Module 2: Occupational Health and Safety for EHTs

Ministry of Health Liberia
Division of Environmental & Occupational Health

WASH & EH Package – Early recovery & Resilience Building from EVD outbreak

Learning Objectives

- Describe health and safety in the workplace

- Identify and assess workplace hazards

- Describe the measures for improving workplace safety

- Outline the national laws and policies regarding occupational health and safety

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the session, the participants will be able to:

- Identify factors that can lead to disease/injury-causing conditions in the workplace

- List the kinds of occupational hazards in the workplace with examples and health effects

- Describe the measures for improving workplace safety

- Identify the reference documents with occupational health and safety information in Liberia

What is workplace health and safety?

- Health is concerned with disease-causing conditions.
  - Unsafe water supply
  - Poor sanitary facilities
  - Poor preparation of food
  - Lack of PPE or improper use of PPE
- Safety is concerned with injury-causing situations.
  - Needle prick
  - Wet floor
  - No direction indicators
  - Inhalation of chemicals/substances
  - Poor ventilation/lightening/machine operation

Why is it an issue?

- Quality care is best provided where staff work in a safe, secure environment.

- Preventing incidents means protecting the wellbeing of patients, visitors and staff, maintaining productivity, and avoiding direct and indirect costs.

Why identify and assess workplace hazards?

- Hazard mean danger – no one should be expected to work in a dangerous place.

- Inaction is costly, in both human and financial terms.

How to identify workplace hazards?

1. **Identify risks.**

   ➢ Be aware of the different categories of hazards

   ➢ Get feedback from staff: this provides the most valuable information about hazards;

   ➢ It is useful to use a number of approaches – what others do you suggest?

Hazard category and definition

Biological
Infectious/biological agents, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites, that may be transmitted by contact with infected patients or contaminated body secretions/fluids

Chemical
Various forms of chemicals that are potentially toxic or irritating to the body system, including medications, solutions, and gases

Psychological
Factors and situations encountered or associated with one's job or work environment that create or potentiate stress, emotional strain, an/or other interpersonal problems

Physical
Agents within the work environment that can cause tissue trauma

Ergonomic: Mechanical/Biomechanical/musculoskeletal
Factors encountered in the work environment that cause or potentiate accidents, injuries, strain, or discomfort

How to assess workplace hazards?

2. **Assess risks**

- Evaluate how *severe* the risk is in terms of the effects of the hazard

- Decide how *likely* it is that the risk will occur.

- Once hazards have been identified and assessed, this is the next logical step

- If your workplace is not taking all the measures it could, the repercussions will be costly in human and financial terms

Put in place the necessary measures to control hazards and improve safety: HOW?

- Introduce measures for each category of hazard.

- Start with the hazards you have already identified as high risk, whether they cause minor problems frequently, or major problems sometimes.

Hierarchy of Controls

Most effective

Least effective
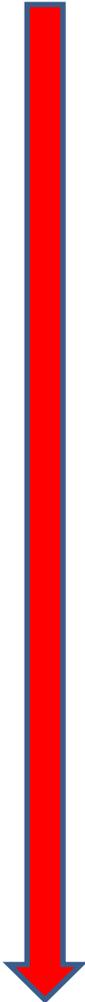
Elimination of hazard
- Use of needleless system
- Repair uneven floors, clear passage ways

Substitution
- Less toxic alternatives for sterilants
- Use latex-free gloves in case of allergy

Engineering control
- Needles retract, sheath or blunt after use
- Shield from radiation source

Administrative control
- Policies, resources, OHS Committee
- Training on Standard Precautions

Work practice control
- No recapping; replace sharps container before full
- Hand hygiene

Personal protective equipment
- Gloves, gowns, goggles, respirators

BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

- Biological hazards:
  - include infectious agents such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites
  - can be transmitted through direct or indirect contact with contaminated materials or bodily fluids.
  - They may be airborne (droplets), blood-borne and/or carried by a vector (e.g., mosquito).
- **Infection prevention and control**:
  - Core strategy to improve workplace safety and quality of care given to patients.
  - It insists on high standards of hygiene and the application of Standard Precautions.

