

Hierarchy of Controls

The hierarchy of controls is referred to in most states Occupational Health and Safety legislation as the manner in which priority should be decided when putting in place control measures to minimise risk when performing hazardous tasks or addressing hazards in the workplace.

Options 1, 2 and 3 represent the best method of addressing problems identified, as they require some physical change to the property, equipment being used or the manner in which the task is being carried out. Utilising one of these approaches will usually be effective. Options 4 and 5 are the least effective, as they rely heavily on the person performing the task, they are therefore not foolproof.

When looking at problems identified on organisation properties the hierarchy of controls should be considered to decide on control measures to be implemented.

1. Elimination

The best way to control a hazard is to eliminate it entirely. e.g. Remove the hazard by removing unsafe equipment or ceasing to perform a particular task.

2. Substitution

Look for another way of performing the work e.g. use a less caustic cleaning substance, or a safe piece of equipment.

3. Engineering

Physically change the workplace or equipment being used e.g. use a guard, modify a piece of machinery or automate a process.

4. Administrative Controls

Explain to people how to perform a task properly e.g. introduce a written work procedure and train the people performing the task. This is a less effective method of controlling risks as it relies on the person performing the task following the procedure, without supervision this does not always happen.

5. Personal Protective Equipment

This is the least desirable control measure to use. Whilst it is possible to supply protective equipment people may not always use it. It is impossible to supervise those doing the task constantly.

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