

Customer Service Reception and Conflict Management

Business Name:		ABN:	
Business Address:			
Contact Person:	Phone:	Email:	

THIS RISK ASSESSMENT IS APPROVED BY THE PCBU ON THIS PROJECT

Under the Work Health and Safety Regulation (WHS Regulation), a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is required to ensure that a RISK ASSESSMENT is prepared before the proposed work starts.

Full Name:		
Signature:	Title:	Date:

CLIENT OR PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR DETAILS

Client:	SCOPE OF WORKS
Project Name:	
Project Address:	
Project Manager:	
Contact Phone:	
Date Risk Assessment supplied to Project Manager:	

SAMPLE

RISK MATRIX									
LIKELIHOOD	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	CATASTROPHIC	SCORE	ACTION	HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS	
ALMOST CERTAIN	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE			<b>Elimination</b> Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	<b>Substitution</b> Replace the hazard.	
POSSIBLE	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	3H HIGH	Review before work starts.	Isolation Isolate People from the hazard	
UNLIKELY	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	2M MODERATE	Ensure control measures in place.	<b>Engineering</b> Isolate the hazard	
RARE	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	1L LOW	Monitor and keep records.	Administrative Change	
								PPE	

  

Risk Rating & Required Action:	
<b>4A</b>	Stop work. The risk is intolerable. Eliminate the hazard or redesign the activity before proceeding. A Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) or higher-level authorisation is required.
<b>3H</b>	Review and approve additional controls for the task parts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
<b>2M</b>	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
<b>1L</b>	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

  

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
<b>Catastrophic</b>	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
<b>Major</b>	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
<b>Moderate</b>	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
<b>Minor</b>	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
<b>Insignificant</b>	No injury	no schedule impact	Deviation caught and corrected on site

  

**Notes on Hierarchy of Controls:**  
Remember to apply controls in the preferred order shown by the coloured pyramid:

1. **Eliminate**
2. **Substitute**
3. **Isolate**
4. **Engineering**
5. **Administrative**
6. **PPE**

Always document **why** a lower-order control is accepted if elimination or substitution is not reasonably practicable.

*aligned with Safe Work Australia's Managing the risk of fatigue at work (2023) and ISO 45001:2018 clauses 6–8.*

