



# HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR **HAIRDRESSERS**



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## Acknowledgements

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## Definitions

**MSDS** means a material safety data sheet prepared by a manufacturer

**plant** includes any machinery, equipment and appliances

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# HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR HAIRDRESSERS

# INTRODUCTION

*Health and Safety Guidelines for Hairdressers* shows you how to improve the health and safety in your salon. The Guidelines adopt a systematic approach to managing health and safety in the NSW hairdressing industry. The minimum elements of a systematic approach include:

- consultation
- risk Management
- policies and procedures
- information
- training
- review
- record keeping.

As in other industries, there are workplace hazards in the hair and beauty industries that can cause illness or injury to employees and visitors to the workplace. Hazards in the workplace can come from many sources. They can sometimes appear insignificant, such as a wet floor that hasn't been wiped up, or a brush or comb that hasn't been cleaned, through to the more obvious, such as chemicals in hair solutions. Workplace injuries cost the hairdressing industry more than \$2.3m in the 2000/01 period.

Many workplace illnesses and injuries can be prevented, often by quite simple precautions. Listed below are some simple explanations about workplace health and safety, some common workplace hazards and practical suggestions on what to do about them.

## **Why is Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) so important?**

A workplace incident that causes an injury to the employee or visitor to the workplace does not only have a cost to the insurer and the employer, there are additional social costs. The cost to the community, the emotional and psychological effects on the injured person and their family should not be overlooked when calculating the final impact of the injury. Often an employee is unable to resume an active role in the community following a workplace incident.

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* employers have a legal duty to protect the health and safety of all people at their workplace. This includes full and part time workers, casual employees, contractors, customers and other visitors to your workplace.

The law requires employers to:

- identify the hazards in your workplace
- assess the risk
- find ways to eliminate the hazard or reduce the risk that it presents
- consult with employees on health and safety matters.

Controllers of work premises have a duty to ensure that premises are safe and without risks to health.

# CONSULTATION

The OHS Act requires employers to take into account the views of employees when making decisions that affect their health, safety and welfare. Involving your employees in identifying hazards and solving health and safety problems is an essential step in making your workplace safe and healthy.

The advice in this publication should be used when consulting with employees about the hazards in your salon and involving them in the risk assessment and control process.

## What is meant by consultation?

Consultation involves sharing information with employees, giving them the opportunity to express their views before decisions are made, valuing their views and taking them into account.

Using the experience and expertise of the employees will help ensure safe outcomes. This is based on recognition that employee input and participation improves decision-making about health and safety. Consultation will assist in developing safe systems of work based on the identification of hazards that may be present and the assessment of the risk these hazards might give rise to.

Although the responsibility for health and safety decisions rests with the employer, consultation provides the opportunity for employees to contribute to the decision-making process in resolving health and safety problems. This helps to ensure that employees cooperate and follow safe work practices.

## When must consultation occur?

Consultation must occur when:

- changes occur that may affect health, safety or welfare are proposed to the:
  - work premises
  - systems or methods of work
  - plant or substances used for work
- assessing the risk to health and safety arising from work
- decisions are made about measures to be taken to eliminate or control those risks
- introducing or altering the procedures for monitoring risk
- decisions are made about the adequacy of facilities for employee welfare
- decisions are made about the procedures for consultation.

Employers must consult with employees about establishing an OHS consultation mechanism, such as a system of representatives or committees.

# RISK MANAGEMENT

An essential part of any OHS program is risk management. Risk management is addressed in Chapter 2 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001*. Risk management is a logical, step-by-step approach that, if followed, can reduce injury, illness and skin disease in your workplace. Always try to assess each and every task by identifying the hazards, assessing the risk, doing something to eliminate or control it and review the actions taken to ensure they are achieving the desired results.

## **Getting started – involve everyone in the risk assessment**

Talk to your staff about risk assessment as soon as possible. They're the ones likely to be most aware of the risk associated with the tasks they undertake in their work and they may be able to suggest ways of improving safety. As well, their involvement in the risk assessment process is likely to make them enthusiastic about, and committed to, any workplace change and it is important that staff can demonstrate that the risk assessment process has been undertaken. Talking to staff about risk assessment and OHS issues is an ongoing process.

## **Keeping track**

It is a good idea to keep records of all of your risk assessments. At the back of these Guidelines there is an example (Attachment 2) of how these records could be kept. You can photocopy the sample page and use it for your record taking.

## **Ten easy steps to reducing injuries**

### **1. Decide on who will conduct the assessment**

This could be the salon manager, owner or senior hairdresser. Whoever it is, they will coordinate the assessment, consult with staff and be responsible for taking notes and writing up the information.

### **2. Divide the work into tasks**

Look at each task used in hairdressing. For example, one task would be shampooing of client's hair, another task would be the cutting, and a third would be the colouring process and so on. Include all work processes in your assessment including cleaning and maintenance tasks.

### **3. Identify all equipment, tools, plant, processes and substances used or produced in the task**

Look at all of the tools, plant, processes and substances you use. For example, scissors, electrical appliances (hairdryers), furniture etc. You should also consider the design of the salon layout, floor

surfaces etc, products used for cleaning, hair products and any substances used for nail care. Do not forget to consider infectious diseases.

