | Α | General March 2008 Not required |

Risk management plays a vital role in creating safer and healthier workplaces and assisting employers to meet their legislative responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (NSW), 2000.* It is Northcott's policy to establish a safe and hazard free workplace for its employees, consumers, volunteers and visitors by ensuring that the appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with all identified hazards in an efficient and timely manner.

Definitions of Commonly Used Terms in OHS Risk Management

| Consultation | the process of communication and participation between staff and management on issues affecting health and safety in the workplace. Managers are required to consult with their staff when assessing risks and deciding and implementing control measures. |
|-----------------|--|
| Hazard | anything (including a work practice or procedure) that causes, or has the potential to cause, injury, harm or illness. |
| Incident | any unplanned event resulting in, or having the potential for, injury, illness, ill health, damage or other loss. |
| Near miss | an incident that does not produce an injury or disease. |
| Risk assessment | the process of determining the potential of a hazard to cause injury or illness and the potential severity of that injury or illness. |
| Risk control | the process of controlling risks associated with hazards by using the hierarchy of control. |

- Risk management the overall process of identifying hazards, assessing the risk of those hazards, eliminating or controlling those hazards and monitoring and reviewing risk assessments and control measures.
- Workplace any place where work is done on behalf of Northcott including any premises or motor vehicle that is owned, leased or rented by Northcott.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (NSW), 2001 risk management is a logical, step-by-step process of identifying hazards, assessing the risk associated with those hazards, eliminating or controlling those risks and monitoring and reviewing risk assessments and control measures. The objective of this process is to improve workplace health and safety by addressing problems before injuries and incidents occur.

Step 1 – Identify hazards

Step 2 – Assess risks

Step 3 – Eliminate or control risks

Step 4 – Monitor and review

Risk management is required at all stages of a work process including:

- Prior to establishing and using a workplace.
- When planning and designing work processes.
- Before selecting, purchasing, installing and using equipment.
- Before changes are made to the workplace or systems of work.
- Whenever there is new information about work processes.

Step 1 – Identify hazards

Identifying hazards is the first step in the risk management process. A hazard is anything (including work practices and procedures) with the potential to cause harm to life, health or property and is the primary cause of health and safety problems in a workplace. Hazards can be identified in a number of ways including:

- Undertaking workplace inspections (see attachment A : workplace inspection procedure & checklist)
- Reviewing injury and incident data including near misses

- Investigating complaints and incidents
- Conducting safety audits
- Monitoring the work environment
- Observing work practices
- Consulting with staff (and in some cases clients and visitors)
- Responding to information contained on Hazard Report Forms
- Equipment manuals
- Material Safety Data Sheets

When a hazard is found, in the first instance a quick fix should be applied, where it is appropriate to do so. Examples of this would include removing boxes stored in front of an emergency exit or changing a work practice for one that is safer. A quick fix is a control measure that sorts the problem out there and then and may be a short or long term solution.

Once a hazard has been identified it must be reported to the line manager, even when a quick fix has been applied. This can be done verbally but a Hazard Report Form must be completed (see attachment B: Hazard report form) and given to the line manager within 24 hours of the hazard being identified. By reporting hazards, staff play a major role in making Northcott premises safer places in which to work.

The line manager must then assess the risk of the hazard causing harm and implement a control measure to fix the problem, in consultation with the staff affected by that hazard. In some cases clients will also need to be consulted regarding the hazard.

Step 2 – Assess risks

Once a hazard has been reported, the line manager must carry out a risk assessment in consultation with the staff affected by the hazard **within 5 working days of the hazard being reported** although in some cases, risk assessments may need to be conducted immediately if the hazard rating is a 1. Risk assessment looks at the likelihood of the hazard causing harm or injury and the severity of that harm or injury. A risk assessment is about working out how serious the problem is. To do this the line manager and staff need to do the following activities:

1. Evaluate the likelihood of an injury or illness occurring and the likely severity of that injury or illness, using a risk assessment matrix to assign a risk rating (see below). The following risk assessment matrix, assigns a risk category from 1 to 5 to indicate the urgency that is required to resolve a hazard.

