



# What are my risk management responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015?

The new Act, which comes into effect on April 4, is more focused on risk than current health and safety legislation. The Fire Service needs to understand and identify health and safety risks that could seriously harm workers. While we already do this, the new Act is a fresh opportunity to check our understanding, leadership, practices, systems, and training around risk management. We need to all ask ourselves what we can do to help make our work and our workplaces safer.

## Risk terminology:

**Risk** is not defined in the Act. However, WorkSafe guidance says:

- ▶ risks arise from people being exposed to a hazard (a source of harm)
- ▶ risk can be described as how likely consequences like death, injury or illness could occur when a person is exposed to a hazard

**Risk management** is the process where you:

- ▶ identify hazards
- ▶ evaluate the risks associated with a hazard
- ▶ consider first whether the risk can be eliminated or minimised with **controls**
- ▶ document (wherever possible) and communicate the controls around the risks
- ▶ review the risks and controls

**Risk controls** are the steps taken by the Fire Service to protect its workers from harm for instance by:

- ▶ **isolating** the risk from our people – such as effective traffic management
- ▶ **substituting** one cleaning product that might be harmful, for another that does not carry the same risk
- ▶ **providing** and training workers in the use and maintenance of PPE such as breathing apparatus, uniforms, gloves and boots
- ▶ **communicating** and assessing the understanding of Operational Instructions and guidelines for example through OSM and leadership observation
- ▶ **training**

## All firefighters, trainees, support staff and contractors:

The key message is to continue good practices around keeping yourselves, your crew members and others safe. In particular you must:

- ▶ follow and comply with reasonable instructions, policies and procedures that you have been notified about by the Fire Service
- ▶ talk about and identify hazards where you can, and consider and document the most effective ways to eliminate or control the associated risks
- ▶ where applicable continue to use tools you've been trained in like Dynamic Risk Assessment and the Safe Person Concept.

## Fire Service – through executive officers and managers, and career SSOs and SOs

As a PCBU, the Fire Service has the primary duty of care to ensure, within reason, its workers are not put at unnecessary risk, for example by:

- ▶ considering the level of risk and potential control measures to eliminate or minimise work-related risks
- ▶ providing information and training to protect firefighters from work-related risks.

## NZFS Commission and Strategic and Operational Leaders:

Those individuals must take proactive and personal responsibility for the overall management framework for risks within NZFS, for instance by:

- ▶ understanding and keeping up to date with the critical risks facing workers
- ▶ ensuring the Fire Service is appropriately resourced to eliminate or minimise risks
- ▶ ensuring there are good reporting processes and communication of information around risks.