

HOW TO WRITE A RISK ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of hazards associated with work activities in the workplace, which have the potential to cause harm. This enables an employer to evaluate if there are suitable and sufficient controls in place to reduce the level of risk to the lowest possible level.

Employers are faced with moral, legal, and economic considerations in all aspects of running a business including health and safety.

Accidents and ill health can:

- Ruin the lives of the individuals or groups directly affected by the incident as well as the lives of their immediate families.
- Lead to legal repercussions such as prosecutions, fines and custodial sentences.
- Affect business output if working time is lost or equipment is damaged, it can also result in increased insurance.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Regulation 3, places a legal duty on employers to assess the significant risks in a workplace, it also states that risk assessments should be suitable and sufficient, taking account of the activities undertaken and the environment in which the activities are conducted.

The assessment should identify the hazards associated with the activity and establish control measures to minimise the risk. This in turn will, based upon the risk levels, allow the employer to prioritise their actions

There is also a duty to monitor and review these assessments to ensure they remain effective, suitable and sufficient.

What needs to be considered?

The important thing you need to consider is, **does the hazard pose a significant risk?** If so have you implemented control measures to reduce the risk to an acceptable level?

TYPES OF RISK ASSESSMENT:

Generic: An assessment of the risks common to the activity that have standard control measures established to minimise the risks associated with the hazard. These may also be referred to as an overarching assessment or Tier 1.

Specific: When a generic risk assessment is not suitable or sufficient due to other factors affecting the activity, a specific risk assessment (formally known as a Tier 2) must be completed. This will most likely be the case for risks generated by hazards specific to the activity for example an event or exhibition where new hazards are being introduced into the work area, the area or environment in which the activity is undertaken has changed or when a unique one off occurrence happening on site presents a transient hazard.

Other factors where a specific assessment will be required include: where a particular department has a process, material, environmental factor, piece of

equipment or activity that has not been adequately identified or addressed in the generic assessment.

Dynamic: Whilst every attempt should be made to ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments covering all foreseeable risks are prepared in advance of any work activity, task or process commencing, sometimes situations/circumstances change requiring an immediate response that does not allow time for a documented review of the existing risk assessment.

In such cases a responsible person may carry out a dynamic risk assessment. A responsible person being someone who is in some way accountable for that which is being assessed, this is most likely to be an Event Manager, Event Co-ordinator, Health and Safety or Fire Safety Advisor or Event Safety Representative or where possible more than one of the aforementioned parties.

The responsible person[s] may only countermand precautions laid out in the risk assessment if:

- They are competent in the matters to which the assessment relates
- The measures in the risk assessment are such that not amending or countermanding them would present a significant risk to those undertaking and/or affected by the activity.

At the first opportunity following the dynamic risk assessment, a written record must be made and a revised risk assessment documented and held on record.

DEFINITIONS

Hazard: Anything that has the potential to cause harm

Likelihood: The chance of harm occurring as a result of exposure to a hazard.

Severity: The level of harm that may occur as a result of exposure to or contact with a hazard. This may sometimes be referred to as the 'Reasonably Foreseeable Worst Case Injury' (RFWCI).

Risk: The likelihood of harm occurring combined with the potential severity to produce a level of risk or risk rating.

HOW TO ASSESS THE RISKS IN YOUR WORKPLACE

By following the steps outlined below you should be able to complete your risk assessment:

- **Step 1:** Identify the hazards – Look at and provide a description of the hazards associated with a task/work activity, include any hazards associated with any equipment, substances or processes used in the task/activity.
- **Step 2:** Persons at Risk – Identify those persons or groups of people who may be at risk if exposed to the hazard.
- **Step 3:** Detail the existing control measures already in place to prevent harm occurring. Once you have this information you can make an informed decision which will allow you to move to step 4.

- **Step 4:** Quantify the level of severity (The reasonably foreseeable worst case injury), the likelihood (the probability/chance of an incident occurring) and the population rating (the number of persons likely to be affected) Using the NEC Group risk assessment, once this information is entered it will automatically generate a risk rating.
- **Step 5:** Once a risk rating has been generated, you will be able to identify and prioritise which tasks/activities require further control measure to bring the risk down to as low as is reasonably practicable
- **Step 6:** Enter any additional control measures required and based upon this new information re-assess the severity, likelihood and population figures to generate a residual risk rating. (Remember that until these additional controls have been implemented the level of risk will remain as per your first risk rating)
- **Step 7:** Record your findings and complete an Action Plan detailing what needs to be done, by whom and when by. Make sure you review the action plan to ensure that the actions have been implemented within the allotted timescale.
- **Step 8:** Monitor and Review your assessment to ensure it remains suitable and sufficient. A formal review should be carried out within an appropriate timeframe (usually on an annual basis).

