HEALTH & SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

According to the occupational health and safety act of South Africa, 1993, a safe work environment is the right of every employee.

However safety and health risks are often not a priority in most organizations because safety management is believed to be expensive and employees are not always aware that they have health risks/hazards in their workplace.

It is important that employees and employers are aware of risks in the workplace so they can be able to protect themselves.

Types of Hazards in the Workplace:

- **PHYSICAL HAZARD**
- **CHEMICAL HAZARD**
- **ERGONOMIC HAZARD**
- **NOISE & VIBRATION HAZARD**
Controlling Hazards at the source
Elimination, Substitution
Involves removing the source of the hazard altogether and replacing e.g. more hazardous with less ones.

Controlling Hazards at the path
Engineering, Isolation & Enclosure
Using e.g. local exhaust ventilation to remove harmful chemical fumes, separating the hazard from the worker and enclosing.

Controlling Hazards at the worker
Personal Protection Equipment
Preferably a last option is given to the worker to wear.

Effects of Hazards in the Workplace:

- **Physical**: Sun burn, skin cancer, heat exhaustion, frost bites
- **Chemical**: Skin burn, respiratory problems
- **Noise & Vibration**: Hearing impairment, white finger syndrome
- **Biological**: Diseases e.g. malaria
- **Ergonomic**: Body aches, limb numbness
- **Psychosocial**: Work-related stress, fatigue

The [Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993](#) makes provision for:

The protection of the worker, and any person other than the person at work, in terms of health and safety, from hazards arising in the workplace. The regulations from the Act also require the employer to undertake regular risk assessments and implement control measures to eliminate/minimize risks.

This pamphlet was produced by NIOH. For more information or assistance log a query with our Occupation Hygiene Section at [www.nioh.ac.za](http://www.nioh.ac.za) or contact us at 011 712 6400.