



نظام الشارقة للسلامة والصحة المهنية
Occupational Safety & Health Sharjah

حكومة الشارقة
هيئة الوقاية والسلامة
Government of Sharjah
Prevention & Safety Authority



Code of Practice

New and Expectant Mothers

OSHJ-CoP-39

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1 Introduction

The entity should make provisions for new and expectant mothers who continue to work during pregnancy and/or returning to work after giving birth. These provisions should aim to protect the safety and health of new and expectant mothers.

2 Purpose and Scope

This Code of Practice (CoP) has been developed to provide information to entities to assist them in complying with the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health System in Sharjah.

This Code of Practice (CoP) defines the minimum acceptable requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health System in Sharjah, and entities can apply practices higher than, but not lower than those mentioned in this document, as they demonstrate the lowest acceptable level of compliance in the Emirate of Sharjah.

This document applies to all entities operating within the Emirate of Sharjah.

3 Definitions and Abbreviations

Entities:	Government Entities: Government departments, authorities or establishments and the like in the Emirate. Private Entities: Establishments, companies, enterprises and economic activities operating in the Emirate in general.
Risk:	Is the combination of likelihood of the hazard causing the loss and the severity of that loss (consequences).
Risk Assessment:	The systematic identification of workplace hazards and evaluation of the risks associated. This process takes existing control measures into account and identifies and recommends further control measures where required.
Hazard:	Anything that has the potential to cause harm or loss (injury, disease, ill-health, property damage etc).
New Mother:	Is a woman who, has given birth within the last six months or is breastfeeding.
Expectant Mother:	Is a woman who is pregnant.
Welfare Facilities:	Include changing, washing, rest, eating and toilet facilities that are clean and necessary for the wellbeing of employees.
Wellbeing:	An employee in a state of being comfortable, healthy or happy.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Entity Responsibilities

- Undertake an individual risk assessment for each new and expectant mother, identify the specific hazards and implement adequate control measures that effectively manage risks to the new and expectant mother;

- Provide information, instruction, supervision and training to new and expectant mothers on the safety and health effects of any significant risks identified and the precautions they need to take to manage these risks;
- Provide adequate resources to manage the safety and health of new and expectant mothers.

4.2 Employee Responsibilities

- Notify the entity as soon as possible about pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding;
- Cooperate with the entity during the risk assessment process;
- Cooperate with the entity and receive safety information, instruction, supervision and training;
- Comply with any risk control measures identified during the risk assessment process;
- Report any safety or health concerns in relation to their work activities to the entity.

5 Requirements

New and expectant mothers should inform their line manager or the human resources team as early as possible of a pregnancy, subsequent birth or breastfeeding. As soon as the entity has been informed, a review of the existing risk assessments relevant to the new and expectant mother should be conducted, considering any significant risks to the safety and health of the expectant mother and her child.

5.1 Risk Assessment

The entity needs to assess the safety and health of an employee who is a new or expectant mother. The entity should consider the following factors, including but not limited to:

- Physical;
- Working environment;
- Mental/physical fatigue and stress;
- Chemical agents;
- Biological agents;
- Work schedules.

Where risks have been identified and assessed, the entity must take action to eliminate or reduce risks, wherever possible. If risks cannot be eliminated or reduced to acceptable levels, then the entity must consider other alternatives for the employee including:

- Adjusting the new or expectant mothers working conditions and/or working hours;
- Providing suitable alternative work, if available;
- Find alternative work outside of the place of employment to remove the new or expectant mother from the risks present.

The new or expectant mother should be consulted to ensure that the control measures identified in the risk assessment are practical for her situation.

5.2 Risk Assessment Review

The entity should regularly review the risk assessment to ensure any changes in the condition of new and expectant mothers are taken into account, including but not limited to:

- Concerns raised by a new or expectant mother;
- Changes to the new and expectant mothers health;
- Changes to the working environment;
- The return to work of the new mother after childbirth.

Further information on risk assessment can be found in OSHJ-CoP-01: Risk Management and Control.

5.3 Welfare and Wellbeing

The entity should take into account the needs of new and expectant mothers, ensuring the workplace is suitable and has safe: access and egress to and from the workplace, welfare facilities and adequate workstations.

Further information on welfare and wellbeing can be found in OSHJ-CoP-15: Employee Welfare and Wellbeing.