#### 4. Are they hazardous?

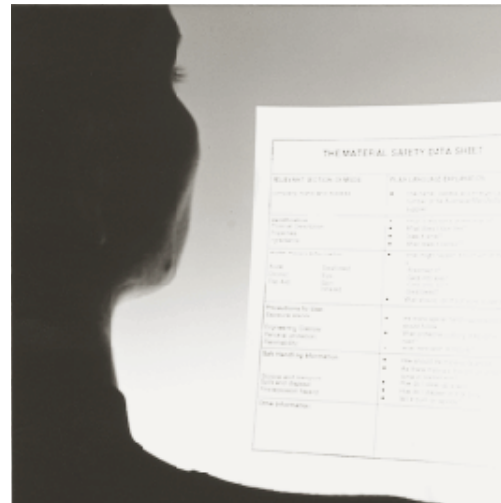
Determining if tools, plant and substances are hazardous will allow you to determine what needs to be done to make the workplace safe. For example, sharp scissors can cause injury if not handled correctly or dropped and blunt scissors can cause repetitive strain injury. Electrical appliances need to be tested and tagged. Wet floors can cause slip, trips and falls. Look at the material safety data sheet (MSDS) to find out if hair products and other chemicals are hazardous substances. Some manufacturers have also produced MSDS on non-hazardous substances and these are clearly marked non-hazardous at the top of the first page. Tools and plant in the salon should be covered by manufacturer operating manuals that indicate hazards and operating instructions.



#### 5. Find the information

Along with the MSDS prepared by the Cosmetics, Toiletry and Fragrance Association of Australia, WorkCover produces a number of publications to provide guidance in assessing workplace risks. These include *Risk Management at Work* (Catalogue No. 425), *Workplace Safety Kit* (Catalogue No. 40) (designed as a step by step guide to safety for business) and *Violence in the Workplace* (Catalogue No 70.1). For further information you can contact the WorkCover Assistance Service on **13 10 50** or visit the website [www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au).

In most cases the MSDS will provide all the information needed to carry out the work with hazardous substances safely. The manufacturer's instructions should be used for other tools and plant (appliances) used in the salon. The *Violence in the Workplace* guide will help you identify violence hazards and assess their risks. There is also guidance material available to help avoid slips, trips and falls and manual handling and repetitive strain injuries. You must follow these instructions. More detailed information can be found in Codes of Practice for manual handling, hazardous substances and prevention of overuse syndrome.



#### 6. Inspect and evaluate the exposure

Know and understand your work environment and consult with staff. You must find out how much and how often people are exposed to or are likely to be exposed to a hazard. What is the severity of the risk? Is exposure to this hazard within reasonable limits? Have any staff experienced any symptoms of exposure?

## **7. Evaluate the risk**

Is the risk significant (ie. likely to adversely affect the health of staff or customers)? To evaluate the level of risk, draw together the information about the hazard and the information gathered from the inspection. The risk assessment should take into account a number of factors such as the nature and severity of the hazard, the degree of exposure (how the person is exposed to the hazard and how often) and the existing control measures. Using the Attachment 1 priority table will assist you evaluate the risks associated with each task.

## **8. Decide what you're going to do about it**

In most cases, controlling the risk will be a simple matter of making sure that the 'precautions for use' set out in the MSDS, manufacturer's instructions or other guidance material, are being followed at your salon. Clause 5 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* sets out a series of common sense steps for hazard control (often called hierarchy of control) where elimination of the risk is not reasonably practical, from which you can use to develop an exposure control plan. These steps are:

1. Substitute the hazard (eg. use a less harmful chemical).
2. Isolate the hazard.
3. Use engineering controls (eg. such as a local exhaust ventilation).
4. Put in safe work practices (eg. job rotation to prevent overuse injuries).
5. Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves and eye protection.

If a hazard cannot reasonably be eliminated employers can work through this list to minimise exposure to risks. For example, try to substitute the hazard first. If this is not possible, go to the next step and so on. The thing is to try to reduce the risk by working down the list step-by-step. In some cases it may be appropriate to implement a combination of the steps eg. Steps 3, 4 and 5. PPE should only be used as a last resort or if it's the only practical way to manage the hazard.

It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that training for staff is appropriate and effective.

## **9. Record the assessment**

Make notes of what you have done. Photocopying the form in Attachment 2 in the back of these Guidelines and filling out the relevant columns will help you keep a record of your assessments.

## **10. Review the assessment**

Your work processes will have to be reviewed to make sure the controls are working, for example, is the exposure to the chemical remaining at an acceptable level, and are your staff being monitored for adverse health effects from the chemicals? Another example is when a change is made to a work practice, or workstation, to address body aches and pains. Always check to ensure you have eliminated or reduced the level of exposure of risk factors (posture, force, repetition, and duration) you have identified and not introduced other risk factors. (See step 8).

Ask yourself 'are my employees working safely'?

You must review your risk assessment, and any measures adopted to control the risk, whenever:

- there is evidence that the risk assessment is no longer valid

- or an injury or illness results from exposure to a hazard to which the risk assessment relates
- or a significant change is proposed in the salon or in work practices or procedures to which the risk assessments relates.

Those operating more than one salon can carry out a risk assessment in one salon and apply those principles to others, provided the salon set-up and the products used are the same.

*Note:* These steps have been adapted from the *Guidance Note for the Assessment of Health Risk Arising From the Use of Hazardous Substances in the Workplace* issued by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC).



## **Personal protective equipment (PPE)**

In some situations, PPE may be the most practical and effective way of minimising risk. Examples of PPE are gloves and aprons, protective masks against dust where needed and eye protection, which should be worn when cleaning equipment or mixing chemicals. Be aware that contact lenses are not PPE and should not be worn by nail specialists as they make the eye difficult to clean in the case of an accident.

# HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

## Hazardous substances laws

Chapter 6 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* outlines the obligations of employers, including self employed persons, related to hazardous substances. These obligations apply to all workplaces in which hazardous substances are used or produced and to all persons who could be exposed to hazardous substances. The *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* states that you must:

- provide information about these substances
- find out what the risks are (risk assessment) and how to control them
- provide training in the safe use of these substances
- keep records, such as register of hazardous substances, MSDS, risk assessment and training.

## Hazardous substances and dangerous goods. What's the difference?

**Hazardous substances** are classified by the health effects they have on people. They can harm people's health if they get into the body, for example, if they are breathed in, absorbed through the skin or eyes or ingested accidentally. Hazardous substances include chemicals, which can be pure substances or mixtures. Some forms of dusts, fumes and other by-products of chemical processes may also be hazardous substances.

The effects of hazardous substances may show immediately, or it may take years for illness or disease to develop. Health effects of some hazardous substances include skin irritation, coughs, asthma, sensitisation, poisoning, and cancer.

There are procedures to follow for the storage, handling and use of hazardous substances to ensure that people are protected from exposure. The aim is to keep exposure as low as possible.

**Dangerous goods** are classified according to their chemical and physical properties, such as if they are capable of causing immediate harm because they are flammable, poisonous, corrosive (that is, acidic or alkaline) or explosive.

As long as proper precautions are taken dangerous goods can be stored, handled and used safely. Common examples of dangerous goods include petrol, hydrogen peroxide, some pesticides, some paints and glues, and acids and caustic soda.

Dangerous goods are generally identified by the diamond shape  $\diamond$  on their labels, although small containers maybe exempt from labelling.

The two categories are not mutually exclusive – some things can be both hazardous substances and dangerous goods, for example, hydrogen peroxide.

## Who supplies what?

The risk associated with chemicals will depend on its concentration, the quantities used and the frequency of use. The law requires that all hazardous substances are properly labelled and listed on a register at the workplace along with their MSDS.

It is the manufacturer's or supplier's responsibility to label each product with risk and safety information if the product contains a hazardous substance and to provide a MSDS. As an employer, it is your responsibility to ensure you have these MSDS and that any decanted chemicals are relabelled with the same information on the original container. (See Storing and Labelling Chemicals Safely).

The MSDS prepared by the Cosmetics, Toiletry and Fragrance Association of Australia must be updated every five years.

## A first step

One of the first steps in identifying a hazardous substance is to carefully read the label and MSDS from your supplier or manufacturer. The MSDS will provide information on whether the product contains a hazardous substance, health effects, control measures, spill control, emergency response, etc. The MSDS will also provide information on whether the product is dangerous goods and detail storage requirements.

If the product contains a hazardous substance, then a risk assessment must be carried out to determine whether control measures are needed, or if the control measures in place, are adequate.

## How to assess a chemical risk

Apply the 10-step risk process on page 4. The best control measure is the one that offers the best protection from a particular hazardous substance and which is practical to use.

You may find also that hazardous substances are not just confined to hairdressing products. For example, you may be using hazardous chemicals as a cleaner or for nail care. In most cases, there are simple practical solutions – such as following the precautions for use listed on the MSDS – for controlling the risk.

## What to do

When working with chemicals always:

- read the label
- follow the instructions on the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)
- put on protective gloves, eye protection and aprons before mixing and applying colour, bleach and perming solution, shampooing and cleaning
- always seal chemical containers when not in use
- Make sure that employees are trained and competent to undertake each task.

In some cases it may be necessary to use an expert, such as a hygienist, to identify the hazards, how often employees are exposed to it and/or the effectiveness of control measures.

## Storing and labelling chemicals safely

Safety is not just limited to directions for use. Storage, accurate labelling and good housekeeping are important safety features if you're to handle and use chemicals properly. When storing chemicals always:

- store chemicals in original containers. Never pour chemicals into unwashed containers or put them in food or drink containers
- re-label chemicals immediately, with the name of the product and the appropriate safety and risk phrases, if they are put into a different container or if the label cannot be clearly read
- clearly mark unlabelled chemical containers: "Caution. Do not use. Unknown substance." Ring local authorities for the correct disposal
- never mix chemicals that are not intended to be mixed together. (Check the MSDS or ask the supplier if you're not sure)
- clean up any spilled chemicals at once. Follow the clean up instructions on the MSDS
- store hairdressing chemicals away from cleaning products and foodstuffs
- use and store flammable chemicals (most of the substances used by nail specialists are highly flammable) away from heat, flame and ignition sources such as dryers and hot water systems (check the MSDS)
- never allow smoking in the workplace
- always put lids back on containers when you've finished with them.



## Protecting your skin

Many hairdressers suffer skin disorders because they don't use the correct type of gloves. The constant use of water and chemicals can break down the skin's natural barriers. Dermatitis, a skin inflammation caused by exposure to irritants, is by far the most common skin disorder.

Primary irritant dermatitis is a toxic reaction on the skin and can be reduced by wearing protective gloves, (preferably disposable plastic ones) and moisturising the skin regularly.

A chemical irritant known as a sensitiser causes allergic dermatitis, for example, phenylendiamine in hair colouring and persulphate salts in bleach powders. This condition may take longer to develop and causes a mild to severe dermatitis or eczema.

