

How to carry out a risk assessment

Risk assessments are not difficult, but they do take time. It is sensible, therefore, to spread the load as far as is possible and for people to carry out risk assessments in their own particular area such as premises, maintenance, catering, grounds, manual handling or other specialist areas.



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The risk assessment process should be overseen and co-ordinated by the person who has overall responsibility for health and safety.

Systematically look at each area of the premises and note all the hazards and risks, and any existing safety measures. Note also any person who may be specifically at risk. You must then note any additional safety measures or 'controls' which will reduce those risks as far as possible. As well as the interior of the buildings, you must also look at the yards, car parks and other external areas.

A hazard is something with the potential to cause harm. This can include substances or machines as well as methods of work.

Risk is the likelihood of the harm from a particular hazard being realised and its severity.

In order to help you, the following is a checklist of common hazards that you should look for in each area being assessed. If any of these hazards are present then record them and what you need to do about them. Look for any other hazards that may not be included in the checklist, such as specific activities or pieces of equipment that may cause harm.

In addition to the risks arising from buildings you must also carry out risk assessments for activities away from your premises such as visits, outings and fundraising activities.

Where five or more people are employed there is a legal requirement to record the significant findings of the risk assessment. We would strongly recommend that written risk assessments are produced irrespective of the number of employees.

You can calculate a risk rating in order to prioritise the implementation of the additional safety measures required if you need/want to. Just leave the likelihood, severity and risk rating columns in the general risk assessment form blank and note any existing safety measures and any additional ones which you decide to implement.

However, any risk which could result in a serious injury or a fatality must receive priority attention.

Risk assessment checklist

Accidents and first aid

- Provision of first aid equipment
- Persons with first aid training
- Procedures to deal with accidents
- Transport arrangements to hospital
- Examine existing arrangements and assess what is needed.

Fire safety

- Fire risk assessment in accordance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Combustible materials, flammable liquids and accumulations of waste
- Heaters, smoking and other sources of heat
- Provision of fire exits, escape routes and signage
- Provision of fire detection equipment and fire fighting equipment
- Evacuation plans

Legionella

- An assessment is required to decide on the level of risk posed from exposure to legionella. A detailed risk assessment by a competent water management specialist may be necessary depending upon the complexity of the building in question

Asbestos

- An asbestos survey should be carried out to identify if asbestos is present. If asbestos is found to be present, a full asbestos management plan will be necessary including a risk assessment to evaluate the likelihood of exposure

Electrical safety

- Condition of fixed electrical installation, including switches and sockets
- Condition of portable electrical appliances, including leads and plugs
- Use of unauthorised electrical appliances and temporary wiring
- Mechanical damage to wiring
- Overloading of circuits using multiple adaptors

Gas safety

- Condition and maintenance arrangements for fixed gas boilers and heaters
- Condition and arrangements for use, including storage and changing of cylinders for portable liquid petroleum gas (LPG) heaters

Control of hazardous substances

Internal

- Cleaning materials and detergents
- Paints, solvents, adhesives and other chemicals
- Types, amounts, storage arrangements
- Fumes and dusts
- Provision of personal protective equipment

External

- Pesticides, herbicides, petrol
- Types, amounts, storage arrangements
- Provision of personal protective equipment

Other

- Blood and bodily fluids
- Drugs
- Clinical waste and sharps

Plant and machinery

Internal

- Kitchen equipment
- Laundry equipment
- Lifts, hoists and other lifting equipment
- Ladders and scaffolds including storage and accessibility
- Display screen and computer equipment
- Any other machinery and equipment

External

- Lawnmowers, gangmowers, strimmers, etc.

Other

- Sluices and bedpan washers

Slips, trips and falls

Internal

- Loose carpets, rugs, mats and other floor coverings
- Loose and uneven tiles, stone paving and floorboards
- Trailing leads and other obstructions
- Spillages of water and other liquids
- Worn, steep and uneven steps and stairs
- Inadequate lighting and lack of handrails

External

- Uneven and poorly maintained yards, car parks, paths and steps
- Potholes, tree roots and unprotected drops
- Long grass and undergrowth
- Poor drainage of paths and growth of algae
- Inadequate lighting and lack of handrails

Lighting

Internal

- Adequacy of lighting
- Pay particular attention to stairs, steps, cellars, basements and attics

External

- Paths, steps, drives, car parks, boiler room steps and entrances

Falls from a height

Internal

- Any work requiring a person to be positioned somewhere from where they could fall
- Arrangements for light bulb changing
- Storage at high level
- Use of unsecured ladders
- Unprotected openings and walkways at high level

External

- Clearing of gutters and valleys
- Low parapets and balustrades

Food hygiene

- Extent of food preparation
- Food preparation for people who are at increased vulnerability from infection e.g. elderly, immune-suppressed etc
- Nature of foods to be prepared and stored
- Temperature controls
- Areas used for food preparation
- Facilities for washing and preparation of foodstuffs
- Facilities for storage of foodstuffs
- Experience, training and competence of food handlers

Manual handling

- Moving and lifting of stock, plant and other equipment
- Transfer and handling of people where appropriate
- Numbers required
- Specialist equipment needed

Display screen equipment

- List all computer equipment
- Who uses it and for how long
- Check seating, workstation, screen, software
- Lighting and glare

Hazardous buildings/glazing

- Loose brickwork, stonework, falling masonry, slates, tiles, gutters, flagpoles
- Detail any glass in windows below waist height and in doors or beside doors below shoulder height that is not of safety material or protected against breakage
- Narrow panes up to 250mm need not be included
- Check if any asbestos present

Personal safety

- Threat of violence
- Lone working
- Handling of cash
- Means of raising an alarm, summoning assistance
- Travelling and working unusual hours

Other activities and hazards

- Events, exhibitions, work away, etc.
- Age-related hazards (children/elderly)
- Disability access/provision
- Fêtes, sponsored walks, fundraising activities
- Look for and note any other hazards which could cause someone harm, that are not included in the above checklist

Risk assessment calculator

You need to grade both the likelihood and severity from 1 to 3. The grades are then multiplied together to give a risk rating.

Likelihood

The likelihood of something happening can be graded as:

1 = Low (seldom)

2 = Medium (frequently)

3 = High (certain or near certain).

Severity

The severity of injury if something does happen can be graded as:

1 = Low (minor cuts and bruises)

2 = Medium (serious injury or incapacitated for 3 days or more)

3 = High (fatality or a number of persons seriously injured).

Having assessed both likelihood and severity, a risk rating can be calculated by multiplying the likelihood by the severity.

This will give a rating from 1 to 9.

Risk rating matrix

	3	3	6	9
Likelihood	2	2	4	6
	1	1	2	3
		1	2	3
			Severity	

The implementation of additional controls can then be prioritised as follows:

Risk rating:

1 – 2 = low priority

3 – 4 = medium priority

6 – 9 = high priority

- With low priority, no action at all may be required
- With medium priority, additional control measures may be required or a different method of working adopted
- With high priority, it may be necessary to stop the particular activity, or restrict access to the area until action has been taken

A General risk assessment pro-forma is enclosed



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