PHYSICAL HAZARDS

- Avoid extremes of temperature
- Improve ventilation
- Ensure adequate lighting
- Reduce noise levels
- Eliminate uneven floors and obstructed passage ways
- Remove electrical hazards
- Reduce exposure to radiation
- Be prepared for emergencies

Keep air circulating
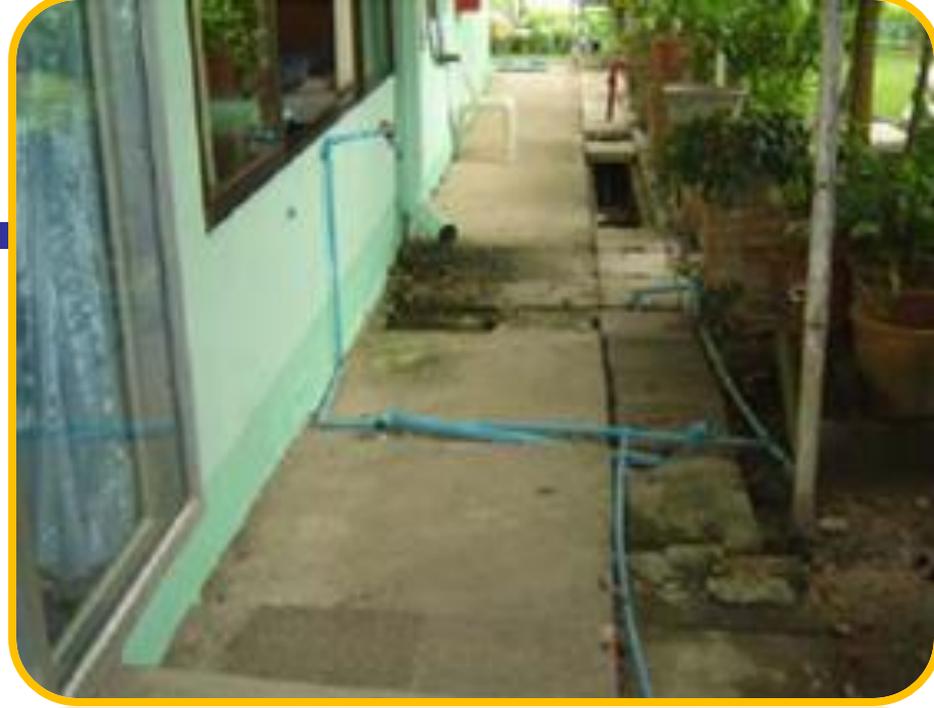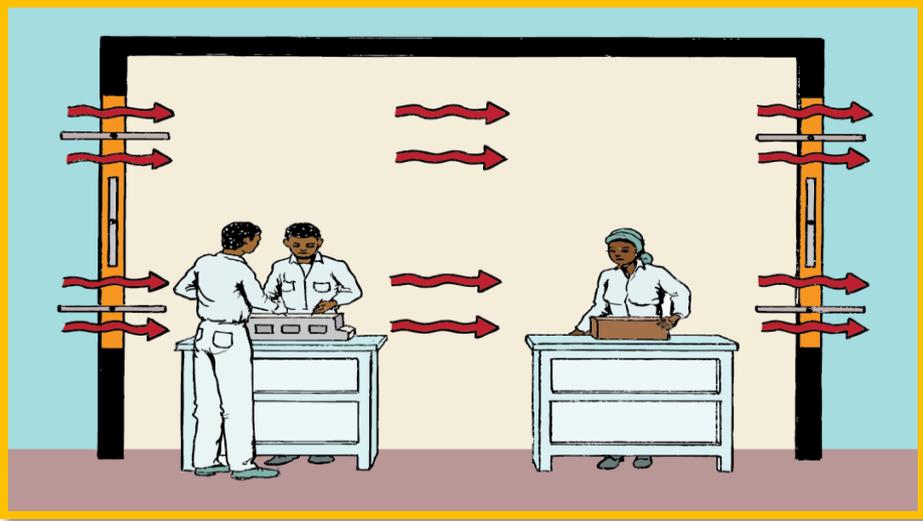
Eliminate uneven floors & obstructed passage ways

Prevent electrical and fire accidents

Control electrical and fire risk

CHEMICAL HAZARDS

1. Eliminate or replace **hazardous substances** such as disinfectants and sterilants

2. Minimize risk by reducing concentrations, ensuring staff wear protective clothing, and/or reducing time staff spend handling them.