## What can you do?

Wear the correct protective gloves (preferably cotton lined or plastic disposable ones). Latex gloves should not be used as they can cause an allergic reaction. Barrier creams do not provide effective protection

- avoid contact with products that contain known sensitisers, eg. hair dyes
- rotate basin duty (to avoid prolonged contact with water)
- moisturise your hands regularly
- wash immediately with water and soap after any skin contact with chemicals.

# SPRAINS AND STRAINS

## Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS)

Many hairdressers experience OOS in their neck, shoulder, arms, hands, and wrists. OOS is a collective term for a range of conditions, including injury, which is characterised by discomfort or persistent pain in muscles, tendons and other soft tissues. Muscles and tendons are able to recover if they are given a variety of tasks and regular rest breaks.

Occupational overuse injuries can be serious and weakening. People suffering from these injuries often need time off work, which can disrupt the operation of the business. Workers' compensation claims for these injuries can also be costly.

Occupational Overuse Syndrome often develops over a period of time. It is usually caused or aggravated by work tasks although other non-work activities can be associated with the condition.

The early symptoms of OOS include:

- muscle discomfort
- fatigue
- ache and pains
- soreness
- hot and cold feelings
- muscle tightness
- numbness and tingling
- stiffness
- muscle weakness.

A number of job/task risk factors are known to cause OOS. When they act in combination the risks increase greatly. The factors are:

1. Repetitive or sustained awkward postures.
2. Repetitive or sustained movements.
3. Repetitive or sustained application of force.
4. Application of high force.
5. Exposure to sustained vibration.
6. Environmental conditions.
7. Work organisation.

## 1. Repetitive or sustained awkward postures

Awkward postures are not necessarily harmful in themselves. In fact they can be necessary for good body function by increasing joint mobility and strength. However, repetitive or sustained awkward postures are a problem.

## Awkward postures



Awkward postures are ones in which any part of the body is in an unnatural position or uncomfortable. They are body positions that are non-neutral and place more stress on the muscles and joints.

A standing neutral posture is when all the parts of your body are aligned – ears directly over shoulders, shoulders over hips, hips over knees, knees over ankles. Your head should be level, not twisted or bent and looking straight ahead. Your shoulders should be relaxed; not hunched or rotated forward. Your upper arms, elbows and hand should be comfortably by your sides and the wrists should be straight and in a handshake position. Your legs should be straight, with your knees relaxed and not locked back.

There are a number of different awkward postures you might use at work that make you feel uncomfortable and may result in injury over time. These are:

### Neck Bent

Working with your neck twisted or bent forward or sideways too far (more than 20°) can place strain on the neck muscles, especially if repetitive or sustained. Over time, the muscles in your neck and shoulders can tighten up, resulting in chronic muscle soreness.

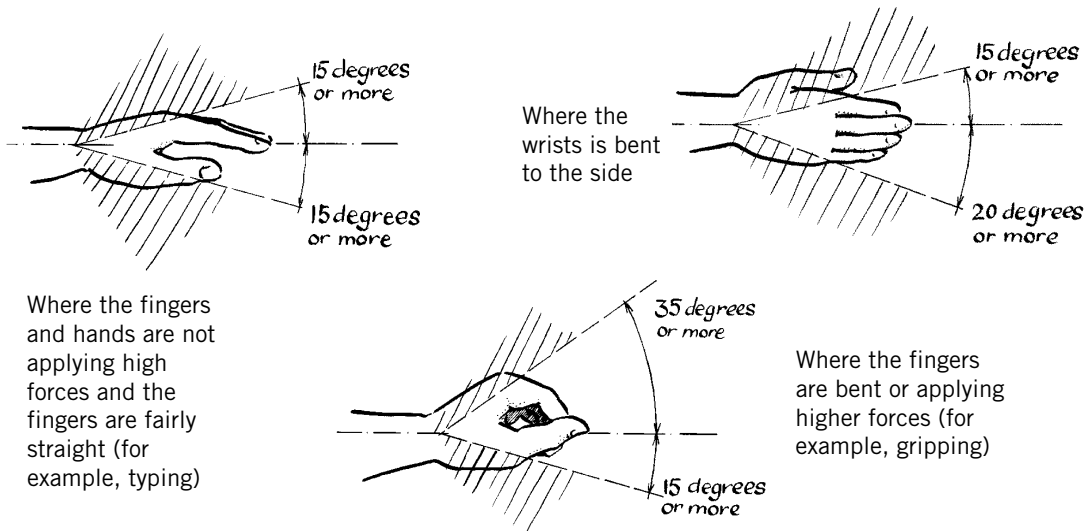


### Arms above shoulder

This posture includes working with your hands or your elbows above your shoulders. Repetitive lifting and sustained holding of your arms above your shoulder level unsupported can lead to strain of the neck, shoulder, arm or back.

### Wrists, hands and fingers bent

Working with your wrists, hands and fingers excessively bent in any of the directions shown below are a problem, particularly when combined with high hand forces and/or repetitive motions. For example, pinching and gripping unsupported objects (tweezers, scissors, styling rods, curling irons, etc.) with a high force and performing highly repetitive motions are a risk.



## **Back bent**

Similarly, working with the back bent, twisted, or bent and twisted by more than 20°, places a lot of strain on the back muscles. Bending over like this also increases the pressure on the discs in your spine.

## **2. Repetitive or sustained movements**

As a general guide repetitive means using the same action and movements continuously with little or no variation more than twice a minute and sustained means held for more than 30 seconds at a time. This work must be performed continuously for a minimum of one hour in order to be considered repetitive.

