**Risk Assessments**



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# Risk Assessment Introduction

This document gives practical information about undertaking risk assessments in for work on customer’s sites / commercial sites.

## Legal Obligations

Whether you are an Employer or Self-Employed, you have a legal obligation to assess the Risks in your Workplace and arising from your work practices.

Improving Health and Safety need not be costly, but a failure to make simple adjustments to the way you work and/or your Workplace may have very expensive consequences.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, require that Employers, and the Self-Employed, must undertake a suitable and sufficient Risk Assessment.

These regulations also require Employers to take particular account young people and new and expectant mothers.

A Risk Assessment is simply an examination of the work you are undertaking and the environment in which this takes place. It does not have to be over complicated but should be appropriate to the size of your company and the risks involved in the work you undertake and the environment in which this takes place.

The purpose of a Risk Assessment is to identify anything with the potential to cause accidents and ill health to you, your Employees, members of the Public, Customer’s Staff or other contractors onsite.

If this Assessment identifies a significant a Risk to Health and Safety, you as an Employer or Self-Employed person must implement measures to either eliminate or control the Risk to a reasonable level. The law does have an appreciation for the fact that it is not possible to eliminate all Risk, however, it does require all Risks to be controlled.

Only Employers who employ 5 or more employees have a legal duty to record the significant findings of the Assessment. However, it is considered good practice for all Assessments to be recorded irrespective of employee number. It should be noted that when tendering for contracts, some companies might require a written Risk Assessment to demonstrate a commitment to Health and Safety.

The Risk Assessment must be reviewed on a regular basis, as and when there are any changes in the Environment, Personnel, Equipment used etc. Although the Employer/Self-Employed person has the responsibility to ensure that the Risk Assessment is carried out, they must also ensure that whoever undertakes the Risk Assessment is competent to do so. This may be via formal training or simply by virtue of time served in that particular discipline.

## What is Risk Assessment?

A HAZARD is defined as “anything, which has the potential to cause harm”

Examples of typical hazards are as follows:

* Working at height with no edge protection
* Working in the presence of asbestos containing materials
* Working with chemicals.

Once the hazard has been identified it is possible to consider the risk from that hazard.

A RISK is defined as “the likelihood of a particular hazard causing harm”

Examples of typical risks are as follows:

* A person falling from height
* Exposure to asbestos fibres
* A burn caused by a spillage of a chemical on to exposed skin.

In order to differentiate between the severities of the identified risks, it is important to give them a risk rating. Some systems use complicated scoring systems, although this is not necessary and a simple ‘Low, Medium or High’ will usually suffice.

In order to assist you with this, consider the following:

**LOW**

Minor impact/damage quickly repaired

**MEDIUM**

Moderate impact/partial loss of operations

**HIGH**

Disaster/very serious consequences

Risk Assessments do not need to be over complicated; it is essential only to judge whether the hazards are significant and whether or not the precautions in place are satisfactory.

## Conducting Risk Assessments

In most cases, where work is undertaken for a one-off project, the Risk Assessment will need to be site or project specific.

The Assessment therefore needs to take into consideration the specific risks related to the work activities being undertaken in that specific project and the work environment in which it is taking place.

This is particularly relevant for construction work where site conditions will change over time and from job to job. For example, a roofing job on a domestic property may involve some different hazards to one undertaken on a factory unit and even work on two different factory units may present some differing hazards.

These Risk Assessments should last for the length of the project only or until there are significant changes which require it to be revised.

In some cases, and more applicable to nicenstripy, where work is of a general nature (i.e. general garden maintenance on a regular basis), it may be reasonable to have a generic Risk Assessment which is reviewed on an annual basis. However, there should still be provision for adding site specific information should any changes in work environment and therefore hazards present themselves.

In either case, you must identify the significant hazards associated with the work, identify who is at risk, and record in a concise easily understandable manner sufficient control measures.