JOB STEP	POTENTIAL HAZARDS	IR	CONTROL MEASURES	RR
SPECIFIC WORK STEPS	HAZARDS THAT MAY ARISE	INITIAL RISK	SPECIFIC MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO ELIMINATE OR CONTROL THE RISKS	RESIDUAL RISK
1. WHS Governance, Policies and Consultation for Customer Service Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of a documented WHS policy that explicitly covers reception, complaints handling and conflict management</li> <li>Inadequate integration of WHS Act 2011 duties into customer service and reception procedures</li> <li>Lack of worker consultation mechanisms regarding psychosocial risks and security concerns at reception</li> <li>Inadequate communication of roles, responsibilities and reporting lines related to WHS in front-of-house areas</li> <li>Failure to regularly review and update policies following incidents, near misses or legislative changes</li> <li>Limited management visibility and oversight of customer-facing WHS risks, including claims and payment disputes</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a WHS governance framework for all customer service and reception activities aligned with WHS Act 2011 and relevant Regulations and Codes of Practice</li> <li>Establish a documented WHS policy that specifically references customer complaints, claims disputes, payment disputes and reception operations at high-risk interaction points</li> <li>Define and communicate clear WHS roles, responsibilities and escalation pathways for reception staff, claims staff, supervisors and management</li> <li>Implement structured worker consultation processes (e.g. HSRs, WHS committee, regular toolbox talks) focused on psychosocial risks, aggression and security at reception</li> <li>Schedule periodic management reviews of WHS performance indicators specific to customer service (incident trends, complaint about staff safety, staff turnover, EAP usage)</li> <li>Ensure all customer service and reception procedures undergo WHS risk review prior to implementation or major change</li> <li>Maintain version-controlled WHS and customer service policies, with a formal review cycle (at least every two years or after significant incident or legal change)</li> <li>Integrate WHS requirements into contractor and labour-hire agreements for any outsourced customer service or security functions</li> </ul>	3H
2. Recruitment, Competency and Training for Reception and Customer Service Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment of staff without appropriate interpersonal, de-escalation or conflict management skills</li> <li>Inadequate induction on WHS Act 2011 duties, organisational policies and reporting mechanisms</li> <li>Lack of formal training in managing aggressive or distressed customers including claims and payment disputes</li> <li>Insufficient competency assessment for staff handling complex claims disputes or sensitive complaints</li> <li>Failure to provide refresher training on updated procedures, systems or legal requirements</li> <li>No structured training on dealing with vulnerable persons, cultural sensitivity and anti-discrimination obligations</li> <li>Inconsistent understanding of authority limits for resolving complaints, contributing to escalation and conflict</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed WHS, conflict management and customer service capability requirements into position descriptions for reception and claims/customer service roles</li> <li>Include behavioural and scenario-based questions in recruitment processes to assess conflict resolution, resilience and communication skills</li> <li>Provide comprehensive induction covering WHS obligations, psychosocial hazards, incident reporting, security systems and support services</li> <li>Implement mandatory training in conflict de-escalation, handling aggressive behaviour, trauma-informed communication and complaint resolution for all front-line staff</li> <li>Deliver specialist training for staff involved in claims disputes, payment disputes and lost property management on legal obligations, privacy and evidence handling</li> <li>Introduce competency assessments (e.g. role plays, knowledge tests) before staff independently perform high-risk customer interactions</li> <li>Schedule regular refresher and scenario-based training, including after critical incidents or when policies are updated</li> <li>Maintain training records, monitor completion rates and escalate non-compliance with mandatory training requirements</li> </ul>	2M

