



## Health & Safety Reporting of Hazards

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<sup>1</sup> or earlier if change in legislation or on risk assessment

### Amendment Control

Version	Date	Amendments
1.0	Oct 2015	
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## Policy Summary

Edinburgh Napier University is committed to providing a healthy and safe working environment for staff, students, visitors, and contractors. In order to maintain a safe workplace, it is essential that any hazards are identified, reported and necessary temporary control measures used until repairs or replacements can be put in place.

Staff, students, visitors and contractors all have a duty to report hazards in the workplace which they feel may be unsafe or have the potential to injure or cause harm. Hazards should be reported to their line manager, supervisor, or any staff member responsible for the area at the time. Any identified workplace hazards can also be reported to the Facilities Service Desk or to the Health and Safety Office.

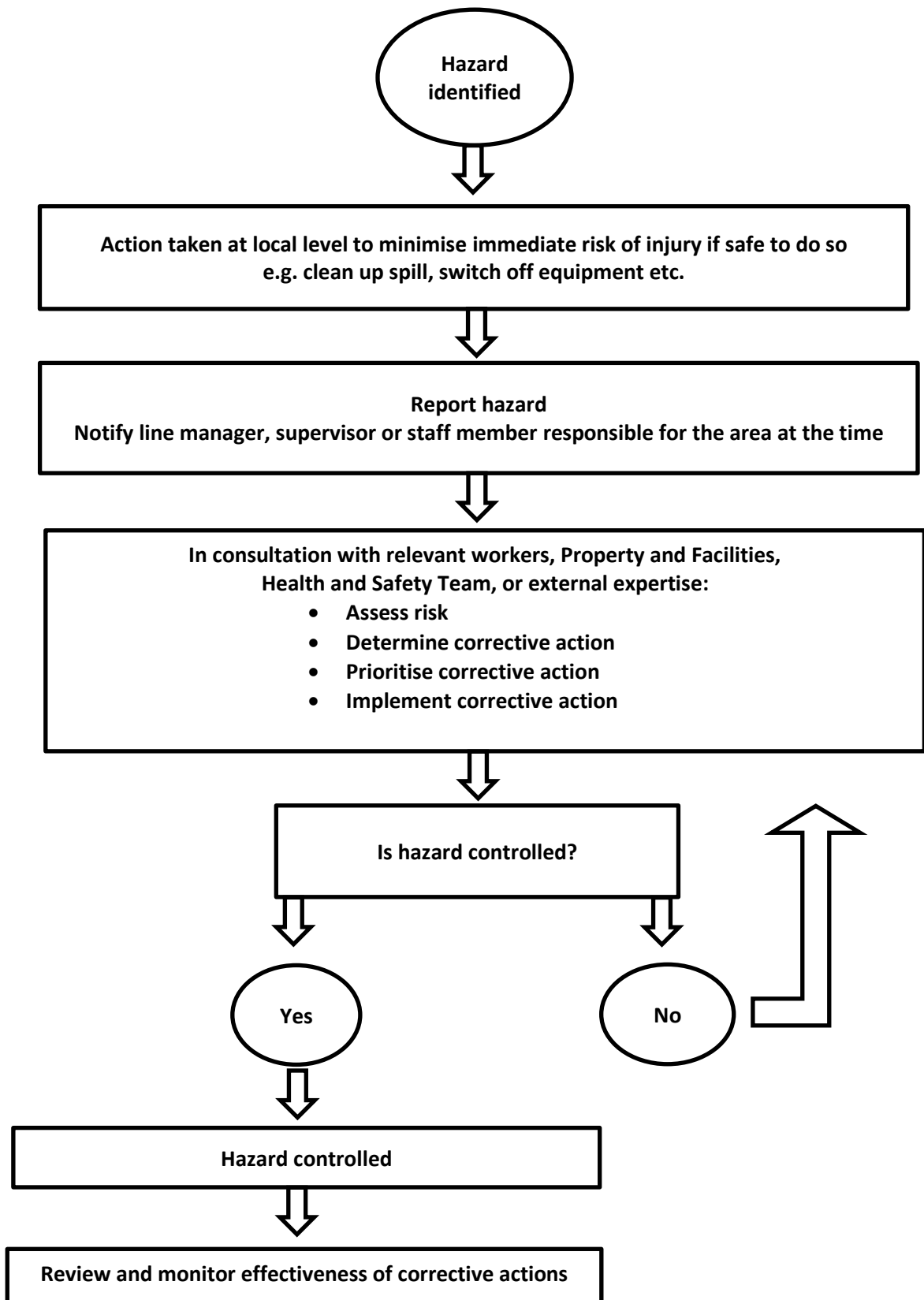
Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations employees must inform their line managers of any work situation which they consider represents a serious and immediate danger to health and safety, with the minimum of delay. Where it is safe to do so, make area safe without putting yourself or others at risk and stop people entering this area.