Below are detailed the ‘5 steps to Risk Assessment’. This is not the only way to do a risk assessment, there are other methods that work well, particularly for more complex risks and circumstances. However, this is the simplest method that works for common workplaces.

## 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:

Contact customer to obtain information about site where work is to take place / Walk around work site and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm.

Ask your employees 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 into their true perspective.

Have a look back at your accident and ill-health records these often help to identify the less obvious hazards.

Remember to think about long-term hazards to health (e.g. high levels of noise 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. There is no need to list everyone by name, but rather identify what groups of people (e.g. ‘employees’ or ‘other contractors’ or ‘passers-by’), might be at risk.

In each case, identify how they might be harmed, i.e. what type of injury or ill health might occur. For example, ‘construction workers may suffer back injury from repeated lifting of building materials’.

It is vital to be aware that some workers may have particular requirements, e.g. new and young workers, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities may be at particular risk.

Further consideration needs to be made for the following groups;

* Visitors, contractors, maintenance workers etc. who may not be in the workplace all
* the time.
* Members of the public, if they could be harmed 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.

## Step 3 Evaluate the Risks and decide on Precautions.

Once the hazards have been identified, appropriate control measures need to be implemented. The law requires you to do everything ‘reasonably practicable’ to protect people from harm.

You need to look at the current work situation to see what you are already doing, consider what controls you have in place and how the work is organised.

Then compare this with best practice to see if there is more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. This will mean that additional control measures are required.

With the existing and additional control measures in place you must then decide if the residual risk high, medium or low.

When looking at the situation you need to keep the following in mind:

* Am I complying with Legislation and Approved Codes of Practice?
* Are all accepted Industry Standards in place?
* Is everything that is reasonably practicable being done to reduce the Risk to the lowest level possible?
* Can the hazard be eliminated altogether?
* If not, how 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 (e.g. switch to using a less Hazardous Chemical);
* Prevent access to the Hazard (e.g. by guarding);
* Organise work to reduce exposure to the Hazard (e.g. put barriers between pedestrians and traffic);
* Issue personal protective equipment (e.g. clothing, footwear, goggles etc.); and
* Provide welfare facilities (e.g. first aid and washing facilities for removal of contamination).

## Step 4 Record your Findings and Implement them

The benefits of Recording the details of your Risks Assessments are far more than simply compliance with the Law and Industry Best Practice. It also proves to staff and potential customers that Health and Safety issues have been considered and relevant action has been taken to eliminate these Risks and subsequently provide a safer working environment.

When recording your results, keep it simple, over complicated Assessments will not be fully appreciated by those who are expected to adhere to them.

All Risk Assessments carried out must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that:

* A proper check was made
* You asked who might be affected;
* You dealt with all the significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved
* The precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is as low as possible;
* You involved your staff or their representatives in the process.
* Make sure that all employees are made aware of the Risk Assessments and their control measures via training and communication. Appropriate supervision may be necessary to ensure that staff are adhering to control measures.

## Step 5 Review your Risk Assessment and Update it if necessary

Your Risk Assessments should be considered a live document and as such be reviewed on a regular basis to determine if the process, personnel or environment has altered since the time of the last assessment.

Consideration must be given to changes in Legislation and Industry Best Practice. You should also consult with employees as they may have identified failings in the current control measures that have not been picked up by the Risk Assessment.

Risk Assessments need to be revised (and a revision date documented) after:

* A change of working practice
* The delivery of new equipment
* Any adverse event, accident, equipment failure etc.

Overview

* Identify hazards
* Identify who might be harmed
* Identify the risks and if existing control measures are adequate
* Identify if further controls are necessary
* Inform, implement and monitor
* Document your findings
* Complete periodic review of assessments.

## Further Guidance

The HSE have a section of their website dedicated to risk management. This includes examples of risk assessments for a number of work activities.

The Risk Management site can be accessed here: http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm

The example Risk Assessments can be found here: http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/index.htm

The following guidance is also available from the HSE: *Five Steps to Risk Assessment (INDG163). Available at:* http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf