

Mad Hatters

Risk Assessment of Rooms and Activities

Introduction

A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in our work and environment, could cause harm to people. It enables us to weigh up whether we have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. It is an important step in protecting workers and our businesses, as well as complying with the law. Risk assessments help us focus on the risks that really matter in our workplaces: the ones with the potential to cause harm. In many instances, straightforward measures can readily control risks.

The law does not expect us to eliminate all risk, but we are required to protect people as far as is reasonably practicable. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives and affect our businesses if output is lost, machinery is damaged, insurance costs increase and/or we have to go to court.

There is a general legal requirement to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments of all activities undertaken by an organisation. If there are five or more employees and there is a significant risk to the health and safety of those employees, or any others, the risk assessment must be recorded.

Policy - Statement of Intent

The aim of this policy is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of our employees while they are at work, through the risk assessment process, and to comply with all relevant legislation, including:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Employer Responsibilities

To ensure that all activities are undertaken safely in accordance with the risk assessment process and that this policy is clearly understood throughout the Nursery, we will:

- ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out on all risks to the health and safety of our employees which they are exposed to while at work;
- ensure that these risk assessments take into consideration persons not in our employment but who could be affected by risks to their health and safety, arising out of, or in connection with, our undertakings;
- provide such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure all staff undertaking risk assessments understand the process;
- ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the requirements of this policy; and
- review this policy at least annually or more frequently if significant changes occur.

Mad Hatters

Procedure

To fulfil our responsibilities as outlined above, we will:

- provide risk assessors with adequate information, instruction and training to ensure that risk assessments are suitable and sufficient;
- identify all operations and activities undertaken by our employees;
- complete a detailed assessment of each activity or operation;
- review risk assessments on an annual basis and amend as necessary. A review will also take place when significant changes or accidents occur, or, when we have any reason to believe the risk assessment to be invalid.

Procedural Steps

The text in ***bold italics*** is the steps taken directly from the Risk Assessment Policy and the information below should be used as an aide memoire for compliance with the procedure.

Provide risk assessors with sufficient information, instruction and training to ensure that risk assessments are suitable and sufficient.

- You need to ensure that any person required to undertake risk assessments for the organisation has been provided with suitable training in basic risk assessment techniques;
- Training may include the use of external providers.
- It is also beneficial for the risk assessor to have a understanding of the process or task etc to be assessed;
- Training may also include on the job training in the process or activity to be assessed.

Identify all operations and activities undertaken by our employees.

- The policy and procedure are aimed at meeting the general requirements for risk assessment. Where there is topic specific legislation, such as the Manual Handling Operations Regulations and the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations, separate policies and guidance notes are available.
- You need to undertake a systematic and thorough examination of all the activities undertaken by your organisation. Areas to consider include, but are not limited to:
 - work equipment or machinery
 - workplace activities, on and off site
 - building maintenance
 - mobile work
 - transport and other road-related activities.
- Identify each activity on the activities register.

Complete a detailed assessment of each activity or operation.

The following are the specific policy issues to be considered for each of the steps of a detailed risk assessment.

Mad Hatters

Step 1 Identify the hazards

First, you need to work out how people could be harmed. When you work in a place every day it is easy to overlook some hazards, so here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter:

- walk around your workplace and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm;
- ask your employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious to you;
- check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets for chemicals and equipment as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them in their true perspective;
- look back at your accident and ill health records as these often help to identify the less obvious hazards;
- Remember to think about long-term health hazards, for example, high noise levels or exposure to harmful substances, as well as safety hazards.

Step 2 Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed: it will help you to identify the best way of managing the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people, for example, people working in the storeroom or passers-by.

In each case, identify how they might be harmed, that is, what type of injury or ill health might occur: for example, shelf stackers may suffer back injuries from the repeated lifting of boxes.

Some workers have special requirements and may be at particular risk:

- new and young workers
- new or expectant mothers
- people with disabilities.

Extra thought will be needed for some hazards:

- cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance workers etc who may not be in the workplace all the time
- members of the public, if they could be hurt by your activities.

If you share your workplace, you will need to think about how your work affects others present, as well as how their work affects your staff. Talk to them and ask your staff if they can think of anyone you may have missed.

Mad Hatters

Step 3 Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. The law requires you to do everything reasonably practicable to protect people from harm. You can work this out for yourself, but the easiest way is to compare what you are doing with good practice.

First, look at what you're already doing, think about what controls you have in place and how the work is organised. Then, compare this with the good practice and see if there's more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. In asking yourself this, consider:

- can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- if I can't, can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible in the following order:

- try a less risky option, for example, switch to using a less hazardous chemical;
- prevent access to the hazard, for example, by guarding it;
- organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard, for example you could put barriers between pedestrians and traffic;
- issue personal protective equipment (PPE), such as clothing, footwear, goggles etc;
- provide welfare facilities, for example, first aid and washing facilities for the removal of contamination.

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents is a low-cost precaution, considering the risks. Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

Involve staff, so that you can be sure that what you propose to do will work in practice and won't introduce any new hazards.

Step 4 Record your findings and implement them

Putting the results of your risk assessment into practice will make a difference when looking after people and your business.

Writing down the results of your risk assessment, and sharing them with your staff, encourages you to do this. If you have fewer than five employees you do not have to write anything down, though it is useful if you do so that you can review it at a later date if, for example, something changes.

When writing down your results, keep it simple, for example:

- tripping over rubbish - bins provided, staff instructed, weekly housekeeping checks
- fumes from welding - local exhaust ventilation used and regularly checked.

Mad Hatters

It is not expected that a risk assessment will be perfect, but it must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that you have:

- identified all the potential hazards relating to the activity, substance, process or equipment;
- considered who might be involved in the activities, substance use, processes or equipment use and the harm that they might come to;
- introduced control measures to manage all the significant hazards;
- demonstrated that the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low; and
- involved your staff or their representatives in the process.

If you have identified quite a lot of control measures that you could implement, don't try to do everything at once. Make an action plan to deal with the most important things first.

A good plan of action often includes a mixture of different things such as:

- a few temporary improvements that can be done quickly, perhaps as an interim solution, until more reliable controls can be put in place;
- long-term solutions to those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health;
- long-term solutions to those risks with the worst potential consequences;
- arrangements for training employees on the main risks that remain and how they are to be controlled;
- regular checks to make sure that the control measures stay in place; and
- clear responsibilities - who will lead on what action, and by when.

Remember, prioritise and tackle the most important things first. As you complete each action, tick it off your plan.

Step 5 Review your risk assessment and update if necessary

When you are running a business it's all too easy to forget about reviewing your risk assessment until something has gone wrong and it's too late. Why not set a review date for this risk assessment now?

Few situations stay the same. It makes sense, therefore, to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis. Risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually and more often if there have been any changes to the premises, tasks, people, procedures or equipment.

Look at your risk assessment again. Have there been any changes? Are there improvements you still need to make? Have your workers spotted a problem? Have you learned anything from accidents or near misses? Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.

Review risk assessments on an annual basis and amend as necessary. A review will also take place when significant changes or accidents occur, or, when we have any reason to believe the risk assessment to be invalid.

Mad Hatters

Risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually and more often if there have been any changes to the premises, tasks, people, procedures or equipment.

Sources of Further Information

British Safety Council (BSC)

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Institution of Safety and Health (IOSH)

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)