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3. Psychosocial Risk Management and Wellbeing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustained exposure to distressed, aggressive or abusive customers leading to psychological injury</li> <li>High workload and sustained emotional labour from continuous complaint and dispute handling</li> <li>Vicarious trauma from listening to traumatic events described in claims or disputes</li> <li>Stigma or fear of reprisal for reporting stress, bullying or customer-related abuse</li> <li>Lack of structured support and recovery processes following critical incidents or threats</li> <li>Inadequate systems to identify and address early signs of burnout, anxiety or depression</li> <li>Poor role clarity and conflicting performance metrics (e.g. speed vs quality vs safety) contributing to stress</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct regular psychosocial risk assessments for reception and customer service functions in line with Safe Work Australia guidance and relevant Codes of Practice</li> <li>Develop a documented psychosocial risk management procedure addressing exposure to aggression, high workload and emotional demands</li> <li>Implement clear performance expectations that prioritise staff safety and respectful interactions over purely quantitative metrics (e.g. call handling time)</li> <li>Provide access to confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and proactively promote its use to reception and customer service staff</li> <li>Introduce structured debriefing and peer support following critical events, threats, or particularly distressing claims or complaint interactions</li> <li>Train managers in recognising early warning signs of psychosocial harm and responding appropriately, including reasonable adjustments and workload review</li> <li>Incorporate regular wellbeing check-ins into supervision and team meetings, with escalation criteria for psychological health concerns</li> <li>Ensure policies prohibit retaliation against staff who report customer aggression, stress or psychosocial concerns and enforce these provisions</li> </ul>	2M
4. Physical Reception Layout, Security Design and Access Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncontrolled public access to reception and back-of-house areas increasing risk of assault, theft or unauthorised access to records</li> <li>Inadequate physical separation between staff and customers during heightened conflict (no barriers, escape route or safe room)</li> <li>Poor line of sight and blind spots reducing ability to monitor customer behaviour and identify escalation</li> <li>Insufficient duress alarm systems or alarms not easily accessible from all reception workstations</li> <li>Inadequate security measures for handling cash or high-value items related to payment disputes or lost property</li> <li>Lack of secure storage for lost property and evidence associated with claims or disputes</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate lighting, signage and wayfinding causing confusion, frustration and crowding at reception</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
5. Customer Behaviour Management and Zero-Tolerance Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of a formal policy outlining acceptable and unacceptable customer behaviour</li> <li>Inconsistent responses by staff to abusive, discriminatory or threatening behaviour</li> <li>Failure to apply bans, warnings or restrictions for repeat offenders, enabling ongoing risk to staff</li> <li>Lack of communication to customers about behavioural expectations and potential consequences</li> <li>Insufficient mechanisms to share information internally regarding high-risk individuals or patterns of behaviour</li> <li>Overreliance on individual staff judgement during volatile situations without clear system support</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
6. Conflict and Dispute Management Systems (Claims, Complaints and Payments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of standardised procedures for managing claims disputes, complaints and payment issues leading to inconsistent and perceived unfair treatment</li> <li>Escalation of disputes due to unclear timeframes, communication gaps and poor documentation</li> <li>Ineffective internal review or appeals process, leading to frustration and aggression from customers</li> <li>Insufficient authority delegation, resulting in staff being unable to resolve minor issues promptly</li> <li>Inadequate documentation of interactions and decisions, hampering transparency and dispute resolution</li> <li>Systemic delays in claims or payment processing contributing to high emotional intensity during interactions</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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7. Communication Protocols and Information Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Miscommunication or ambiguous information increasing customer frustration and disputes</li> <li>Inadequate provision of information in accessible formats (language, literacy, disability) leading to misunderstanding</li> <li>Lack of scripts or guidance for high-risk interactions, such as claims rejections or payment disputes</li> <li>Inconsistent information provided by different staff or channels (phone, email, reception)</li> <li>Failure to record and verify critical information, leading to errors and perceived unfairness</li> <li>Overly complex or legalistic written communication that customers cannot easily understand</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
8. Incident, Threat and Complaint Reporting, Response and Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under-reporting of threats, abuse, near misses and security incidents by reception and customer service staff</li> <li>Slow or inconsistent management response to reported incidents, leading to loss of confidence and customer loyalty</li> <li>Lack of systematic investigation of patterns of aggression or complaint leading to missed opportunities for prevention</li> <li>Inadequate documentation of incidents, reducing ability to support workers' compensation or legal processes</li> <li>No clear criteria for notifying regulators, police or insurers of serious incidents</li> <li>Failure to implement and track corrective actions arising from incidents or investigations</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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9. Rostering, Workload Management and Fatigue Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extended periods of high-intensity customer contact without adequate breaks leading to fatigue and reduced tolerance for conflict</li> <li>Chronic understaffing of reception or call queues increasing wait times and customer frustration</li> <li>Inadequate rotation between high-conflict roles (e.g. claims disputes) and lower intensity tasks</li> <li>Unpredictable overtime or shift extensions following late-running conflict situations</li> <li>Lack of consideration of individual factors (e.g. new staff, returning from illness) when allocating demanding customer interactions</li> <li>Performance targets that encourage skipping breaks or working while unwell</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
10. Information Security, Privacy and Lost Property Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unauthorised access to or disclosure of personal or sensitive information during reception or complaint handling</li> <li>Inadequate verification processes before releasing information, funds or property to customers</li> <li>Poor chain-of-custody controls for lost property, evidence related to claims disputed payments</li> <li>Misplacement or loss of documents supporting claims and disputes leading to mistrust and conflict</li> <li>Failure to comply with privacy and record-keeping obligations, increasing legal and reputational risks</li> <li>Inadequate segregation between public waiting areas and confidential records or screens</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
11. Emergency Preparedness, Security Response and Business Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear procedures for responding to on-site violence, bomb threats, armed intruders or severe aggression</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reception staff not trained in emergency roles or not included in drills and simulations</li> <li>Failure to consider customer and visitor behaviour during emergency evacuations from reception areas</li> <li>Inadequate integration between WHS emergency plans and security contractor procedures</li> <li>Loss of critical customer service functions (claims, payments, reception) during major incidents without continuity arrangements</li> <li>Lack of post-incident recovery plans addressing both operations and staff wellbeing</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
12. Technology, Telephony and Remote Customer Interaction Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate call routing and queue management increasing wait times and customer frustration</li> <li>Lack of call recording or system notes for high-risk conversations, limiting evidence for dispute resolution</li> <li>Insufficient controls for remote or hybrid workers dealing with aggressive customers from home or satellite sites</li> <li>Technology failures affecting payment or claims processing leading to confusion and disputes</li> <li>No procedures for safely terminating abusive calls and preventing immediate re-contact or harassment</li> <li>Reliance on single communication channels without backup options during outages</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
13. Contractor, Visitor and Third-Party Interface Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Security or cleaning contractors at reception not integrated into WHS and aggression management systems</li> <li>External claims agents, dispute resolution bodies or debt collectors interacting with customers in ways that increase conflict risk</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent induction of visitors and contractors on reception safety and behaviour expectations</li> <li>Lack of clarity over responsibilities when third parties occupy or manage reception spaces</li> <li>Information gaps between organisation and third-party providers leading to mishandled disputes or complaints</li> </ul>		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
14. Monitoring, Audit, Review and Continuous Improvement of WHS Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Static WHS systems that do not adapt to emerging risks in customer behaviour, technology or service models</li> <li>Lack of formal audit and inspection regimes for reception and customer service risk controls</li> <li>Failure to involve front-line staff in evaluating effectiveness of conflict management systems</li> <li>Inadequate use of data (incidents, complaints, staff turnover, sick leave) to identify systemic WHS issues</li> <li>No structured management review of WHS performance, specifically in customer-facing areas</li> </ul>	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	1L

