



RISK ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

One of the most important activities that we need to carry out in order to improve our workplace health and safety is the assessment of risk. Risk assessments form a part of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

Risk assessment is little more than common sense, written down for all to see and understand.

Risk assessment is about:

- Identifying the hazards
- Assessing the risks
- Taking Suitable Control Action
- Recording, reviewing and using risk assessments

What is a hazard?

A hazard is something that can cause harm. A hazard can be an activity or a method of working. The identification of hazards is the essential first step that must be undertaken before the assessment of workplace risks can be carried out. The identification of hazards is not complex but a systematic and structured approach helps to ensure that significant hazards are not overlooked.

We review current working practices to see what hazards exist on an annual basis. Consideration is given to both normal operation and emergency activities e.g. breakdowns, emergencies, and maintenance work.

Consideration to who and how many people could be affected by workplace hazards.

Direct observation of the workplace helps to highlight other hazards that may not have been already identified. For occasional or irregular activities, maintenance work and similar we may need to seek further information.

Assessing the Risks

The level of Risk is the combination of the likelihood of injury and the nature or severity of the outcome. Risk also reflects the number of people that might be affected. Risk Assessments need to be suitable and sufficient and should focus on the significant risks present in the workplace.

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People at risk: Office staff, visitors, members of the public, delivery drivers.

All of the above may be exposed to workplace hazards. Whilst the exact nature and extent of exposure will vary, all must be considered when carrying out risk assessments.

Implementing the Controls

The sole purpose of carrying out a risk assessment is to reduce risk. However risk assessments are often flawed or ineffective because of the failure to implement any effective control steps or actions. There are usually controls already in place and these should be assessed to decide whether they are effective. If they are adequate then there is no reason to change them and the risk assessment can simply record the existing controls. Otherwise new controls will be needed.

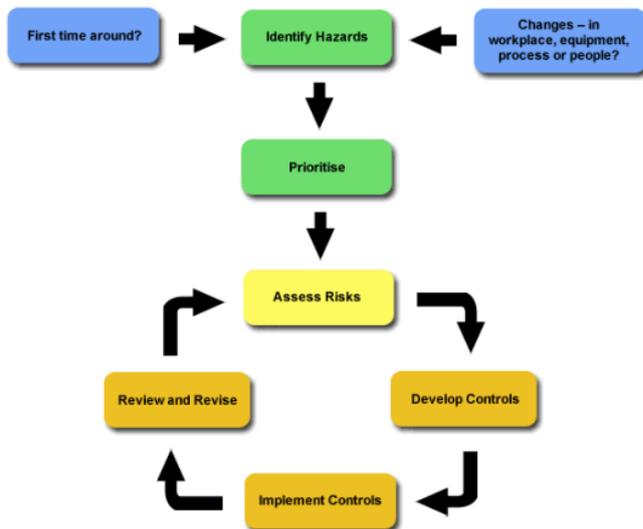
Recording, Reviewing and Using Risk Assessments

Recording: Risk assessments need to be recorded wherever the risks are significant. Recording provides a basis for monitoring health and safety controls and indicates training needs, thus aiding the development of suitable training programmes. Written risk assessments also provide excellent training material for new employees.

Reviewing: Risk assessments should not be regarded as fixed, unchanging documents and should be subject to regular review. If there are no changes or developments in the workplace, no new machinery has been purchased and production processes have remained unchanged then reviews can take place on a routine basis, perhaps every 12-24 months.

Using Risk Assessments: Any change in the workplace, from the introduction of new machinery to changes in work practices should lead to a review of the risk assessment. As new hazards are introduced or existing hazards eliminated; existing controls may not be sufficient or effective.

Finally, whenever an accident occurs the risk assessment should be reviewed as part of the investigation process. It may be that the initial assessment failed to identify a hazard or that the control that had been implemented was not effective at reducing risk or was not being followed or used. A review of a risk assessment following an accident is an essential part of the learning process, leading to continual improvement in health and safety management.



In our office there are very few hazards that can be identified and these have been noted in depth in our Health & Safety Policy, as follows:

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Good housekeeping includes having a place for everything and everything in its place. Neglect in maintaining these practices may lead to accidents, fire and health hazards.

You can contribute to good housekeeping by:

- Keeping passageways clear.

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- Closing desk drawers.
- Storing and stacking materials safely.
- Preventing trip hazards e.g. trailing cables, boxes, papers, handbags etc on floor.
- Disposing of waste in bins provided.
- Adopting a clear desk policy each night.
- Tidying your work area at the end of the day.
- Clearing up spillage's immediately.

Taking pride in your work area.

ELECTRICITY

As always treat electricity with respect. It is a very convenient source of power but can be lethal!

You must not attempt any repair or maintenance work unless you have been trained and authorised to do so.

If you have to open photocopiers or printers, first switch off the power at the socket.

Trailing wires are tripping hazards – report them to the management.

Switch off all electrical equipment (except fax, telephone answering machines etc) when you leave at night.

Look out for

- Damaged insulation cables.
- Broken or discoloured plugs and sockets.
- Loose cable grips on plugs or equipment.

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- Signs of dampness near a power supply.

DO NOT

- Move desks or equipment.
- Leave drinks on any electrical equipment.
- Touch equipment with wet or damp hands.
- Bring personal electrical equipment to work (e.g. radios, kettles).
- Obstruct ventilation grilles in any equipment.
- Overload plug sockets.
- Obstruct the power point (the plug should be easily removable).
- Fit plugs on to equipment (leave it to the experts).

You can contribute to electrical safety by

- Avoiding the use of adapters.
- Never using defective electrical equipment.
- Not interfering with or misusing electrical equipment.
- Checking the condition of the flex and plug.
- Not covering electrical equipment.

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LIFTING

You should not be moving around heavy equipment such as PCs, furniture or heavy boxes. If you do have to lift heavy items like a box of photocopying paper then before you lift, ensure that the area is clean and tidy. Remove any obstacles from the area that may cause a slip, trip or fall, such as trailing wires and cables, loose carpeting or items of office furniture.

Assess the weight to be lifted by carefully pushing the object to be moved. If it moves easily, it should be within your capability to lift. If you find it difficult to move, the load is probably too heavy for you and you should request assistance from a colleague.

Once appropriate checks have been completed, you are ready to lift. The practice of safe lifting and handling is based on the following six basic principles:

- FEET Hip width apart, with one foot forward in the direction of travel

- KNEES Bend to gain lifting power from the leg muscles which are the strongest in the body.

- BACK Keep your back straight to ensure the spine and other back muscles do not take the strain of the lift.

- HANDS Grasp object to be lifted by using the whole of the fingers and the palms of the hands.

- ARMS Keep them as close to the body as possible, with elbows tucked well in.

- HEAD Chin tucked in with load facing in the direction in which you intend to move.

You can contribute to safe lifting by:

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- Thinking before lifting.
- Using mechanical aids, e.g. cart or trolley – push don't pull.
- Obtaining assistance for heavy and awkward objects.
- Wearing sensible footwear.
- Avoid wearing loose clothing.
- Loading at waist height.
- Being able to see over the load.
- There is no weight at which a load becomes safe or unsafe as every individual has their own capabilities. For this reason a member of staff may legitimately refuse to undertake any task they feel puts them at risk of injury.

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STORAGE OF MATERIALS

When storing or filing items in cupboards or filing cabinets, remember to store heavy items close to waist height. Items of equipment should not be stored on top of cupboards above eye level.

Use available storage space to the best advantage, so that you can move about without colliding with sharp corners of desks, cabinets etc.

Be careful with metal furniture, particularly shelves and drawers, which might have sharp edges. These can inflict nasty injuries on the unwary.

Your can contribute to safe storage by:

- Not overloading cupboards or shelving.
- Not opening more than one drawer at a time.
- Not filling drawers so that they cannot open or close properly.
- Not storing items in passageways – especially on escape routes.
- Using storage sensibly.
- Disposing of unwanted filing.
- Filing neatly in drawers and on shelves.

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