This policy is a guide to all staff, students, visitors and contractors working at Edinburgh Napier University highlighting the importance of reporting hazards.

Refer also to the [Accidents, Dangerous Occurrences and Near Misses Policy](#).

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## 1. Introduction

The reporting of hazards in the workplace is about creating a safe working environment. It is about creating a culture where people feel safe and where staff, students, visitors, and contractors are all part of the solution when it comes to mitigating risk.

Anybody working, studying or visiting Edinburgh Napier University has a duty to report any hazard (this can also be an unsafe condition or an unsafe act), potential hazard or any workplace activity that they deem unsafe, or which might pose a risk to the health and safety of themselves and others, or caused by others working unsafely.

Staff, students, visitors and contractors are also legally obliged to notify management of any shortcomings in the health and safety arrangements, even when no immediate danger exists. Reporting hazards early allows appropriate, trained staff to fix or remove the hazard before it develops into something more serious.

On being informed of the hazard, supervisory and managerial staff should take the appropriate action to remove or minimise the hazard provided it is safe to do so. This may include stopping the work temporarily or addressing the issue themselves or reporting the hazard to the Facilities Service Desk and/or the Health and Safety Office to organise repairs and/or removal and replacement of the hazard.

Reporting hazards also allows investigations to take place in order to reduce future risk.

### ▶ **Immediate action to avoid injury should be taken if the risk is imminent**

For the purpose of this policy Edinburgh Napier University is defined as:

- All campus buildings.
- All accommodation buildings.
- University grounds such as car parks, walkways, and any garden areas around its buildings.
- Any other buildings owned or used by the university.

Areas away from the university, such as staff/students on fieldtrips or external visits, are also included. Any hazards identified in these areas should also be reported.

### ▶ **Remember if it looks unsafe it probably is!**

### ▶ **Avoid injury - report it now**

## 2. Hazard Reporting

Staff, students, visitors, and contractors have a duty to:

- Report any hazard, accident, incident, near miss or dangerous occurrence to their manager, supervisor or staff member responsible for the area at the time and take reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of any person at work.
- Participate in the consultation process following the reporting of hazards, accidents, incidents, first aid incidents, near misses or dangerous occurrences.

- Follow all instructions e.g. University Policies and Procedures, safe working procedures, safe practices, wearing protective equipment, undergoing training etc.
- Take all reasonable care to protect their own health and safety and must take reasonable care to avoid adversely affecting the health and safety of any other person through an act or omission.

Health & Safety Management/Schools/Services/Managers/Property and Facilities Management have a duty to:

- Observe and identify hazards.
- Investigate and respond to all hazard reports promptly and report back on the actions taken with timescales if known.
- Ensure staff/students/visitors/contractors are notified of any hazardous situation and take appropriate action to eliminate or control any risk associated with the hazard.
- Monitor and review effectiveness of controls.
- Comply with legislative requirements.
- Ensure effective consultation takes place.
- Maintain appropriate documentation.
- Provide information, instruction, training and supervision in order for work to be conducted in a safe manner.
- Develop an effective workplace inspection process, specific to the site/area using the [checklists](#) on the Health and Safety Office intranet pages.

### 3. Hazard identification

Hazard identification can and should simply be a part of normal operations, and that way it is blended into the way people work and creates better hazard identification opportunities and improves the leadership and health and safety culture across the University.

The main 'times' when hazard identification should be done include:

- When planning work processes, work activities and events.
- When writing new, or reviewing current, Risk and COSHH assessments.
- Before purchase, hire, lease, commission/decommission, erection/dismantling of plant, equipment or substances.
- Prior to disposal or sale of plant, equipment, or substances.
- When changes are made to the workplace, work activities or work methods.
- When new members join the team as they might not be aware of the local issues.

Any time new information becomes available due to:

- Hazard reports
- Workplace inspections
- Legislative changes
- Audit findings
- Analysis of accident/incident/near miss occurrences
- Testing results
- Consultation of relevant parties

When it comes to how to identify hazards in the workplace, one of the best tools is experience. Workers who have been in a workplace for a long time can often identify hazards quickly and accurately. But they can also become complacent with hazards and accustomed to simply working around the hazards, so it is also great to get fresh eyes in the form of other employees and external inspectors onto a site or workplace.

