



Conduct an assessment of risks in the workplace

Fundamental to running a business is an understanding of the process involved in carrying out a risk assessment according to regulatory requirements.

This involves:

1. identifying hazards in the workplace
2. assessing the level of risk and recommending action
3. reviewing your workplace assessment of risks

What you need to do

- define, clearly why and where the risk assessment will be carried out
- confirm that all the information available to you on statutory health and safety regulations is up-to-date and from recognised and reliable information sources
- recognise your own limitations and seek expert advice and guidance on risk assessment when appropriate
- select a method of identifying hazards appropriate to the workplace being assessed
- make sure your investigation fully identifies those areas in the workplace where hazards with a potential for serious harm to health and safety are most likely to occur
- identify hazards which could result in serious harm to people at work or other persons
- record those hazards in a way which meets legal, good practice and workplace requirements
- research different suppliers of equipment, tools and materials
- report the results of the process to the responsible person in an agreed format and timescale
- review all legal requirements that are appropriate to your workplace and working practices to ensure effective control measures are in place
- confirm that industry standards and all other reasonable precautions are in place
- identify hazards that could be eliminated
- for hazards that cannot be eliminated, you start your risk assessment with those hazards that are most likely to cause serious harm to people at work or other people
- assess the level of risk and consider how the risks can be controlled to minimise harm
- list unacceptable risks in priority order including all breaches of relevant health and safety legislation and workplace procedures



- prepare a risk assessment report containing recommendations for minimising risks
- present the results of the risk assessment to responsible persons in the agreed format and timescale
- compare the latest risk assessment to current workplace and working practices
- identify, accurately, any significant differences between previous and new working practices
- investigate the action taken as a result of your recommendations specified in the latest risk assessment
- identify, accurately, new hazards arising from changes in the workplace or working practices
- make changes to your risk assessment in line with the review
- inform, promptly, everyone affected by the changes

What you need to know and understand

Methods of identifying hazards

- methods of identifying hazards including direct observation, examining records, or interviews, the work areas and people for whom you are carrying out the assessment
- the work areas and people for whom you are carrying out the assessment
- work activities of the people in the workplace where you are carrying out the risk assessment
- resources required for a risk assessment to take place
- information sources for risk assessments (e.g. HSE publications)
- where to find expert advice and guidance

Your remit and responsibilities

- your own limitations, job responsibilities and capabilities
- the work areas and people for whom you are carrying out the assessment
- work activities of the people in the workplace where you are carrying out the risk assessment
- resources required for a risk assessment to take place
- effective communication methods



Health and safety legislation

- the responsibilities for risk assessments as required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 and other related regulations
- your legal duties for health and safety in the workplace as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- your duties for health and safety as defined by any specific legislation covering your job role

Risk assessment

- effective procedures for carrying out a risk assessment
- the purpose, legal implications and importance of carrying out risk assessments
- what to do with the results of the risk assessment
- hazards that are most likely to cause harm to health and safety
- the particular health and safety risks which may be present in your own job role and the precautions to be taken
- the importance of remaining alert to the presence of hazards in the whole work place
- the importance of dealing with or promptly reporting risks

Key words and phrases which you might see used frequently within health and safety

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the body appointed to support and enforce health and safety law. They have defined two important concepts as follows:

- Hazard

“a hazard is something with potential to cause harm”

- Risk

“a risk is the likelihood of the hazard’s potential being realised”



- Almost anything may be a hazard, but may or may not become a risk, for example:

A trailing electric cable from a piece of equipment is a hazard. If it is trailing across a passageway there is a high risk of someone tripping over it, but if it lies along a wall out of the way, the risk is much less.

Toxic or flammable chemicals stored in a building are a hazard, and by their nature may present a high risk. However, if they are kept in a properly designed secure store, and handled by properly trained and equipped people, the risk is much less than if they are left about in a busy workshop for anyone to use – or misuse.

A failed light bulb is a hazard. If it is just one bulb out of many in a room it presents very little risk, but if it is the only light on a stairwell, it is a very high risk. Changing the bulb may be a high risk, if it high up, or if the power has been left on, or low risk if it is in a table lamp which has been unplugged

A box of heavy material is a hazard. It presents a higher risk to someone who lifts it manually than if a mechanical handling device is properly used.

- Workplace:

this word is used to describe the single or multiple areas in which you carry out your work.

- Working practices:

Any activities, procedures, use of materials or equipment and working techniques used in carrying out your job. In this unit it also covers any omissions in good working practices which may pose a threat to health and safety.

- Workplace policies:

This covers the documentation prepared by the employer on the procedures to be followed regarding health and safety matters. It could be the employer's safety policy statement, or general health and safety statements and written safety procedures covering aspects of the workplace that should be drawn to the employees' (and "other person") attention.

- Other persons:

This phrase refers to everyone covered by the Health and Safety at Work Act including: visitors, members of the public, colleagues, contractors, clients, customers, patients, students, pupils.



- Personal Presentation:

This includes, personal hygiene; use of personal protection equipment; clothing and accessories suitable to the particular workplace.

- Responsible persons:

The person or persons at work to whom you should report any health and safety issues or hazards. This could be a supervisor, line manager or your employer.

Key points regarding health and safety legislation and regulations

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 is the main piece of legislation under which nearly all the other regulations are made. It is for this reason that only this piece of legislation is specifically referred to in this Unit.

Employers have a legal duty under this Act to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of the people for whom they are responsible and the people who may be affected by the work they do.

Under this Act it is also important to be aware that all people at work, not just employers, have a duty to take reasonable care to avoid harming themselves or others through the work they do.

Risks should be reduced “so far as is reasonably practicable”. This term means the duty-holder (in most instances the employer) can balance the cost against the degree of risk although obviously any Health and Safety Inspectors would expect that relevant good practice is followed.

According to the Act:

Employers must safeguard so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all the people who work for them and “other persons”. This applies in particular to the provision and maintenance of safe plant and systems of work, and covers all machinery, equipment and substances used.

People at work also have a duty under the Act to take reasonable care to avoid harm to themselves or to others by their working practices, and to co-operate with employers and others in meeting statutory requirements. The Act also requires employees not to interfere with or misuse anything provided to protect their health, safety or welfare in compliance with the Act.



Other legislation

There is an array of health and safety regulations and codes of practice which affect people at work. There are regulations for those who, for example, work with electricity, or work on construction projects, as well as regulations covering noise at work, manual handling, working with VDUs, or dealing with substances hazardous to health, etc. The specific requirements for all or any of these can be obtained from HSE local offices.

As many of the regulations are only relevant to certain workplaces or working practices no specific reference has been made in the knowledge requirements (i.e. What you need to know) to any of these regulations. The phrase “your responsibilities for health and safety as required by any specific

legislation covering your job role” is intended to relate to those specific pieces of legislation important to your workplace and/or working practices which you should be able to find out about.