## **3. Repetitive or sustained application of force**

This risk factor refers to the repeated or sustained force or pressure workers need to apply to perform various tasks. Examples of this include lifting a heavy object, or squeezing the equipment hard such as when holding a styling wand, hair roller or a blow-dryer. Another type of force, known as **contact stress**, comes from pressure against part of the body. For example, using scissors puts pressure on the two fingers used to grip it.

## **4. Exposure to sustained vibration**

Exposure to vibration can affect particular parts of the body, such as the hands when using power tools eg. a blow-dryer. This is known as **hand/arm (localised)** vibration. In this type of exposure vibrations transferred to the hand/arms can disrupt the blood and oxygen circulation causing damage to the nerves and tendons in the hand and forearm.

## **5. Work organisation**

This factor refers to the way jobs are organised and include staffing levels, scheduling workload (booking appointments) and job pacing, performing monotonous tasks, and the amount of control workers have over how they perform their jobs. These are sometimes also called psycho-social factors.

## **6. Other conditions**

A very hot or cold environment can be uncomfortable and unpleasant and result in increased muscle tension. Inadequate lighting (glare, low levels, etc.) can cause workers to adopt awkward postures to compensate for this.

Many manual handling injuries (OOS) are caused by unsuitable workplace design, people working in an uncomfortable way, lifting heavy objects or overstressing muscles ligaments and tendons with repetitive movement.

## What should you do to minimise potential injury?

The approach to prevent occupational overuse injuries generally involves:

1. Eliminating risks in the first place by safe design of the salon, employing safe work methods, processes, tools, equipment and products.
2. Conducting hazard identification, risk assessment and eliminate or implement control of the factors that are known to cause OOS. The control measures should be reviewed after a while to see if there are no new risk factors introduced. (Use the worksheet shown in Attachment 2 for assistance)
3. Providing employees with training and information addressing OOS risk factors, correct work methods and postures and the correct use of tools.

## Designing a safe salon

The main aim should be to design a salon layout, which eliminates or reduces risk factors associated with OOS such as awkward postures, repetitive and sustained movements and applications of high force.

Some **suggested practical solutions**, which can help you achieve this are:

## Workplace design

- Provide workbenches, reception desks, clients' chairs, washbasins (for tasks such as cutting, styling, shampooing, and appointment booking etc.) at the right (comfortable) height and adjustable stools, chairs for sitting.

The aim of height adjustment of chairs or stools is to avoid awkward postures eg. working with arms above shoulder height or constantly bending your head forward as you work. Ideally the client's head should be at a height around 20 cm above your elbow height. (Keeping your elbows down and close to the body will reduce muscular fatigue in the shoulders and neck region).

- Rearrange the work area so that the task, materials (shampoos, conditioners, dyes etc.), equipment (scissors, blow-dryers, etc.) and controls are within easy reach and do not require stretching or twisting.



- Provide adequate access and space around clients' chairs, wash basins and shampoo areas to allow easy movement of the chairs used by workers.
- Store frequently used and heavy objects, material and stock between knee and shoulder height. (Do not lift heavy boxes, cartons of hair dyes, shampoos, conditioning, etc. supplied to the salon. Instead it may be beneficial to unpack the boxes before storing the chemicals and other supplies.)

## Tools and equipment

- Purchase scissors, blow-dryers, styling rods and rollers, gloves etc, which are easy and safe to use. The equipment should be ergonomically designed to avoid awkward hand/arm postures and high force to use.

(Hand tools for repetitive tasks eg. blow-dryers, curling irons, etc. should be a comfortable size, shape and weight, be well-balanced with a comfortable grip and need no more than reasonable force to operate.)

- Ensure scissors used are regularly maintained to make cutting hair easy. Similarly blow-dryers, styling rods, etc. must be regularly maintained to ensure easy operation and checked for electrical hazards (caused by fraying cords).
- Provide workers with trolleys to use to prevent carrying tools, equipment and chemicals. The trolleys must be stable and with suitable castors, which are easy and safe to push/pull.

## **Work organisation and work practices**

As far as is practical, book appointments for each worker to provide a variety of tasks (a mix of repetitive and non-repetitive tasks) that naturally reduce the risk factors. Introduce frequent, short, rest breaks if the job cannot be varied or rotated. Ensure these rest breaks are taken.

Review work rates to ensure they are realistic and are within employees' physical and psychological capabilities. (Manage the number of bookings for each employee, for example, those involving demanding tasks such as highlighting hair; those clients with long hair.)

If the job needs precise and fine movements, make sure the task is done slightly above elbow level and the lighting is adequate. If the job needs a lot of muscle strength (eg. hair washing, scalp massaging) make sure the task is done slightly below elbow level.

Ensure that workers understand the risk factors associated with OOS and are adequately trained particularly in the correct work methods to avoid them.

# OTHER HAZARDS

## Slips, trips and falls

In the hairdressing industry, factors that may cause slips, trips and falls include:

- slippery surfaces (eg. unswept hair, surfaces that are wet, polished or oily)
- poorly lit work areas and walkways
- cluttered aisles or passageways (eg. vacuum cleaner hoses, cords, electrical cables and extension boards lying on the floor)
- untidy work areas
- undertaking wet mopping, vacuuming, or floor polishing tasks during busy times
- unsuitable footwear (ie. not providing enough friction between footwear and the floor).