| Likelihood 📫 | 99 Very likely could | 9 Likely | - Unlikely |
|--|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Severity | happen regularly | | Officery |
| High – life threatening or cause serious injury | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Med – Could result in temporary incapacity | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Low – Could result in inconvenience/first aid | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Hazard Rating | Time Scale for Risk Control to be implemented |
|---------------|---|
| 1 | Situation is serious. May need to stop work tasks or change work processes immediately. Must be fixed as soon as possible. Consider short and long term options. |
| 2 | Action needs to be taken in a timely manner, but if a quick and easy solution is available, the hazard should be fixed immediately. |
| 3,4,5 | Action is required within 3 months but if a quick and easy solution is available, the hazard should be fixed immediately. |

- 2. Identify the factors that may be contributing to the risk.
- 3. Where available, review health and safety information that is relevant to the particular hazard (such as Codes of Practice, WorkCover guidelines and Material Safety Data Sheets).
- 4. Document outcomes relating to risk assessments undertaken.

When assessing the risks associated with a hazard, line managers must consult with the staff affected by that hazard. Line managers may also need to consult with clients especially if the hazard is located in a client's home and/or directly affects a client's service provision.

When the risk assessment is completed the line manager must document the outcomes on the Risk Assessment and Control Form (Attachment C).

Step 3 – Eliminate/control risks

Once risks have been assessed action must be taken by line managers (in consultation with staff, and in some cases, clients) to eliminate or control risks. Whilst the most effective action is to eliminate risks, this is not always possible, so control measures must be implemented according to the hierarchy of control contained in the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (NSW) 2001.*

The Hierarchy of Control will assist in determining the most appropriate course of action to control the risk identified in the Hazard report form. The Hierarchy of Control ranks risk control strategies from the most effective to the least effective. Not all strategies will be practicable and a combination of strategies may be needed to achieve the best protection, for example ventilation and gloves.

The following is the Hierarchy of Control in descending order:

Eliminate the risk (most effective)

Examples of elimination strategies are:

- Redesigning the workplace: by redesigning rooms to allow sufficient space for manual handling tasks (widening doorways, removing furniture).
- Changing work practices so that unnecessary high risk tasks are no longer carried out (using a hoist to move clients rather than lifting them).

Minimise the risk

a. Substitution

This is achieved by replacing hazardous substances or procedures with those that are safer. Examples of substitution strategies are:

- Replacing tiles in the bathroom with non-slip tiles.
- Replacing hazardous cleaning products with non-hazardous environmentally friendly products.

b. Modification

This is achieved by modifying the workplace or work practices. Examples of modification strategies are:

- Improving drainage in bathrooms.
- Rearranging the layout of a bedroom to allow free access with a hoist.

c. Isolation

Examples of isolation strategies are:

- Guarding exposed moving parts on machinery.
- Moving a photocopier away from a desk area.
- Locking medication in a cupboard in a respite house to prevent unauthorised access.

Engineering Controls

This is achieved by using mechanical solutions to control the risk. Examples are:

➢ Hoists, trolleys, electric beds, forklifts.

Administrative Controls

Examples of administrative controls are:

- ➤ Training.
- Increasing supervision of staff.
- Implementing safe work practices and standard operating procedures.
- ➢ Job rotation.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (least effective)

Personal protective equipment is the least satisfactory solution to OHS risks as it does not address the hazard but merely provides a shield to protect the employee. It should only be used when it is not reasonably practicable to address the risk any other way or to supplement other risk strategies.

Personal protective equipment and clothing must be:

- > Carefully selected and appropriate for the task.
- Correctly fitted and comfortable to wear.
- > Selected to take into account individual differences within employees.
- > Always worn where indicated/instructed.

Examples of personal protective equipment are:

Gloves, safety glasses, protective footwear, ear plugs.

Step 4 – Monitor and review risk assessments and control measures

Once risk assessments are in place, the legislation requires that the assessments be monitored and reviewed in order to maintain the currency of that assessment. Changes to work practices, work environment or equipment may change the level of risk. The control measures used must also be monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are effective and do not create additional risks.

