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Introduction

The current landscape of health and safety regulation necessitates that all businesses, large and small, undergo comprehensive risk assessments. However, the bottleneck created by the limited number of authorized assessment providers, combined with the high costs involved, disproportionately affects small to micro businesses. For these entities, the one-size-fits-all model is inefficient and often unnecessarily burdensome.

The crux of the issue lies in the unscalable nature of the existing framework. While large corporations can absorb the assessment costs, smaller organizations find themselves strained, compromising their ability to grow and potentially overlooking fundamental health and safety standards due to cost-related avoidance.

A graduated risk assessment configuration is proposed to alleviate these hurdles. Tailoring the health and safety laws to the scale and complexity of businesses, this model aims to:

1. **Reduce Financial Burdens:** Small to micro businesses will face lower compliance costs, proportionate to their operational risks and capacity.
2. **Increase Compliance Flexibility:** Differentiated tiers of risk assessment requirements will accommodate varying business sizes and risk exposure levels.
3. **Simplify Health & Safety Obligations:** Streamlined and scaled-down assessment processes for smaller businesses will improve understanding and execution of health and safety obligations.

By implementing a graduated model, we can foster a more equitable regulatory environment. This policy encourages compliance among small businesses, improves the management of health and safety risks, and supports business sustainability and growth.

Policy Proposal

The graduated risk assessment model for health and safety compliance is designed to be inclusive and scalable. Small to micro businesses will benefit from simplified and cost-effective risk assessment processes, while the rigor of assessments for larger organizations will remain intact, ensuring comprehensive coverage of potential risks.

The initial phase involves segmentation of businesses based on criteria such as size, revenue, industry risk profile, and employee count. This segmentation allows for the creation of tailored compliance requirements that are appropriate to the risk level and operational scope of each business tier.

Secondly, a set of minimum health and safety standards will be developed, applicable universally to ensure baseline protection. Beyond this baseline, additional criteria will be





specified for each tier, increasing in complexity and depth with the size and risk profile of the business.

The assessment process for the smallest businesses might be fulfilled through self-assessment checklists, simplified inspections, or consultations with qualified professionals, depending on the tier. This flexibility facilitates compliance without imposing disproportionate financial or operational burdens.

To validate and support this graduated approach, a certification process will also be established. This process will allow smaller businesses to demonstrate compliance without the need for expensive external audits, through recognized self-certification mechanisms or peer assessments within business associations.

The policy includes the introduction of education programs and resource centers to aid businesses in understanding and meeting their health and safety obligations, with assistance tailored to each tier.

Regular reviews and adjustments will ensure the model is responsive to industry changes, technological advances, and evolving health and safety data.

Scaled Differentiation of Risk Assessment Criteria

The graduated risk assessment model takes into account the differing operational complexities and risk exposures of businesses, setting scaled criteria to align with each tier's specific needs. It allows for progression from basic self-administered checklists to comprehensive third-party audits in line with increasing business size and risk potential.

For example, micro businesses might be required to conduct internal reviews with prescribed, user-friendly tools, while large-scale operations engage in full-scale risk assessments conducted by accredited professionals.

Peer Review and Support Structures

A novel aspect of this graduated model is the incorporation of a peer review mechanism within industry associations. Peer support systems can foster community engagement in health and safety standards, with shared knowledge and resources reducing individual compliance costs.

This system also taps into pooled industry-specific expertise, establishing a support network that aids in maintaining high health and safety standards without the overhead of formal assessments for small-scale operations.

Cost-Effective Certification and Compliance

By introducing cost-effective certification options such as self-certification or association-based certifications, we alleviate the financial strain on small to micro businesses. This





element of the model seeks to create a pathway for businesses to validate their health and safety compliance in a more accessible, less burdensome manner.

Training and Resource Allocation

To enable businesses to navigate the risk assessment and compliance processes, training programs, and resources will be developed. Online platforms, regional workshops, and downloadable toolkits could be part of this arsenal, providing the necessary guidance and support for each tier within the graduated model.

Regular Updating and Evaluation

The policy mandates periodic evaluation and updating of risk assessment criteria and tools to ensure they remain relevant and effective. Input from stakeholders, coupled with compliance data and industry developments, revises the model to reflect the evolving landscape.

Streamlining Regulatory Processes

Efforts will also focus on streamlining the administrative processes around health and safety compliance. This includes simplifying documentation, reducing the frequency of mandatory assessments for lower-risk entities, and increasing the use of technology to automate parts of the compliance process.