## Hygiene

A clean, tidy workplace is essential for good health and safety. Poor housekeeping can result in slips, trips and falls, which may cause injury. More importantly, it can also contribute to infection by providing an unhygienic environment where bacteria can flourish. For health and safety you should:

- regularly inspect floors to see that they are free from hair, nail clippings etc.
- clean up any spilt oil, chemicals or water at once
- remove rubbish (boxes etc.) from walkways immediately
- change towels and capes after each client
- thoroughly clean equipment such as brushes, combs, scissors after use.

## Risk of disease

A survey by an industrial taskforce revealed that hairdressers did not know how to effectively clean their equipment between clients. It is estimated that 1.4 per cent of the NSW population has hepatitis C. This means, on average if you cut the hair of 12 clients a day, you will come into contact with at least 40 people with hepatitis C in a year.

Many infectious diseases can be spread by contaminated equipment. Some particularly important viruses, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS are spread mainly by blood and less often by other body fluids. It is essential that all equipment (particularly if contaminated by blood) be thoroughly cleaned after use on each client. Codes of salon and personal hygiene must be strictly followed.

## What to do

For safety, always:

- wash your hands after contact with blood or after removing gloves
- check for any cuts and abrasions and cover them with waterproof dressings
- wash hands before and after working, eating, drinking, smoking and going to the toilet.

All equipment must be cleaned as soon as it's used. A special area should be set aside for cleaning and plastic or nitrile gloves worn during the entire process.

To clean your equipment always:

- pre-rinse equipment in cold water
- wash in tepid water and detergent taking extra care with hard-to-reach areas. Hold the item under water and scrub carefully with a clean brush
- equipment which cannot be washed must be wiped clean with 70% alcohol solution on a clean cotton pad
- dry and store in a dust-free environment.

## Further procedures

To minimise the risk of infection always:

- use disposable equipment, if possible
- clean equipment thoroughly after each client
- treat all body substances such as blood as potentially infectious – always wear gloves
- make sure all sharp equipment is disposed of in a safe manner.

## Electricity

An employer must comply with clauses 64 and 65 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001*. These clauses require regular inspection, testing and maintenance of electrical tools and equipment used in the salon. The employer is also required to keep record of the inspection, testing and maintenance. Further guidance can be obtained from Australian Standard AS 3760: see [www.standards.com.au](http://www.standards.com.au).

# TRAINING

An employer must ensure that each new employee receives induction training that covers the following:



- arrangements at the salon for the management of OHS, including arrangements for reporting hazards to management
- health and safety procedures at the salon relevant to the employee, including the use and maintenance of risk control measures, eg. the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and eye protectors
- how employees can access health and safety information.

The training needs of new employees have to be considered based on their competence, experience and age.

An employer must ensure that any person who may be exposed to a risk of health and safety at the employer's place of work is informed of the risk and is provided with any information, instruction and regular training to ensure the person's health and safety.

Training should take into account literacy and language barriers. It should be practical, with hands-on sessions. Always check to see that everyone has understood. You will also need to update your training when there's a change in the chemical or equipment used, work practices or procedures.

Employers should also keep records of the training provided to staff. These records should include the names of employees who have received training, the dates attended, an outline of the course content and the names of the people who provided the training. Once trained, your staff will still need to be supervised to ensure that they are working safely.

# INJURY MANAGEMENT

## What should you do if an accident happens?

1. Apply First Aid.
2. Help your injured workers get medical assistance eg. to call their local doctor or an ambulance.
3. Phone your workers compensation insurer **quickly**. You **must** do so within 48 hours.
4. Enter the details in the Register of Injury.
5. Supply the insurer with the earning details of the injured worker as soon as possible (within 28 days).
6. Cooperate with the injured worker's nominated treating doctor and your workers compensation – insurer in getting your staff back to work ASAP.
7. Provide suitable work that either you, or an occupational rehabilitation provider, have negotiated with the nominated treating doctor and the injured worker. Agreed suitable duties are documented and signed by you (the employer or manager) and the injured worker on a return-to-work (RTW) plan. A sample return-to-work plan can be found in the *WorkCover Guidelines for Employers' Return-to-Work Programs* (Catalogue No. 506.1).
8. Review and upgrade the suitable duties and the RTW plan, in accordance with the Nominated Treating Doctor's advice, as the worker progresses.
9. Investigate the accident and make any changes required to work practices, equipment or products to make the workplace safer.

## What are your other responsibilities to your staff?

A salon owner/manager must:

- have a current workers compensation insurance policy covering all workers
- have a summary of the requirements of the *Workers Compensation Act* and information about the workers compensation insurance company, displayed where it can easily be read
- provide suitable employment when a worker is injured unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.

Where your workers compensation tariff premium is more than \$50,000 you must:

- display or notify your RTW program at the workplace
- appoint a RTW Coordinator who has undertaken the WorkCover approved two-day training course.

These programs and assistance by coordinators are designed to:

- ensure staff get their workers compensation entitlements quickly and correctly after they have an accident

- help and encourage an early return to work after an accident
- ensure you notify your insurer of a significant injury within 48 hours.

Your workers compensation insurer can advise you further if needed.

If you would like more information about managing risk in your workplace, call the WorkCover Assistance Service on **13 10 50** or order publications by calling 1300 799 003

or

Go to WorkCover's Website [www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au) for general information about workplace health and safety, workers compensation and injury management.

