

Laksa Festival risk assessment for people who can't handle spicy food

The following is a light hearted example of how the risk assessment process can be easily applied to individual circumstances.

Background

John Citizen, a country boy from down south, is in Darwin to try his luck in Season 10 of the Million Dollar Fish competition with a group of mates. John is amazed at the sights and smells of Darwin's multicultural society, especially after a visit to the Parap Markets.

The long lines of people at the various stalls waiting for a laksa and the advertising for the Darwin International Laksa Festival has intrigued John, and he tells his mates that he wants to give a laksa a go. John's mates laugh at this idea, as John was brought up on a diet of meat and three vegetables and finds a light sprinkle of pepper spicy.

John's mates tell him horror stories of what happens to people who can't handle the spicy food they eat. Not to be put off, John decides to apply the risk assessment process to this issue.

1. Identify the Hazards

John has identified capsaicin, a component in chillies that causes the burning sensation, as the hazard his mates are warning him about.

2. Assess the Risks

Growing up in a very small country town, John has never tried Asian food and from his diet of meat and three vegetables, knows he doesn't have the genetics and has not built up any tolerance for spice.

John assesses that it is almost certain that he won't be able to tolerate the spice in a bowl of laksa and the consequences would be severe. One of John's mates jokes he will go buy a 12 pack of toilet rolls just for John.

3. Control the Risks

Looking at the hierarchy of control measures, John's mates urge him to **eliminate** to risk and give up the idea of having a laksa.

Another mate suggests John asks the chef to **isolate** the spice, but John points out that it wouldn't be a laksa anymore but noodles in a coconut soup.

A more supportive mate suggests John asks the chef to **reduce the risk through engineering controls** by only adding a little bit of spice.

John is beginning to have serious doubts on his ability to handle any spice and decides to apply the **substitution** control measure and buys a laksa inspired ice cream.

4. Review the Control Measures

John really enjoyed the flavours of the laksa inspired ice cream and is keen to try some more. John has heard a club with beautiful Darwin sunset views serve a laksa inspired panna cotta and makes a reservation for that night.

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Workplace/location:	Darwin City (Darwin International Laksa Festival)
Name of person/s conducting assessment:	John Citizen
Date and time:	30 September 2024

Identify the hazard		Assess the risk	Fix the problem			Evaluate
Identify the task or activity	What are the hazards associated with each activity?	Is the risk associated with the hazard low, medium, high or extreme?	If the risk is deemed unacceptable, what will be done to eliminate or minimise the risk?	By whom?	By when?	Go through the first 3 steps again to ensure risk levels are now at acceptable level. Revised risk level?
Eating Laksa during the Darwin International Laksa Festival	Intolerance to spicy (capsaicin)	Extreme	Substitute the laksa for a laksa inspired dish.	John Citizen	1/10/2024	Low
		Choose an item.			Click or tap to enter a date.	Choose an item.

RISK MATRIX

Likelihood	Consequence				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Almost Certain	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
Likely	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

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Consequence - Evaluate the consequences of a risk occurring the left hand column

Descriptor	Level	Definition
Insignificant	1	No issues keep eating.
Minor	2	Burning sensation in mouth.
Moderate	3	Eyes watering and runny nose.
Major	4	Heartburn and reflux.
Severe	5	Abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

Likelihood - Evaluate the likelihood of an incident occurring according to the according to the ratings in the top row ratings

Descriptor	Level	Definition
Rare	1	May occur somewhere, sometime ("once in a life time/once in a hundred years").
Unlikely	2	May occur somewhere over an extended period of time.
Possible	3	May occur several times over a period of time.
Likely	4	May be anticipated multiple times over a period of time. May occur once every few repetitions of the activity or event.
Almost Certain	5	Prone to occur regularly It is anticipated for each repetition of the activity of event.

Hierarchy of control measures - Always aim to eliminate the risk, which is the most effective control. If this is not reasonably practicable, minimise the risk by working through the other alternatives in the hierarchy

Control measure	Definition
Elimination	The most effective control measure involves eliminating the hazard and associated risk by not introducing the hazard in the first place.
Substitution	Substitute the hazard with something safer.
Isolation	Physically separating the source of harm from people.
Engineering controls	Using either a mechanical device or process to minimise the hazard.
Administration controls	Administrative controls include work methods or procedures that are designed to minimise exposure to a hazard.
Personal protective equipment	Personal protective equipment limits exposure to the harmful effects of a hazard.