

HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION SHEET 6

Risk Assessments

Every employer, and self employed person, is under a legal duty to assess the risks to their employees and other people who may be affected by the undertaking (The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999). Employers with more than 4 employees must also record the significant findings of that assessment. If you employ 4 or less employees you do not need to write anything down.

If you already carried out a risk assessment required by other legislation e.g. COSHH or manual handling, then you will have satisfied in part the need for assessment.

However you must still assess areas of your business.

Why Carry Out An Assessment?

- So that you can identify what measures you need to take in order to satisfactorily control the risks in your workplace.
- It will enable you to target your resources on the most important risks.
- It will help you to comply with the law.

What You Must Do

1. Identify The Hazards Present

- Empower your workforce. Encourage your employees to help with identification.
- Be systematic in looking at hazards e.g. look at them in groups such as machinery, or transport.
- Ensure all aspects of your work are covered including non-routine operations and interruptions to work activity. Think about people who may not be in the workforce at the time, i.e. visitors, contractors or members of the public.
- Specific Acts or Regulations may help to identify hazards e.g. lifts and pressure vessels.
- If there are no hazards then there are no risks.

2. Evaluate The Risks

- Risk is the likelihood that the harm will occur. The extent of the risk relates to the number of people who might be exposed and the consequences for them.

- Identify the significant risks i.e. ignore trivial and everyday life risks, and focus on those arising from your work activity.
- It may be necessary to obtain specialist advice for unfamiliar risks e.g. complex processes or ergonomic design (this means designing the work to fit the person).
- Look at what actually happens in the workplace.
- Remember to take account of existing control measures.
- Avoid generic assessments.

3. Identify Preventative And Precautionary Measures

- Use your assessment to decide how to control the risk e.g. avoid a risk by not using a dangerous article if it is not essential; tackle root causes of risks rather than treating the symptoms; examine the ergonomics of a work activity; use the latest technical advances to improve work processes.
- Ensure you comply with any relevant legal requirements.
- Give priority to measures which protect the whole workplace.
- Ensure that all workers understand what they need to do i.e. give instruction and training in precautions, control measures, etc.

4. Record The Significant Findings

These should include:

- Significant hazards identified.
- The existing control measures and the extent of control.
- The people who may be affected by these risks.
- Assessments need to be suitable and sufficient, not perfect.

5. Review And Revise

- When the nature of the work changes.
- When your experience suggests that the assessment is insufficient or no longer valid.
- On a regular basis depending on the nature of the risks and the degree of change.

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