



HAZARDS

Social Outings and Activities in Aged Care

Social Outings and Activities are an important and enjoyable part of life in an aged care facility. While a fulfilling social life might be important to the health and wellbeing of residents, time spent outside the controlled environment of an aged care facility can expose residents to a variety of hazards.

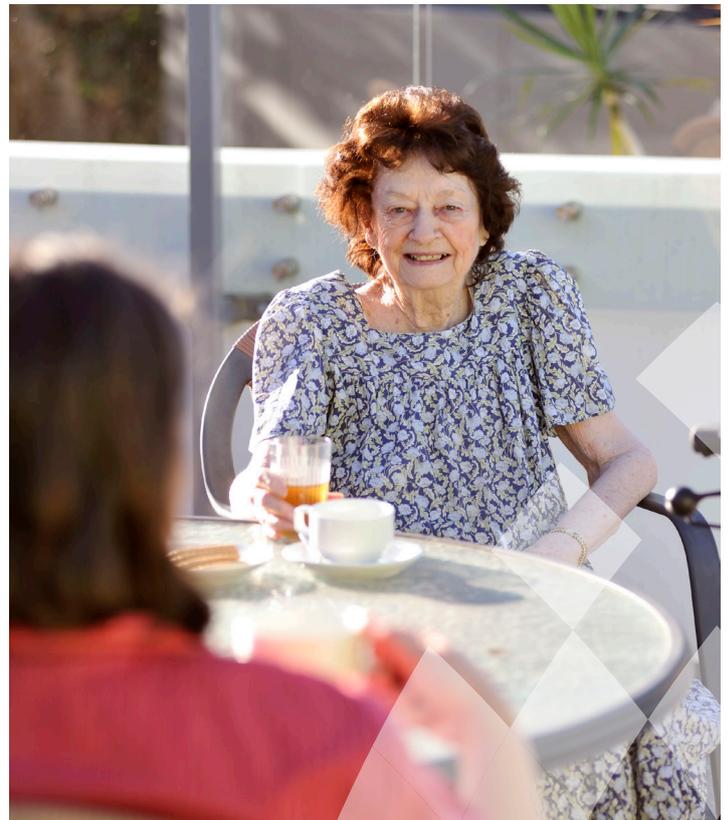
Participating in Social Outings and Activities gives residents and workers some welcome respite and enables residents to engage in different experiences while connecting with their community. But residents' often frail physical and mental state can mean the likelihood of common hazards such as slips and trips or challenging behaviours occurring is increased.

An aged care facility has a duty of care to its residents and this applies even when residents leave the facility for a social outing or activity. A facility must exercise its duty of care even when an external provider or venue operator coordinates an activity or outing, for example a tour of the local library or a theatre performance at the local school. Workers attend these outings and activities too and an aged care facility has an obligation to provide them with a safe place of work whether their day is spent on-site or off-site.

When might this hazard occur?

Residents often have issues with mobility which places them at greater risk of injuries from slip and trip hazards. A trip to the local shopping centre may require residents to travel on escalators, use steep steps or navigate busy thoroughfares where they risk sustaining musculoskeletal injuries, cuts, bruises, fractures and other serious injuries. Careful planning and ensuring worker resident ratios are adequate can help reduce the risk.

Residents and workers regularly travel to social outings by mini bus. The risk of injury or harm can be quite high if those responsible for driving these vehicles are not



adequately trained. A specific license or a heavy vehicle endorsement is generally required, depending on the state or territory; additional training through an external provider may also help reduce the risk of accident or injury.

Workers who attend social outings and activities may be more likely to perform hazardous manual tasks and run the risk of physical injury. If a vehicle is not fitted with an appropriate lift or hoist workers may be required to assist residents manually. This could lead to serious injuries to the back, shoulders, abdomen or ligament and tendon damage. Ensuring all vehicles are fitted with appropriate equipment will help reduce the risk.

What do I need to do?

Under work health and safety legislation, aged care facilities have a duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace. In order to meet these obligations and their duty of care to residents, an aged care facility must have robust policies in place to deal with Social Outings and Activities. Workers must also be provided with adequate information and training as part of their induction and through ongoing training programs. A facility is also obliged to respond to and investigate incidents.

- ◆ Identify the risks associated with Social Outings and Activities in your workplace. Ask yourself these questions:
 - What might happen?
 - When might it happen?
 - Why might it happen?
 - What could cause this to happen? (there may be multiple causes)
 - What has happened in the past?
- ◆ Consider what you are currently doing to manage the risk (also known as controls).
- ◆ Consult with workers, volunteers and Health and Safety Representatives to develop policies and procedures around Social Outings and Activities.
- ◆ Ensure workers understand the role they have to play in reducing the risk.
- ◆ Review resident Behaviour Management Plans before any Social Outing or Activity to determine their individual level of risk, clarify needs and determine if any additional supports necessary.
- ◆ Review the health and behaviour of each resident immediately prior to any Social Outing or Excursion to determine if needs or behaviours have changed.
- ◆ Ensure all incidents are reported and investigated where appropriate.

Practical Help

Safe Work Australia

www.safeworkaustralia.org.au

Your state or territory Workplace Health and Safety Authority.

If you would like further information about Social Outings and Activities in Aged Care please contact the *risksupport* Helpdesk on:

1300 660 827
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