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE – CALL 000 FOR EMERGENCIES**

Ensure to have an Emergency Management Plan in place as well as adequate numbers of trained first aid staff with easy access to fully stocked first aid kits, rescue equipment, material safety data sheets, adequate access to emergency communication equipment and fire-fighting equipment suitable for all classes of fire and ignition sources.

**LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES**

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND CODES OF PRACTICE. DELETE THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES FOR ANY STATE THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE

**Queensland & Australian Capital Territory**

Work Health and Safety Act 2011  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011  
 Legislation QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/work-health-and-safety-laws>  
 Codes of Practice QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>  
 Legislation ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>  
 Codes of Practice ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

**Victoria**

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004  
 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017  
 Legislation VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>  
 Codes of Practice VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/compliance-codes-and-codes-practice>

**New South Wales**

Work Health and Safety Act 2011  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2025  
 Legislation NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/legislation>  
 Codes of Practice NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-codes-of-practice>

**Western Australia**

Work Health and Safety Act 2020  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022  
 Legislation Western Australia: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/legislation>  
 Codes of Practice WA: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/codes-practice>

**Northern Territory**

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011  
 Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulation 2011  
 Legislation NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-safety-laws>  
 Codes of Practice NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

**Safe Work Australia Links**

Law and Regulation (All States): <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation>  
 Model Codes of Practice: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-publications/model-codes-of-practice>

**South Australia**

Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)  
 Legislation for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/resources/legislation>  
 Codes of Practice for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workplaces/codes-of-practice#COPs>

**Model Codes of Practice**

- Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work
- Confined spaces
- Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals
- Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace
- Welding processes
- First aid in the workplace
- Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- Hazardous manual tasks
- Managing the risk of falls in housing construction
- Managing electrical risks in the workplace
- Demolition work
- Excavation work
- Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination
- Managing the work environment and facilities
- How to manage work health and safety risks
- Managing risks of plant in the workplace
- Construction work

**Tasmania**

Work Health and Safety Act 2012  
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 2012  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012  
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional) Regulations 2012  
 Legislation for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>  
 Codes of Practice for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Details of permits, licenses or access required by regulatory bodies (add or delete as required):

- Permits from local council
- Authorisation to commence work
- Any required documents.