Critical Risks – Managing critical risks

Identifying, assessing, managing and reviewing critical risks is a Canterbury Safety Charter commitment. Remember I AM safe on site where it’s up to everyone on site to understand and manage the critical risks you’ll come across.

What are critical risks?
A construction site is a hazardous place. There are plenty of opportunities for something to go wrong, but being alert about the critical risks around you can help. A risk-based approach is a key part of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. There are 13 critical risks listed in the Safety Charter:

1. Working at height and depth  
2. Working in confined spaces  
3. Working with electricity  
4. Working around existing services  
5. Working around asbestos  
6. Working around construction dust including silica  
7. Excavations  
8. Using and working around mobile plant and machinery (vehicles)  
9. Traffic management  
10. Hot works  
11. Workplace violence  
12. Lifting and slinging  
13. Using power tools

You may have other critical risks on your sites that will need to be managed. Some of these risks may be particularly hazardous and may need to be notified to WorkSafe New Zealand. You can do this online: http://www.worksafe.govt.nz/worksafe/notifications-forms/particular-hazardous-work
Managing Critical Risks

It’s essential to look after each other on the job. Intervene or speak up if you see something dangerous or not right, report any incidents or near misses, and pause and plan the work before starting. There’s a three-step process in managing critical risks. Talk through this process with those on site so they understand what to do when they come across a critical risk.

Step 1: IDENTIFY the hazard

- Go on regular walk-through inspections of your workplace to identify all potential hazards and the best ways to eliminate or reduce risk.
- Make sure you are aware of any new high-risk activities, machinery or work processes.
- Health risks are not always immediately obvious. Some are only discovered over time, such as illnesses caused by exposure to certain chemicals, so consider whether these are a hazard.
- Write everything down in a site-specific safety plan for each worksite.

Step 2: ASSESS the danger

- After you’ve made your list of possible hazards you need to make a judgment about the risk posed by each hazard.
- Take a close look at each item on your list. What is the possible outcome if things go wrong?
- Once you’ve worked out which hazards present critical risks, mark them as high priority.

Step 3: MANAGE the risk

- Critical risks are often areas of work which are unavoidable. If you can’t remove the risk, you need to ensure you can control it and work with it safely.
- Take action to highlight and resolve health and safety issues as soon as possible. This includes escalating an issue to more senior management if necessary. Once agreement is reached on how to fix a problem, implement it as soon as possible.
- You might have to alter the way jobs are done, change work procedures, or wear protective equipment. Most importantly, you and everyone on site need to be aware of the processes in place to manage the risk.

Review

Critical risks on site can change constantly. Make sure you regularly review the risks by following the steps above; Identify, Assess, and Manage. I AM safe.

Where do we get more information?

Specific toolbox talks on each of the 13 Safety Charter critical risks are available at www.safetycharter.org.nz

Q&A

Here’s an opportunity to discuss your company’s approach to critical risks. Ask your team:

- How do you identify all the critical risks on site?
- Whose responsibility is this?
- What are our policies and procedures to manage critical risks?

Employee issues raised:

Date to be resolved by:

Thank you to Fletcher EQR, WorkSafe New Zealand and WorkSafe Victoria for providing information for this toolbox talk.