What is the difference between a hazard and a risk?

A hazard arising from a work activity can be defined as a situation or thing that has the potential to cause death, injury or illness to a person.

The Act states that hazards also include a person’s behaviour where that behaviour has the potential to cause death, injury or illness to a person (whether or not that behaviour results from physical or mental fatigue, drugs, alcohol, traumatic shock, or another temporary condition that affects a person’s behaviour).

Hazards at work may include: hazardous substances, vehicles, plant and equipment, falling objects, repetitive movements, fatigue, bullying and violence at the workplace, and falls, slips and trips.

Risk is the likelihood that death, injury or illness might occur when a person is exposed to a hazard. Risks must be managed by taking action to eliminate them, and if that is not reasonably practicable, minimising them. Eliminating a hazard will also eliminate any risks associated with that hazard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAZARD</th>
<th>RISK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A situation or thing with the potential to cause death, injury or illness</td>
<td>The likelihood that death, injury or illness might occur when exposed to a hazard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is risk management?

Boards/ECEs (as PCBUs) must manage risk and ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, health and safety under the Act. Managing work health and safety risks involves the following four steps:

- **identifying hazards**: finding out what situations and things could cause death, injury or illness
- **assessing risks**: understanding the nature of the risk that could be caused by the hazard, what the consequences could be and the likelihood of it happening
- **controlling risks**: implementing the most effective control measures that are reasonably practicable in the circumstances
- **reviewing control measures**: ensuring control measures are working as planned
What is hazard identification?

Boards/ECEs must identify reasonably foreseeable hazards that could give rise to risks to health and safety in the workplace. Identifying hazards arising from work activities involves finding things and situations that could potentially cause harm to people. Hazards generally arise from the following aspects of work and their interaction:

» physical work environment
» work tasks and how they are performed
» equipment, materials and substances used
» work design and management
» people’s behaviour in the workplace

The hazard identification process could involve:

» inspecting the workplace – regularly walking around the workplace and observing how things are done can help you predict what could or might go wrong
» consulting with workers – working closely with workers and looking at every task in the workplace will assist in finding potential hazards
» analysing records of health monitoring, workplace incidents including near misses, worker complaints, sick leave and the results of any inspections and investigations to identify hazards

What is hazard identification?

Here are some examples of common hazards arising from work activities and their potential harm:

» falling objects, and falls, slips and trips of people – bruises, lacerations, dislocations, fractures, concussion, permanent injuries or death
» vehicles, plant, machinery, equipment – bruises, lacerations, dislocations, fractures, concussion, permanent injuries or death
» repetitive movement (e.g. data entry, lifting young children onto a changing table) – muscular strain, occupational overuse syndrome (OOS)
» biological (bacteria, viruses) – e.g. leptospirosis
» loud noise (from power tools in technology classes or children’s noise levels) – permanent hearing damage
» bullying in the workplace – stress-related illness
» hazardous substances – burns, skin conditions, respiratory problems

Read Risk Management – Part 2 for information on assessing and controlling risks in the workplace and reviewing control measures