Line managers are responsible for monitoring and reviewing risk assessments and control measures in consultation with staff. They are also responsible for documenting the monitoring and review processes using the Risk Assessment and Control Form. A copy of this form is to be kept at the worksite (or at the local office), and a copy forwarded to the OHS Coordinator.

Assessments and control measures will need to be re-evaluated if:

- there is evidence that the risk assessment or control measure is no longer valid.
- an injury or incident resulting from exposure to the hazard occurs.
- there are changes to the work environment, equipment or work practices which may make the assessment or control measure ineffective or out-of-date.

Monitoring should occur on a regular basis such as weekly, monthly or quarterly whereas a review should occur at the end of a specified time period by which point a risk assessment or a control measure would be expected to have demonstrated whether or not it was effective. Remember – any 'quick fixes' that are implemented to control hazards, also need to be monitored and reviewed.

The Risk management process will operate at different organisational levels within Northcott. This is because some risks are common to many areas and require an organisational response, whilst other risks are unique to local workplaces and require a local response.

For instance, risks associated with manual handling are common to all workplaces within Northcott and require organisational control measures. Organisational control measures are designed to ensure a consistent response across the organisation and to reduce the duplication of effort involved if every workplace developed control measures for what are common issues. Organisational control measures are to be implemented by senior management and Human Resources and are applied to local workplaces. However, where hazards that are unique to a workplace are identified, local managers and staff are responsible for using the risk management process to develop and implement appropriate local control measures (advice/assistance can be sought from Human Resources if necessary).

Responsibilities

For an OHS Risk Management strategy to be successful it must be driven from senior management level, as this is the management level responsible for making organisational decisions.

Core Executive Group (CEG) is responsible for:

- Developing an organisational approach to meet the legislative requirements of risk management.
- Ensuring that processes are in place for identifying hazards, assessing risks, documenting risk management controls and monitoring/reviewing risk assessments and control measures.
- Providing information, instruction, training and supervision to enable staff to implement risk management processes.
- > Monitoring and reviewing the overall effectiveness of risk management processes.
- Ensuring sufficient resources are available to effectively manage risks in the workplace.

Managers, Team Leaders & Supervisors are responsible for:

- > Ensuring risk management processes are implemented in their work area.
- Ensuring that staff are provided with training, information and instruction to enable them to participate in risk management processes and to enable them to perform work tasks safely.

- Following up on reported hazards by undertaking risk assessments and implementing control measures (in consultation with the relevant staff, and in some cases, clients).
- Monitoring and reviewing risk assessments and control measures.
- Referring complex issues requiring a higher level authority, to a more senior manager.

Employees are responsible for:

- > Carrying out all work activities in a safe manner and in accordance with procedures.
- > Reporting hazards and bringing them to the attention of the supervisor or manager.
- Providing assistance in rectifying hazards and participating in consultation processes.

OHS committees are responsible for:

- > Reviewing measures taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees.
- > Investigating OHS matters and providing assistance in resolving those matters.
- > Accompanying WorkCover inspectors when WorkCover inspections are conducted.
- Acting as an observer during departmental investigations into incidences or other occurrences.
- Assisting in the recording of workplace hazards and incidents.

OHS Coordinator and Human Resources Department is responsible for:

- > Providing advice to managers and supervisors about the risk management process.
- Providing specialist support in relation to risk assessments and control measures to ensure that risk management processes are implemented.
- Providing support to OHS committee.
- Developing and reviewing policies, guidelines and protocols in relation to risk management processes to ensure that the organisation's needs are met.
- Monitoring organisational trends, addressing emerging issues and reporting on performance.

References:

OHS Act 2000 OHS Regulation 2001 Risk Assessment Code of Practice 2001 AS NZS 4360-1999 Risk Management

Supporting Policies:

Occupational Health and Safety

Supporting Documents:

Workplace Inspection Procedure Workplace Inspection Forms Hazard Identification Form Risk Assessment and Control Form Authorised by:

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