

# HOW TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE S.O.P

## WHAT IS AN SOP?

The procedure is firm and fixed, following the procedure to the letter is mandatory.

An SOP must be written – an SOP cannot be a set of verbal instructions or steps.

A **standard** operating procedure is **document** that describes the **safest** and most efficient way in which to carry out a **complex**, routine or non-routine procedure.

The main purpose of an SOP is to ensure that every hazard, associated with every step, is identified and that the steps in the procedure are designed to ensure that the hazard does not cause harm.

SOPs are only developed for complicated, multi-step procedures not for simple two or three step procedures.

## WHY ARE SOPS NECESSARY?

SOPs are required to **comply with the law** and they are required as a **best practice principle** to protect employees from harm.

The requirement for an SOP to be developed flows directly from the risk assessment process.

The outcome of the risk assessment process, if done correctly, will be an identification of all hazardous activities (procedures) as well as a risk rating. From there, the Hierarchy of Controls is applied to eliminate, minimise or control the risk.

**SOPs are only developed for procedures and not for equipment.**

## WHAT DOES AN EFFECTIVE SOP LOOK LIKE?

An effective SOP is made up of two parts:

Front end

Body

This part of the SOP should include:

- the scope of the SOP
- a unique id number & dates of action (version control)
- reference to all applicable legislation & documentation
- clear explanations of definitions & abbreviations used in the SOP
- clear statement of what special tools and / or PPE are required

This part of the SOP should include:

- sequential steps (tasks) to be taken to complete the procedure (activity)
- hazards associated with each step (task)
- the way that the steps must be carried out so that the hazard does not cause harm.

## HOW IS AN EFFECTIVE SOP DEVELOPED?

Define the scope of the SOP

Add the front end detail

Compile the body in detail

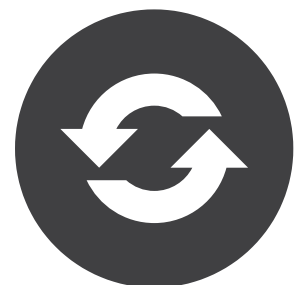
## SOME GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING SOPS



Get the right team together



Ensure the SOP is suitable for the target audience (language, terms etc.)



Test and revise the SOP when complete