3. Ensure that hazardous products are **clearly labelled and stored in lockable cupboards**.

4. Control **latex allergy** by substituting other materials and/or reducing time of exposure.

5. Protect staff from the effects of **hazardous drugs** by providing gloves and gowns and ensuring adequate ventilation where staff mix chemical agents.

6. Give additional **protection to pregnant women**, and be aware which agents can affect the fertility of either sex and take controlling measures.

7. Review and improve **waste management.**

ERGONOMIC HAZARDS

- Musculoskeletal disorders:
  - injuries to muscles, ligaments, joints and bones;
  - most common injuries suffered by health workers.
- Preventive action includes:
  - changes to work stations and working practices,
  - avoidance of heavy lifting or the use of technical devices,
  - reducing prolonged sitting or standing and repeated actions.
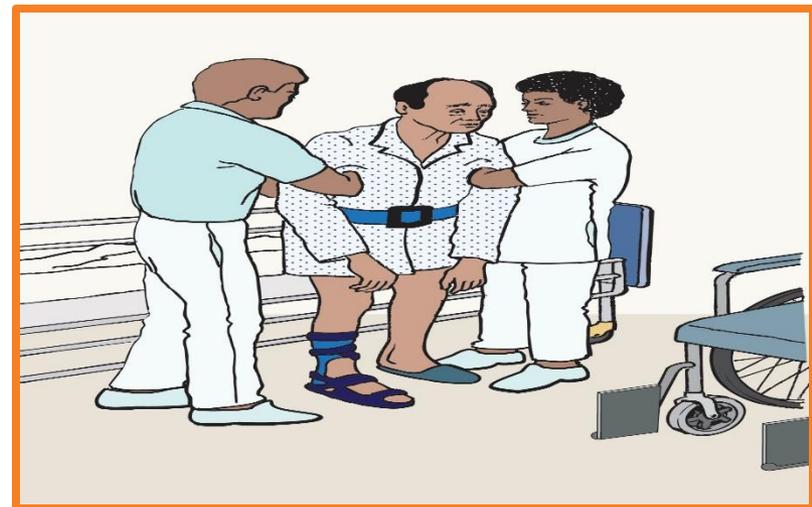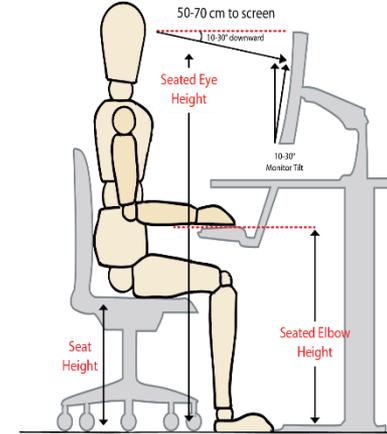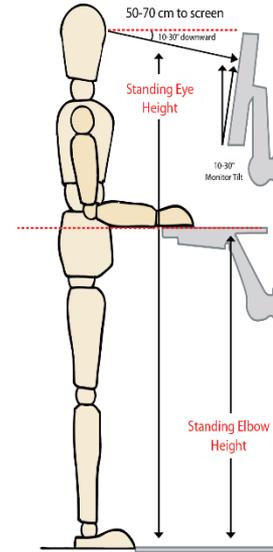
PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

- The health sector is recognized as a high-stress work environment.

- Actions to reduce job stress give a high priority to organizational changes that improve working conditions, control demands of work, and give more support to staff.

Promote a 'no blame' culture to support the reporting of incidents and disclosure of illness: WHY?

- Quality patient care is most often delivered in facilities with a culture of trust, respect and collaboration.

- A response to incidents that focuses on understanding and solution-finding helps strengthen trust and collaboration.

- A 'no-blame' culture encourages reporting – which is essential to improved hazard prevention and control.

Promote a 'no blame' culture to support the reporting of incidents and disclosure of illness: HOW?

1. Promote **good communications, appreciation, respect and collaboration** – all help create a culture of trust and frankness rather than blame.

2. **Reporting** should be encouraged by supervisors, reinforced by workplace notices and training, and made as simple as possible. Review current reporting requirements and revise as necessary to make reporting easier.

