RM Insight®

Managing change – Beyond COVID-19

Governments around the world have been required to act swiftly and decisively to slow the pandemic. This has produced opportunities for some businesses but most have had to operate differently just to survive. For example, restaurants, pubs and clubs now offer takeaway food and beverages, rather than in-house dining and manufacturers have retooled to produce a variety of essential personal protective wear such as surgical masks, gowns and hand sanitiser.

New processes, unfamiliar methods, new raw materials and increased stock levels may introduce new or higher risks. It is important that businesses recognise the risk as well as the opportunities that change brings and revise existing strategies or adopt new strategies to mitigate those risks.

The following resources can be used to help manage change and minimise the risks to your business during this pandemic and into the future.

Worker training and engagement

Workers may not be familiar with new processes or the hazards involved and may also be reluctant to change established work methods. Management should clearly communicate their commitment to change so that everyone understands what to expect, the necessity and the opportunities. Each new task should be evaluated by performing a job safety analysis. This will enable risks to employees and the business to be identified and minimised and identify any training needed. Refer to RM Insight® articles *Managing hazardous tasks in the workplace,*

Communication, Training and Risk and the Vero self-inspection checklist *Implementing safety systems at work.*

Increased/differing use of existing plant and equipment

Increased production may require more frequent servicing, maintenance and cleaning of plant and equipment. For example, a commercial kitchen operating extended hours now requiring a contractor to clean the stove hoods and extraction ductwork monthly instead of every 3 months. Refer to RM Insight® article *Cleaning of ducts and flues* and the Vero self-inspection checklist *Inspection and maintenance of refrigeration systems.*

Differing or increased production may draw increased electricity causing overloads and overheating. Refer to the Vero self-inspection checklist *Risk control for your electrical equipment and service* which covers the need for sufficient power outlets, limited use of power boards and extension leads, testing of circuits and appliances.

New products

The business is now in uncharted waters producing products and services different to that before. Refer to the Vero self-inspection checklist *Quality control for production environments* which covers obligations, responsibilities, a quality management system directive, testing, continual improvement, traceability and recall procedures.

Contractor controls

Many businesses are taking the opportunity to bring forward renovation and construction

works. Experience indicates that employees may not be familiar with the necessary risk controls dealing with multiple contractors on the premises. Refer to the Vero self-inspection checklists *Contractor engagement and safe work practice* and *Minimise risk of property damage during construction works on your site and next door.*

Hot work

Businesses should recognise that contractor activities may well include hot work that generates a potential source of ignition. Refer to RM Insight® article *Conducting hot work - Risks and control measures* and the Vero *Hot Work Permit form.*

Warehousing

Change to the business could include increased stocks of raw materials, packaging and finished goods and the introduction of flammable or dangerous goods. Suitable storage facilities and risk controls are required to prevent exposure to sources of ignition or exceeding the capability of the fire suppression system. Yards may be in use for overflow storage. Refer to the Vero self-inspection checklists *Managing risk of unstable/unsecured items and objects, Risk control for storage areas* and RM Insight® articles *Labelling of hazardous chemicals in the workplace* and *Storage and handling of combustible waste.*

Risk control for the temporary closure of premises

The Vero checklist *Risk control checklist for the temporary closure of premises - general* provides details of potential hazards and recommendations for the temporary closure (or partial closure) of premises.

For more information:
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