

Health & Safety Risk Assessments

Overview

If you are an employer or are self-employed then you have a legal requirement to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of any health and safety risks which may arise during the course of carrying out your company's work. This assessment only needs to be recorded if you have five or more employees.

In addition to being a legal requirement of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the risk assessment also forms a fundamental step in the successful management of your health and safety. It helps to identify hazards and highlight the actions required to reduce and eliminate potential sources of harm in your workplace. It helps to protect employees and any other people who could be affected by your work activities such as visitors to the premises or members of the public.

The law does not expect you to eliminate all risk, but you are required to protect people as far as is 'reasonably practicable'.

You can either undertake the risk assessment yourself or bring in a health and safety advisor to help you. Ultimately the responsibility for making sure the risk assessment is carried out correctly lies with the 'responsible person' so you will need to make sure that the person undertaking the risk assessment is competent.

If you have decided that you require advice to manage your health and safety you might find it useful to use the OSHCR to find a consultant. The Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register provides you with details of consultants who have had their qualifications and experience assessed and meet the standards set by their professional body. All consultants who join the register are bound by their professional body's code of conduct and are committed to providing sensible and proportionate advice.

What is involved in carrying out a risk assessment?

The HSE current best practice guidelines recommend adopting a five step process to risk assessment:

1. Identify the hazards within your premises

The first step involves identifying any hazards which could cause potential harm within the workplace. This includes long term hazards to health, such as exposure to harmful substances or high levels of noise, as well as safety hazards.

2. Decide who might be harmed and how – including those especially at risk

You need to decide which groups of people might potentially be harmed and how, by each of the hazards identified. This will make it easier to manage any risks presented more effectively.

Particular attention needs to be given to the requirements of those who may be especially at risk. For example people with disabilities, new or expectant mothers and new or inexperienced workers may require special consideration.

3. Evaluate and categorise the risks and recommend a series of actions to eliminate or reduce as far as possible any identified hazards

Following the risk assessment you may find that there are a number of issues requiring attention. These will need to be prioritised in terms of the level of risk they represent so you can decide which issues you need to tackle first.

Control measures and mechanisms will need to be introduced to eliminate or reduce the risk involved. You are not required to eliminate all identified risks but you do need to protect people as far as is reasonably practicable against the risks involved. You will need to decide which risks can be eliminated completely and which need to be controlled so that the likelihood of harm is diminished.

In terms of risk control the HSE suggest applying the following principles in the priority order shown below:

1. Try a less risky option
2. Prevent access to the hazard
3. Organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard
4. Issue personal protective equipment
5. Provide welfare facilities

Some circumstances may require improvements to be implemented quickly even if this is only as a temporary solution until more reliable control measures are in place.

4. Record your findings and implement them

Documenting the findings of your risk assessment, mandatory for employers with five or more employees, allows you to prove that you have taken the necessary steps to identify risk and makes it easier to develop and manage an action plan to eliminate and control those risks. Either a paper or electronic management system may be used for this purpose.

It is important not to try and implement all the necessary actions at once. You will need to prioritise the actions so that the most important actions are dealt with first. Your action plan should detail time frames and identify clear roles and responsibilities for the implementation of these actions.

The action plan will probably contain a mix of:

- Quick win actions, some of these may be a temporary fix until a more permanent solution can be implemented
- Long term solutions to the risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health
- Long term solutions to the risks with potentially the most severe consequences
- Employee training arrangements
- Details of regular checks to make sure the control measures implemented remain in place

If you are responsible for a portfolio of properties you might find it easier and less time consuming to use a web based risk management system such as Metro SRM's, SRManager.

SRManager can detail all your risk actions either by property or portfolio, prioritise them in terms of level of risk and set time frames for their completion. The system also automatically updates every time you complete or add a risk action so you always have an up to date status report and documented audit trail of all activities. It also makes it much easier to compile management reports.

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For more details of please visit SRManager on our website.

5. Review your assessment and update if necessary

There is no set frequency for updating risk assessments but annual reviews are recommended or more frequently if there have been any significant changes to work processes, equipment or staff which may result in new or increased hazards or risks.

How Metro SRM can help

MetroSRM are able to provide a complete Health and Safety Risk Assessment service nationally.

All our risk assessments are conducted by professionally qualified consultants in accordance with best practice guidelines recommended by the HSE. Our consultants' breadth of experience and knowledge means we are able to offer you the site specific advice required to meet the demands of your individual properties.

We understand the need for workable, practical solutions that are cost-effective whilst still meeting legislative requirements and make sure the remedial actions we propose are always proportionate to the risk identified.

To ensure your risk assessment is up-to-date, we can conduct regular reviews and report on any actions required. Your own day-to-day management of recommended risk actions can be made simpler using our SRManager web-based risk management system.

Please contact us on 020 7960 3939 for further details or advice.

For more information please contact us on **020 7960 3939** or visit our website: www.metro-safety.co.uk

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