5.4 Return to Work

The entity must make provision for new mothers return to work, including but not limited to:

- Consulting with the employee to identify any issues that may affect her return to work;
- Employee concerns about safety and health;
- Review of risk assessments to include employee concerns about safety and health;
- Any refresher training identified as being required.

Further information on return to work can be found in OSHJ-CoP-14: Management of OSH Illness and Disease.

5.5 Breastfeeding Mothers

There are other risks to consider if a new mother is still breastfeeding. These are different depending on the job she is doing but are usually associated with hazardous substances. The entity must ensure that a breastfeeding mother is not exposed to risks that could affect her or her baby.

Welfare facilities should be provided to allow breastfeeding mothers to, including but not limited to:

- Express milk;
- Store expressed milk in a suitable refrigerator;
- Be able to take rest in a suitable environment.

6 Training

The entity should provide training in languages and in a format that employees understand to all new and expectant mothers on any significant risks that could affect their prenatal or postnatal safety, health and wellbeing, including but not limited to:

- Changes to the working environment;
- Changes to workplace hazards;
- The return to work arrangements of the new mother after childbirth.

Periodic refresher training should be conducted to ensure employees competency is maintained, including but not limited to:

- Where training certification has expired;
- Where identified as part of a training needs analysis;
- Where risk assessment findings identify training as a measure to control risks;
- Where there is a change in legal requirements;
- Where incident investigation findings recommend refresher training.

The entity must record and maintain accurate training records of OSH training provided to employees.

Further information on training can be found in OSHJ-GL-08: Training and Competence.

7 Emergency Preparedness and Response

The entity should consider that in the event of an emergency evacuation the new and expectant mothers may have trouble descending flights of stairs while evacuating from the workplace. Additional measures may include, but not limited to:

- Relocating the employee workstation to reduce travel distances to emergency exits;
- Allocating a person to assist during evacuation;
- Provision of an emergency evacuation chair;
- Devising a personal evacuation plan.

Further information on emergency evacuation can be found in OSHJ-CoP-18: Emergency Preparedness and Response.

8 References

OSHJ-CoP-01: Risk Management and Control

OSHJ-CoP-14: Management of OSH Illness and Disease

OSHJ-CoP-15: Employee Welfare and Wellbeing

OSHJ-CoP-18: Emergency Preparedness and Response

OSHJ-GL-08: Training and Competence

9 Document Amendment Record

TITLE	New and Expectant Mothers		
DOCUMENT AMENDMENT RECORD			
Version	Revision Date	Amendment Details	Pages Affected
1	15 SEP 2021	New Document	N/A
2	04 JUL 2024	The document changed from a guideline to a code of practice. The document code was changed from OSHJ-GL-27 to OSHJ-CoP-39.	
2	04 JUL 2024	Risk Register Added	9
2	04 JUL 2024	Checklist Added	12

APPENDIX 1. : Risk Register

Some manuals within Sharjah Occupational Safety and Health System include a sample risk register as an advisory document that entities can emulate. The examples listed in this sample may not be directly applicable to every entity; however, they serve as illustrative cases to enhance understanding of the methods used to evaluate activities within the entity, potential risks, and possible consequences. The sample demonstrates how to assess risks by calculating their likelihood and consequences.

Some manuals present this sample to emphasize the importance of risk monitoring, evaluation, and the implementation of appropriate control measures. It is unacceptable for an auditor from the Prevention and Safety Authority to find any entity engaging in hazardous activities without a thorough risk assessment process. We can anticipate and prevent workplace risks, and the risk monitoring process is not complex. Therefore, this appendix aims to provide a sample that aids in the monitoring, evaluation, and implementation of control measures, monitoring residual risks, and defining tasks and responsibilities for managing hazards.

Every government entity or private establishment has its unique nature of work and environment, which contain risks specific to its operations. Hence, each entity should develop its monitoring procedures based on this appendix. We can develop more detailed assessment tools beyond what this sample presents. As stipulated by Executive Council Resolution No. (15) of 2021 regarding the Sharjah Occupational Safety and Health System, employers are required to identify all foreseeable workplace hazards, assess the risk of injury or illness to workers, and implement consistent preventive measures to ensure workers' safety, health, and well-being. The same resolution also holds employers responsible for their employees, contractors, visitors, and anyone affected by the employer's activities. Therefore, this sample recommends including these individuals in the risk assessment process.

