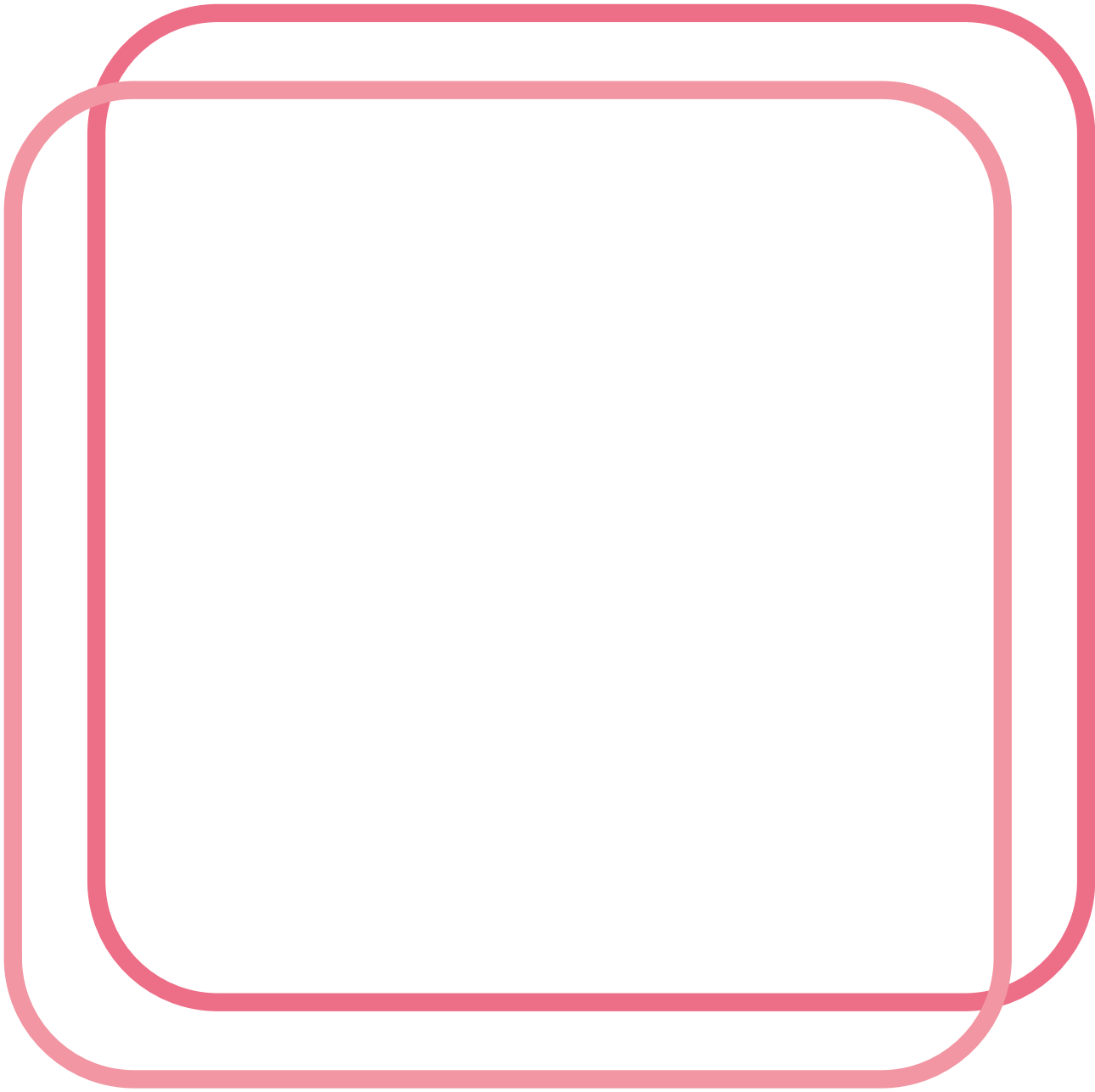


Risk Assessment



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Safer Business - Better Health

Issue date - December 2007

Introduction

What is risk assessment?	<p>A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. The aim is to make sure that no one gets hurt or becomes ill. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives, and affect your business too if output is lost, machinery is damaged, insurance costs increase, or you have to go to court. You are legally required to assess the risks in your workplace.</p>	<p>The important things you need to decide are whether a hazard is significant, and whether you have it covered by satisfactory precautions so that the risk is small. For instance, electricity can kill but the risk of it doing so in an office environment where it is used properly is remote, provided that 'live' components are insulated and metal casings properly earthed.</p>
Why do I have to do risk assessment?	<p>Under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations - every employer has to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which</p>	<p>they are exposed whilst they are at work and the risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment where they will be affected by work activity.</p>
How do I assess the risks at my workplace?	<p>Follow the five steps listed in this section.</p> <p>Don't be overcomplicated. In most firms in the commercial, service and light industrial sectors, the hazards are few and simple. Checking them is common sense, but necessary. You probably already know whether, for example you have machinery that could cause harm, or if there is an awkward entrance or stair where someone could be hurt. If so, check that you have taken what reasonable precautions you can to avoid injury.</p>	<p>If you are a small firm and you are confident you understand what's involved, you can do the assessment yourself (you don't have to be a health and safety expert!).</p> <p>If you are a larger firm, you could ask a responsible employee, safety representative or safety officer to help you.</p> <p>If you are not confident, get help from a competent source. But remember - you are responsible for seeing it is properly done.</p>

How to Risk Assess

Step One Look for the hazards

Definition of hazard

Anything that can cause harm e.g. chemicals, electricity, working from ladders etc.