Benefits of the Proposal

Sustainable Economic Growth

By implementing effective policies and measures to reduce the regulatory burden and simplify the processes encountered by small and micro businesses, we actively contribute to enhancing the ability of these enterprises to allocate resources towards expansion, research and development, and job creation. This, in turn, not only fosters sustainable economic growth but also serves as a catalyst for driving the growth and prosperity of both the local and national economy.

Enhanced Health & Safety Awareness

A scalable model promotes wider engagement and awareness of health and safety practices. It is tailored to business needs, encouraging a proactive approach to health and safety and improving workplace safety culture.

By implementing this model, businesses can actively contribute to enhancing workplace safety and fostering a proactive safety culture. The scalability of the model ensures that health and safety practices are tailored to the specific needs of each business, promoting wider engagement and awareness. This approach encourages businesses to take a proactive stance towards health and safety, focusing on prevention rather than reacting to incidents. Overall,





the model aims to improve workplace safety culture and create a safer working environment for all.

Increased Compliance Rates

Adaptable regulations are more likely to be observed, increasing overall compliance rates. Small businesses will engage with health and safety requirements more readily when these requirements are reasonable and manageable. By allowing for flexibility and scalability in the regulatory framework, businesses of all sizes can effectively meet their health and safety obligations without facing excessive burdens.

This approach fosters a more equitable regulatory environment, promotes compliance among small businesses, and improves the management of health and safety risks. Ultimately, it supports the sustainability and growth of businesses while ensuring the well-being of employees and the community.

Implementation Considerations

The successful integration of the graduated risk assessment model hinges on the meticulous development of a tiering system that accurately reflects the diverse realities of businesses across sectors. Such a system is pivotal in recognizing the disparity in resources, operational scale, and hazard exposure inherent to different business categories. The precise delineation of tiers requires a comprehensive analysis encompassing factors such as company size, inherent industry risks, and employee demographics. Upon the establishment of these distinct tiers, criteria specific to each must be articulated, ensuring that the regulatory burden is proportionate to the resources and risk profile of each category. An equitable tiering system ensures that businesses are neither overburdened by unrealistic standards nor under-protected due to inadequate safety measures.

Alongside a structured tiering system, the provision of straightforward and comprehensive self-assessment tools and resources emerges as an essential element in equipping businesses to competently manage their health and safety duties. These tools and resources should be presented in a simplified manner, enabling companies, particularly those with limited resources, to understand and apply health and safety standards without specialized knowledge or external aid. The methodology behind these resources must strike a balance between being detailed enough to be effective and simple enough to engage the user. The end goal is to empower businesses, primarily small to micro-sized, to assume responsibility for their compliance while minimizing the complexities often associated with regulatory frameworks. In response to these educational needs, the production and dissemination of clear guidelines and resource toolkits demand significant attention, aiming to enhance health and safety governance industry-wide.





The consideration of certification and compliance verification stands as a cornerstone of the implementation process. The development of a credible certification system is paramount in allowing businesses to affirm their adherence to health and safety standards without incurring substantial costs. Flexibility in methodologies, such as permitting self-certification or relying on peer reviews facilitated by industry associations, introduces cost efficiency and practicality into the compliance structures. However, the integrity of these methods must be upheld through strict governance to ensure they are as robust and respected as traditional external audits. This innovative approach necessitates the careful orchestration of stakeholder collaboration. Continuous dialogue with business proprietors, industry affiliates, health and safety experts, and the workforce is imperative, serving as a guiding force in shaping a model that is both relevant and practicable. This collaborative ethos extends to the monitoring and enforcement strategies, which must be adaptable to accommodate the variegated capabilities of businesses across the tier spectrum, ensuring that oversight is fair, actionable, and conducive to the overarching aims of workplace safety and sustainability.

Conclusion

Introducing a graduated risk assessment model for health and safety compliance helps level the playing field for small and micro businesses, enabling them to fulfill their obligations without facing prohibitive costs. This approach promises to enhance safety standards, encourage business growth, and foster an environment where compliance is seen as an opportunity for improvement rather than a burden.

Implementing this model requires thoughtful criterion development, effective resource distribution, and a robust certification system. By scaling health & safety laws and processes, we ensure that businesses of all sizes are supported in their efforts to protect their workers and contribute to a thriving, sustainable economy.