For more information about cleaning equipment, call your nearest Public Health Unit. You will find them listed under Health NSW in the White Pages of the telephone book.

# REFERENCES

- AS/NZS 3760:2001 In-service safety inspection and testing of electrical equipment  
Body Strain Prevention Kit*, Workplace Standards Tasmania, October 2001  
[www.wsa.tas.gov.au](http://www.wsa.tas.gov.au)
- Code of Practice for the Control of Workplace Hazardous Substances*, WorkCover NSW  
(Catalogue No. 153)
- Code of Practice for Manual Handling 2000 – Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* (Vic)  
[www.workcover.vic.gov.au](http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au)
- Code of Practice for OHS Consultation*, WorkCover NSW (Catalogue No. 311)
- Code of Practice for Risk Assessment*, WorkCover NSW (Catalogue No. 963)
- First Aid in the Workplace – Guide 2001*, WorkCover NSW (Catalogue No. 121)
- Guidance Note for the Assessment of Health Risks Arising From Hazardous Substances in the  
Workplace* [NOHSC:3017(1994)]
- Guide to Risk Management at Work 2001*, WorkCover NSW (Catalogue No. 425)
- Guidelines for Employers' Return-to-Work Programs*, WorkCover NSW (Catalogue No. 506.1)
- Manual Tasks Advisory Standard 2000 – Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* (Qld)  
[www.whs.qld.gov.au/advisory/adv028.pdf](http://www.whs.qld.gov.au/advisory/adv028.pdf)
- National Code of Practice for Manual Handling*, [NOHSC:2005(1990)]
- National Code of Practice for the Prevention of Occupational Overuse Syndrome*,  
[NOHSC:2013(1994)]#
- National Standard for Manual Handling*, National Occupational Health and Safety Commission  
(NOHSC): [NOHSC:1001(1990)]\*
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000*
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001*
- Workplace Safety Kit 2001*, WorkCover NSW (Catalogue No. 40)

\*Adopted in New South Wales as the *Code of Practice for Manual Handling, 1991*.

# Adopted in New South Wales as the *Code of Practice for the Prevention of Overuse Syndrome, 1995*.

# HOW IMPORTANT IS THE HAZARD?

## Use the priority table

The table will help you to find a priority number for each hazard in the workplace. (See the example below)

The numbers in the table show how important it is to do something:

- 1 it is extremely important to do something about this hazard as soon as possible
- 6 this hazard may not need your immediate attention.

**Example**

---

**Hazard:** plate glass door at foot of steps

**Judge severity:** Someone falling down the steps could smash through the glass and be very seriously injured. So it is a **!!!** hazard. (Look in the second row of numbers.)

**Judge likelihood:** This could easily happen at any time. So it is **++** very likely. (Look in the first column of numbers.)

**Second row, first column is priority number 1.** So it is extremely important to fix this hazard soon.

**FIND THE HIGHEST PRIORITIES! FOR EACH HAZARD, THINK ABOUT:**

1 How severely could it hurt someone or how ill could it make someone?	2 How likely is it to be that bad?			
	++ very likely could happen at any time	+ likely could happen sometime	- unlikely, could happen, but very rarely	- very unlikely could happen but probably never will
 kill or cause permanent disability or ill health	1	1	2	3
!!! long term illness or serious injury	1	2	3	4
!! medical attention and several days off work	2	3	4	5
! first aid needed	3	4	5	6

HAIRDRESSER ASSESSMENT RECORD																		
TASK	bleaching hair					LOCATION	salon					ASSESSED BY	Naomi Kelly		DATE	26/5/03		
<b>IDENTIFY the hazard</b> Does the task involve:			<b>ASSESS the risk</b> Risk Level (please circle) USE PRIORITY TABLE ATTACHMENT					<b>ELIMINATE or CONTROL</b> WHAT WILL BE DONE TO FIX THE PROBLEM? Always try to eliminate the risk before using controls.			<b>BY WHOM?</b>		<b>BY WHEN?</b>		<b>REVIEW &amp; EVALUATE BY WHOM &amp; WHEN?</b>			
<b>MANUAL HANDLING (sprains and strains)</b> Record hazards:			Comments:															
			Insignificant					Significant										
			6	5	4	3	2	1										
<b>HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES/CHEMICALS</b> <i>(use the MSDS)</i> Record hazards: Mixing – Hydrogen peroxide solution & bleach powder Applying bleach solution Cleaning of equipment			Comments: Avoid inhalation, skin & eye contact. Hydrogen peroxide above 12% must be stored and handled in accordance with the MSDS and AS 4326 The storage and handling of oxidising agents.					Remove organic matter (paper etc) away from mixing area. Do not use hydrogen peroxide in excess of 12% Mixing should be carried out in a well ventilated area use appropriate mixing & measuring equipment to avoid spills and splashes When mixing & applying bleach wear eye and hand protection (glasses & gloves) Mixing and measuring equipment (including any material used for cleaning up spills) should be washed immediately after use.										
			Insignificant					Significant										
			6	5	4	3	2	1										
<b>EQUIPMENT</b> Record hazards:			Comments:															
			Insignificant					Significant										
			6	5	4	3	2	1										
<b>OTHER HAZARDS</b> Record hazards:			Comments:															
			Insignificant					Significant										
			6	5	4	3	2	1										
<b>APPROVED BY</b>			Kim Jude					<b>SIGNATURE</b>			Kim Jude		<b>DATE</b>		28/5/03			