Activity/task	Dangers	Consequences	Existing control measures	Risk			Additional control measures	Residual risks			Executing person	Administrator: Date:
				L	C	R		L	C	R-R		
Working in environments requiring prolonged standing	Excessive fatigue and strain	Circulatory problems and extreme fatigue	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Provide options for frequent sitting and reducing standing duration	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[date]
Exposure to Chemicals	Poisoning or harm to the fetus	Health risks to mother and fetus	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Replace hazardous chemicals with safer alternatives	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[date]
Working under high psychological stress	Stress and anxiety	Negative impact on maternal and fetal health	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Offer psychological support and reduce workload	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[date]
Manual lifting and carrying of heavy objects	Muscle and joint strain	Back and joint injuries	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Restrict manual heavy lifting and provide assistance	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[date]
Working in high-temperature environments	Heat stress	Heat exhaustion and other health issues	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Provide an air-conditioned and comfortable work environment	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[date]
Dealing with clients or patients	Exposure to infectious diseases	Risk of infections that could affect pregnancy	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Implement infection prevention and control measures	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[date]

APPENDIX 2. Checklist

The checklist is used by Prevention and Safety Authority to monitor compliance levels during audit and inspection operations; it is not intended for use by government entities or private establishments.

Every code of practice or guideline published by the Prevention and Safety Authority within the Sharjah occupational safety and health system contains requirements that employers in the Emirate of Sharjah must comply with. Each manual includes an inspection checklist that summarizes the essential items used by the SPSA auditor to verify that government entities or private establishments comply with the manual's requirements. Auditors can add additional essential items as necessary. The inspection checklist also includes a manual reference for each essential item, as well as a sample of acceptable compliance evidence for each item. The SPSA's auditor may request additional compliance evidence based on the item's condition, as well as the severity and potential impact of non-compliance.

The SPSA's auditor uses the inspection checklist to provide a comprehensive report on the entity's status. We will use the same checklist to monitor manual standard violations. Non-compliance with these standards constitutes a violation of Executive Council Resolution No. 15 of 2021 regarding the Sharjah Occupational Safety and Health System. If the SPSA's auditor detects non-compliance, they can issue violations based on the approved violation list.

In this manual, the SPSA provides information and standards that employers conducting activities in the Emirate of Sharjah must adhere to. This is to ensure the safety of workers, property, and the environment. Adhering to the requirements of this manual helps improve the level of occupational safety and health at the workplace, and it shields private establishments from potential violations or financial penalties for non-compliance.

The Emirate of Sharjah's Executive Council Resolution stipulates that employers must exercise due diligence to ensure the safety and health of workers, contractors, visitors, and all those affected by the employer's activities. To avoid non-compliance, employers must ensure adherence to the Sharjah Occupational Safety and Health System requirements. Entities should develop their procedures and inspection checklists according to their activities, nature of work, and risk level.

Depending on recorded or reported incidents, and as necessary, the SPSA may amend the requirements in this manual. As a result, the attached inspection checklist may change. Occupational safety and health practitioners must stay up-to-date on published standards and any changes to the inspection checklist attached to each manual.

Audit/Inspection Checklist

Code Title	New and Expectant Mothers	Code No.	OSHJ-CoP-39	Rev. No.	2.0
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Sr.	Checklist Item	Clause in the Code	Acceptable means of compliance
1.	Are risks related to new and expectant mothers are identified and assessed?	5.1, 5.2: Risk Assessment, Risk Assessment Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Check the RA – Check Work schedules of the new or expectant mother
2.	Is the workplace is suitable and safe for expectant mothers?	5.3: Welfare and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Verify the safety of entity access and egress – visual verification of welfare facilities
3.	Are welfare facilities for breastfeeding mothers available?	5.5 : Breastfeeding Mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Verify the suitability of refrigerators for milk storage – Verify the presence of rest areas
4.	Are the new and expectant mothers provided with proper training and records retained?	6: Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Copy of the training certificates/records
5.	Are there measures taken in case of an emergency evacuation for expected mothers?	7: Emergency Preparedness and Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Check the location of the employee workstation (it should be near emergency exits) – Verify the presence of the emergency evacuation chair