Risk assessment doesn't need to be overcomplicated and identifying hazards is common sense, however risk assessments should only be carried out by a competent person, that is someone who is familiar with the activity, the environment in which the activity takes place and who has sufficient knowledge and understanding that they can identify those hazards present. Additionally the competent person should recognise their limitations and be prepared to seek advice as necessary.

Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing control measures are adequate or if more should be done.

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 is, whether the remaining level of risk is acceptable, if not then further action is required.

The goal is to reduce the level of risk to 'as low as is reasonably practicable'

RISK RATING TOOL

The NEC Group risk assessment uses a matrix to calculate the level of risk. This is achieved by selecting to appropriate figure from the chart below and multiplying the Severity x Likelihood x Population to give you a risk rating.

The **severity** is the reasonable foreseeable worst-case injury likely to be inured by a person who comes into contact with the hazard.

The **likelihood** is the chance that such an injury may occur.

The **population** is the number of persons likely to be affected by the hazard

	SEVERITY		LIKELIHOOD		POPULATION	
1	First aid at scene	X	1 Unlikely	X		
2	Referred to/transferred to hospital or absence from work		5 Possible		1	Single Individual
5	Major injury as defined under RIDDOR		10 Likely		2	2 – 10 Persons
10	Permanent disability or fatality		20 Certain		3	Greater than 10 persons

Once you have inputted the data, the formula will generate a risk rating as can be seen in the diagram below. This risk rating will then direct you towards an action, for example if the rating was low; this signifies that some additional controls may be necessary. If this were the case then it would be reasonable to allocate a timescale of three months for the implementation of the additional controls.



RISK RATING MATRIX

		RISK RATING	ACTION
=	<10	ACCEPTABLE	Monitor and Review
	<19	LOW	Within 3 months
	<49	MEDIUM	Within 1 month
	<99	HIGH	Within 1 week
	100+	UNACCEPTABLE	Immediately

Additional Controls required to reduce risk to as low as is reasonably practicable

Once a risk rating has been populated and where this indicates that further actions and controls are necessary to ensure that the risk has been reduced to as low as is reasonably practicable then consider the following:

- a) Can the hazard be removed altogether?
- b) If not, how can I control the risks?

When controlling risks, try applying the principles below:

Use ERIC PD

ELIMINATE - get rid of the hazard; replace it with something less hazardous.

REDUCE the level of risk by reducing the nature of the hazard, e.g. use small quantities, lower voltage,

ISOLATE the hazard from people, for example by guarding

CONTROL exposure to the hazard by controlling who has access or limiting exposure time

PPE issue personnel protective equipment

Discipline and Culture

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot however failure to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments and not controlling significant risk in the workplace can cost a business in more ways than one.

If a task or activity remains the same, then a generic risk assessment can be produced for the task, however the assessment must be reviewed when the environment changes affecting the activity and/or the process changes. For example: a generic assessment can be produced for crossing the road but if road works were introduced then a specific assessment for that crossing point would be required. Additionally whilst crossing the road the individual would carry out a dynamic assessment, checking for developing hazards that would change the risk level, such as a speeding vehicle.

Remember also that situations and circumstances are ever changing so there are times when we need to carry out a dynamic risk assessment, an on the spot assessment, for example when you cross a road, the situation is ever changing so you need to be constantly monitoring the risks and adapting the control measures.

The priority rating will again automatically populate from the risk assessment template. (see below)

Priority Rating - Key
Unacceptable - Immediate action required
High - Actions to minimise risks within 1 week
Medium - Actions to minimise risks within 1 month
Low - Actions to minimise risks within 3 months
Acceptable - Monitor and Review

Monitor and Review the assessment and revise as necessary

All assessments must be reviewed not less than annually and/or if:

- There is a **S**ignificant change in equipment or process
- There is a change to the **T**ask, activity process or environment
- **A**fter an incident or accident
- There is a change to the **P**eople are affected by the activity
- There is a change in **L**egislation
- There is a change to or introduction of new **E**quipment
- The **R**outine, process, system or procedure is no longer valid

Use the acronym **STAPLER** to help you remember

If you have any queries regarding the completion of a risk assessment please contact the Safety Team.