HAIRDRESSER ASSESSMENT RECORD																										
TASK	cutting hair				LOCATION	salon				ASSESSED BY	Liz Smith		DATE	1/5/03												
IDENTIFY the hazard Does the task involve:			ASSESS the risk Risk Level (please circle) USE PRIORITY TABLE ATTACHMENT				ELIMINATE or CONTROL WHAT WILL BE DONE TO FIX THE PROBLEM? Always try to eliminate the risk before using controls.			BY WHOM?	BY WHEN?	REVIEW & EVALUATE BY WHOM & WHEN?														
<b>MANUAL HANDLING (sprains and strains)</b> Record hazards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>standing for long hours</li> <li>arms held away from body</li> <li>neck bent to look down</li> <li>forceful repetitive scissor action</li> <li>awkward wrist postures</li> </ul>			Comments: <table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Insignificant</th> <th colspan="2">Significant</th> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>				Insignificant				Significant		6	5	4	3	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use a height adjustable stool</li> <li>cut with wrists in neutral position</li> <li>relax the shoulders</li> <li>ask clients to turn or bend their heads</li> <li>use 'ergonomic' scissors</li> </ul>							
Insignificant				Significant																						
6	5	4	3	2	1																					
<b>HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES/CHEMICALS</b> <i>(use the MSDS)</i> Record hazards:			Comments: <table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Insignificant</th> <th colspan="2">Significant</th> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>				Insignificant				Significant		6	5	4	3	2	1								
Insignificant				Significant																						
6	5	4	3	2	1																					
<b>EQUIPMENT</b> Record hazards: <p>Blunt scissors</p>			Comments: <table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Insignificant</th> <th colspan="2">Significant</th> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>				Insignificant				Significant		6	5	4	3	2	1	regularly sharpen/replace scissors							
Insignificant				Significant																						
6	5	4	3	2	1																					
<b>OTHER HAZARDS</b> Record hazards: <p>Hair on floor - slip hazard</p>			Comments: <table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Insignificant</th> <th colspan="2">Significant</th> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>				Insignificant				Significant		6	5	4	3	2	1	regularly remove hair with appropriate tool							
Insignificant				Significant																						
6	5	4	3	2	1																					
<b>APPROVED BY</b>		Pam June				<b>SIGNATURE</b>		Pam June				<b>DATE</b>	2/5/03													

HAIRDRESSER ASSESSMENT RECORD														
TASK	LOCATION						ASSESSED BY				DATE			
<p><b>IDENTIFY the hazard</b> Does the task involve:</p>	<p><b>ASSESS the risk</b> Risk Level (please circle) USE PRIORITY TABLE ATTACHMENT</p>						<p><b>ELIMINATE or CONTROL</b> WHAT WILL BE DONE TO FIX THE PROBLEM? Always try to eliminate the risk before using controls.</p>				<p><b>BY WHOM?</b></p>	<p><b>BY WHEN?</b></p>	<p><b>REVIEW &amp; EVALUATE BY WHOM &amp; WHEN?</b></p>	
<p><b>MANUAL HANDLING (SPRAINS &amp; STRAINS)</b> Record hazards:</p>	<p>Comments:</p>													
							<p><b>Insignificant</b></p>			<p><b>Significant</b></p>				
							6	5	4	3	2	1		
<p><b>HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES/CHEMICALS</b> <i>(use the MSDS)</i> Record hazards:</p>	<p>Comments:</p>													
							<p><b>Insignificant</b></p>			<p><b>Significant</b></p>				
							6	5	4	3	2	1		
<p><b>EQUIPMENT</b> Record hazards:</p>	<p>Comments:</p>													
							<p><b>Insignificant</b></p>			<p><b>Significant</b></p>				
							6	5	4	3	2	1		
<p><b>OTHER HAZARDS</b> Record hazards:</p>	<p>Comments:</p>													
							<p><b>Insignificant</b></p>			<p><b>Significant</b></p>				
							6	5	4	3	2	1		
<b>APPROVED BY</b>					<b>SIGNATURE</b>							<b>DATE</b>		

# WORK SAFETY IN HAIRDRESSING

## DERMATITIS



## WEAR GLOVES

- when mixing, colouring, shampooing and cleaning
- Moisturise your hands regularly
- Rotate basin duty to avoid prolonged contact with water

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES



## WASH HANDS REGULARLY

- Cleanse, disinfect and cover with waterproof dressing any cuts or abrasions
- Wash and sterilise all equipment between clients
- Treat all body substances such as blood as potentially infectious (see Health and Safety Guidelines for Hairdressers for tips on thorough cleaning)

## PAIN AND INJURY



## ORGANISE YOUR WORK FOR COMFORT

- eg. Equipment and materials within easy reach
- Avoid awkward ways of working
  - Alternate between sitting and standing
  - Vary tasks as much as possible
  - Use height adjustable chairs and stools

## STRESS



## MANAGE THE NUMBER OF BOOKINGS

and the time allocated for each one, eg. Allow enough time for highlighting techniques

- take regular breaks
- regular exercise, rest and a balanced diet

## EYE & LUNG IRRITATION



## PROVIDE A SMOKE FREE ZONE IN YOUR SALON

- good ventilation, especially when mixing chemicals
- wear protective glasses where necessary (check the MSDS sheets)

Catalogue No. **123.1** Ordering Hotline **1300 799 003**



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Locked Bag 2906 Lisarow NSW 2252 WorkCover Assistance Service **13 10 50**  
Website **[www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au)**

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