If you are doing the assessment yourself, walk around your workplace and look afresh at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Ignore the trivial and concentrate on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people.

Ask your employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things which are not immediately obvious. Manufacturers' instructions or data sheets can also help you spot hazards and put risks in their true perspective, as can accident and ill-health records.

Step Two Decide who might be harmed and how

Don't forget:

- Young Workers
Trainees
- New & Expectant
Mothers
- Anyone who may be
at particular risk
- Cleaners
- Visitors
- Contractors
- Maintenance
Workers
- People who may not
be in the workplace
all the time
- Members of the
public
- People who you
share your
workplace with
- Anyone who could
be hurt by your
activities

Step Three

Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done

Definition of risk

The chance high or low, that somebody will be harmed by the hazard

Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm. This will determine whether or not you need to do more to reduce the risk. Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains. What you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low.

First, ask yourself whether you have done all the things that the law says you have got to do. For example, there are legal requirements to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery. Then ask yourself whether generally accepted industry standards are in place. But don't stop there - think for yourself, because the law also says that you must do what is reasonably practicable to keep your workplace safe. Your real aim is make all risks small by adding to your precautions as necessary.

If you find that something needs to be done, draw up an 'action list' and give priority to any remaining risks which are high and/or those which could affect most people.

In taking action ask yourself:

- 1 can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- 2 if not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

In controlling risks apply the principles below, in the following order:

- try a less risky option
- prevent access to the hazard (e.g. by guarding)
- organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard
- issue personal protective equipment
- provide welfare facilities (e.g. washing facilities for removal of contamination and first aid)

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents, or putting some non-slip material on slippery steps, are inexpensive precautions considering the risks. Remember that failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

Any questions so far ?

But what if the work you do tends to vary a lot, or you or your employees move from one site to another?

Identify the hazards you can reasonably expect and assess the risks from them. After that, if you spot any additional hazards when you get to a site, get information from others on site, and take the action necessary to make the work safe.

But what if you share a work-place?

Tell the other employers and self-employed people there about any risks your work could cause them, and what precautions you are taking. Also, think about the risks to your own work-force from those who share your workplace.

But what if you have already assessed some of the risks?

If, for example, you use hazardous chemicals and you have already assessed the risks to health and the precautions you need to take under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH), you can consider them 'checked' and move on, but remember you will need to add these completed assessments to the list for review in the future.

Step Four Record your findings

If you have fewer than five employees you do not need to write anything down, though it is useful to keep a written record of what you have done.

But if you employ five or more people you must record the significant findings of your assessment.

This means writing down the significant hazards and conclusions. Examples might be 'Electrical installations: insulation and earthing checked and found sound' or 'Fume from welding: local exhaust ventilation provided and regularly checked'.

You must tell your employees about your findings.

Risk assessments 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 obvious 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.

Keep the written record for future reference or use; it can help you if an inspector asks what precautions you have taken, or if you become involved in any action for civil liability. It can also remind you to keep an eye on particular hazards and precautions. It also helps to show that you have done what the law requires. There is an example at the end of this guide which you may find helpful to refer to, but you can make up your own form if you prefer.

To make things simpler, you can refer to other documents such as manuals, the arrangements in your health and safety policy statement, company rules, manufacturers' instructions, your health and safety procedures and your arrangements for general fire safety. These may already list hazards and precautions. You don't need to repeat this information, and it is up to you whether you combine all the documents, or keep them separately.

Step Five

Review your assessment and revise it if necessary

Sooner or later you will bring in new equipment, substances and procedures which could lead to new hazards. If there is any significant change, add to the assessment to take account of the new hazard. Don't amend your assessment for every trivial change, or for each new job, but if a new job introduces significant new hazards of its own, you will want to consider them in their own right and do whatever you need to keep the risks down. In any case, it is good practice to review your assessment from time to time to make sure that the precautions are still working effectively. For most businesses an annual review will be required.

The following page has an example of what a risk assessment form could look like, there are also blank copies for you to fill in.

Risk Assessment No.

Company Name:

Date of Risk Assessment:

Step 1 What are the hazards?	Step 2 Who Might be harmed and how	Step 3 What are you already doing	What further action is necessary?	Step 4 How will you put the assessment into action
<p>Spot hazards by: walking around your workplace asking your employees what they think visiting the Your industry areas of the HSE website calling the HSE Infoline calling Workplace Connect checking manufacturer's instructions contacting your trade association Don't forget any long-term health hazards</p>	<p>Identify groups of people, remember: some workers have certain needs people who may not be in your workplace all the time members of the public if you share your workplace with other businesses</p>	<p>List what is already in place to reduce the likelihood of harm or make any harm less serious</p>	<p>You need to make sure that you have reduced risks 'so far as is reasonably practicable'. An easy way of doing this is to compare what you are already doing with good practice. If there is a difference, list what needs to be done</p>	<p>Remember to prioritise. Deal with those hazards that are high-risk and have serious consequences first</p> <p>Action by Action by When When Done Done Whom Whom</p>

Step 5
Review Date & Manager Sign Off

* Review your assessment to make sure you are still improving, or at least not sliding back
 * If there is a significant change in your workplace, remember to check your risk assessment and where necessary, amend it.

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