Some general rules of thumb which help all staff/students/contractors to better identify hazards in the workplace include:

- Look at every aspect of the work including cleaning and maintenance, not just normal operations.
- Look closely at the physical work environment, equipment, materials etc.
- Look at past injury and incident records to spot weaknesses or 'hot spots'.
- Discuss hazards with staff/students/contractors in an individual setting and through safety meetings as they often know hazards best.
- Look at how specific work processes are done and managed, including the systems behind the processes and procedures.
- Consider possible and somewhat unforeseen circumstances including what might happen and what could potentially become a hazard in different conditions e.g. adverse weather etc.
- Determine how easy it would be for someone or something to impact the safety of a machine or other object.
- Consider risks to others on campus or out on fieldwork – visitors to campus, contractors, members of the public. Work you are doing may be safe for you but how does it affect others in the area.
- Consider risks created by others not employed by the university, but who work close to or adjacent to University premises or activities.
- Look at the skill levels and competency of different groups. Factor in students or more inexperienced workers when considering whether a hazard is obvious.
- Consider others who may be at risk such as young persons, pregnant women or vulnerable persons.

#### **4. Common reasons people do not report hazards**

Even with a robust reporting system in place and staff and others having an understanding of the types of workplace hazards they may encounter, there is still no guarantee that staff, students, visitors and contractors will report the potential hazards they see. The common reasons people are discouraged or fail to report hazards can generally be divided into three categories:

**a) They do not understand the importance of reporting hazards. Staff, students, visitors and contractors may feel:**

- Reporting the common hazards they encounter is not necessary.
- The hazards are not serious enough to report.
- They know how to stay safe around the hazard, so they do not need to report it.
- They feel they can sort the hazard themselves.

**b) There is not a safe environment to report hazards. Staff, students, visitors and contractors may feel:**

- They will get in trouble with their supervisor or be seen as a complainer.

- They don't want to be blamed for the hazard or be seen as irresponsible for causing the hazard.
- They may fear that owning up to a near miss will lead others working in area to see them as weak or accident prone.

**c) Reporting hazards adds more work to their plate. Staff, students, visitors and contractors may feel:**

- Reporting a hazard will just cause a headache for everyone involved.
- It adds extra paperwork to their plate that takes up a lot of time.
- It will distract them from completing the job they need to finish.

To ensure a **successful hazard reporting programme**, managers and senior supervisory staff need to proactively remove as many of these barriers to reporting as possible.



## **Appendix 1 - Workplace Hazards - definitions**

### **Safety Hazard**

These are hazards that:

- Create unsafe working conditions, e.g. trailing power cords, loose or frayed carpets, broken or damaged stairs, uneven ground, spills, ice and snow etc. These could all cause a slip, trip or fall in the workplace, and result in physical and mental impacts on an injured person and those who witnessed the incident.
- Are created by individuals through their unsafe actions of working unsafely and putting others at risk (e.g. creating dust, noise, vibration, working with tools and equipment incorrectly, etc).

### **Physical Hazard**

Physical hazards are environmental factors that can harm a person without necessarily touching them e.g. working at heights, excessive noise, poor lighting, and extremes of temperature.

### **Biological Hazard**

Biological hazards include viruses, bacteria, blood, bodily fluids etc. that can cause adverse health impacts. These health impacts can range from skin and respiratory system irritation to the transmission of infections. Also includes animal bites, insect stings and bites, harmful plants, sewage etc. They can also cause environmental damage.

### **Chemical Hazard**

Chemical hazards are hazardous substances that can cause harm. These hazards can result in both health and physical impacts such as skin irritation, respiratory system irritation, eyesight irritation or damage to property, corrosion and explosions. Examples of chemical hazards include acids, bleach, alcohol, solvents etc. They can also cause environmental damage.

### **Ergonomic Hazards**

Ergonomic hazards are a result of physical factors that can result in musculoskeletal injuries. They can be found in every workplace and, if not managed correctly, can have significant long and short term impacts on the employee's health and wellbeing. Musculoskeletal injuries are those that affect the musculoskeletal system, including damage to muscles, tendons, bones, joints, ligaments, nerves and blood vessels, e.g. a poor workstation set up in an office (or at home), poor posture and manual handling.

### **Psychosocial Hazards**

Psychosocial hazards include those that can have an adverse effect on an employee's mental health or wellbeing, e.g. sexual harassment, victimisation, bullying, stress and workplace violence.