3. **Identify and analyse the causes** of a hazardous incident rather than focusing exclusively on the staff involved.

4. Supervisors and the staff medical services should be trained to recognize psychosocial symptoms and to take the initial steps in providing care and support.

Manage hazards and promote safety
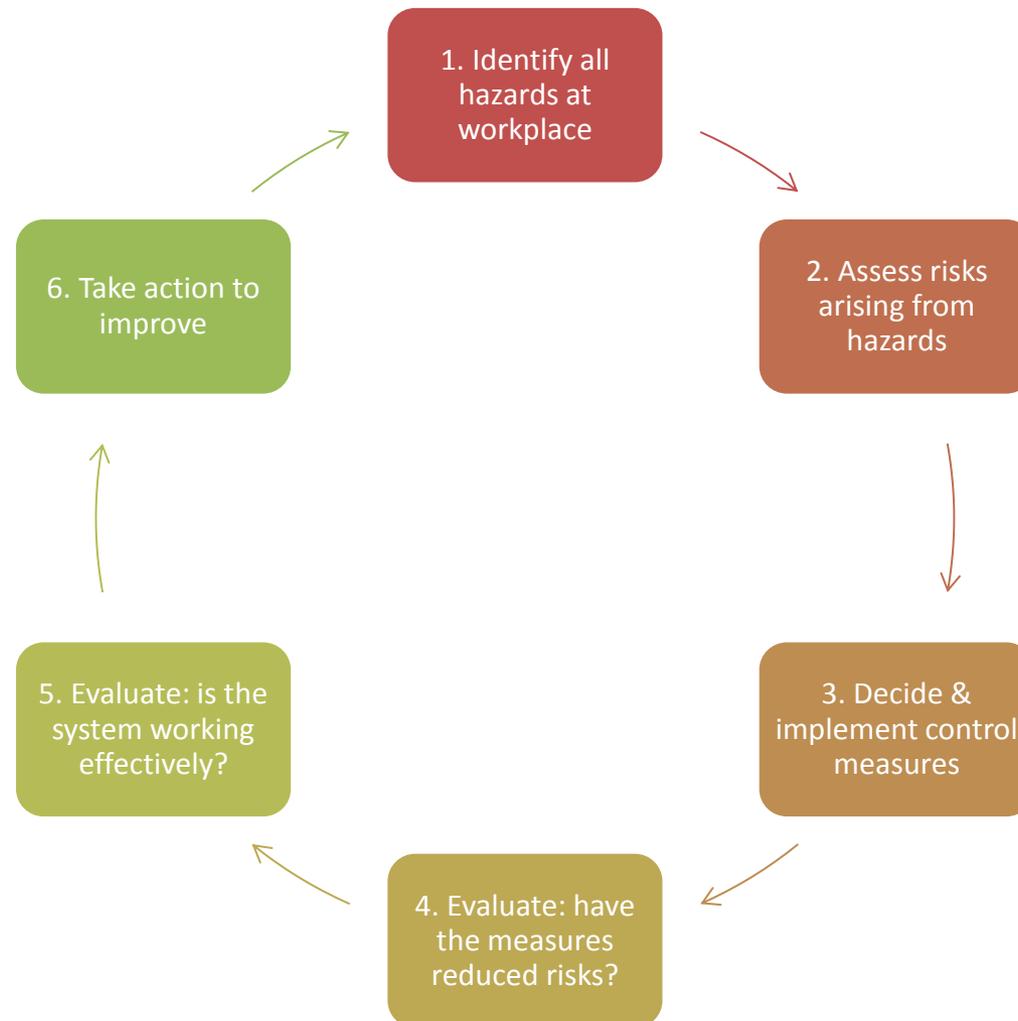
OHS resources available at the Ministry of Health

- Public Health Law of Liberia – 1976 (revised)

    - "Part IV: Health Standards of Public & Private institutions – required employees to undergo compulsory medical examination"

- National Environmental and Occupational Health policy – August 2010

    - "Legislation – Leadership – Roles – Duties – Responsibilities of Employer's & Workers"

- National Environmental and Occupational Health five-year strategic plan (2012-2016) – December 2011

    - "National study – National OHS bank/database"

- Standard Operating Procedure for Environmental and Occupational Health Services

    - "National – County – Facility – Community levels"

- Comments and discussions

- Thanks