

### Risk assessment guide

Definition: a systematic process of evaluating the potential risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.

A risk assessment should include consideration of what in your department might cause harm and how and, the people who might be affected. It should take into account any controls which are already in place and identify what, if any, further controls are required.

A risk assessment should show that:

- a proper check was made
- all people who might be affected were considered
- all significant risks have been assessed
- the precautions are reasonable
- the remaining risk is low

You do not need to include insignificant risks. You do not need to include risks from everyday life unless your work activities increase the risk.

Any paperwork that is produced should help with communicating and managing the risks in your business.

### Five steps to a risk assessment

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advises the following these five steps when carrying out a workplace risk assessment.

1. Identify the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide upon the precautions
4. Record your significant findings
5. Review your risk assessment and update if necessary

### Definitions

**Hazard:** Anything that can cause harm.

**Risk:** The likelihood, high, medium or low, that somebody or something will be injured or damaged should that hazard be realised.

#### 1. Identify the hazards

Observe all manual handling activities in your workplace and the frequency with which they are undertaken. Concentrate on the significant hazards, which could result in serious harm. Ask your colleagues what they think, consider accident and/or incident documentation to target specific risk areas. The factors to consider are:

- Environment
- Load
- Individual capacity
- Task
- Equipment/ other

## 2. Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed; it will help you identify the best way of managing the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people (e.g. patients, staff, visitors, agency staff, contractors and members of the public).

Some workers have particular requirements, for example new and young workers, migrant workers, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities may be at particular risk. Extra thought will be needed for some hazards.

In each case you need to identify how people may be harmed, e.g. what type of injury or ill health could occur?

Ask your colleagues what they think the hazards are, as they may notice things that are not obvious to you and may have some good ideas on how to control the risks.

## 3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having identified the hazards, you then have to decide how likely it is that harm will occur; e.g. the level of risk and what to do about it. Risk is a part of everyday life and you are not expected to eliminate all risks. What you must do is make sure you know about the main risks and the things you need to do to manage them responsibly.

The aim is to reduce the risk associated with manual handling activities to the lowest level reasonably practicable. You will need to consider the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble. However, you do not need to take action if it would be grossly disproportionate to the level of risk.

Your risk assessment should only include what you could reasonably be expected to know - **you are not expected to anticipate unforeseeable risks.**

Look at what you're already doing, and the control measures you already have in place. Ask yourself:

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

Some practical steps you could take include:

- Health declaration to ascertain staff's health status
- Re- Organise work activities, staffing numbers and skill levels to accommodate for 'busy' periods in the working day
- Specific/ further manual handling training
- Competencies around manual handling tasks for staff
- Suitable handling aids and equipment
- Back care and wellbeing advice for staff
- Correct documentation in place: care plans, risk assessments, policies and procedures
- Auditing systems

## 4. Record your significant findings

A written risk assessment needs to be available for those tasks which are deemed hazardous, please use the trusts simplified risk assessment form. When writing a risk assessment keep it simple and easy to follow, this does not need to be a big exercise - just note the main points down about the significant risks and what you concluded.

A risk assessment must be 'suitable and sufficient', e.g. it should show that:

- you asked who might be affected
- a proper check was made
- you asked who might be affected
- you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low
- you involved your employees or their representatives in the process

If your risk assessment identifies a number of hazards, you need to put them in order of importance and address the most serious risks first.

Identify long-term solutions for the risks with the biggest consequences, as well as those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health. You should also establish whether there are improvements that can be implemented quickly, even temporarily, until more reliable controls can be put in place. Remember, the greater the risk the more robust and reliable the control measures will need to be. Where significant risks are identified, they must be logged onto the appropriate risk register for action. These risks are to be reviewed annually, or as changes occur, in accordance with the Trust Risk Management Policy.

The completed forms need to be available to all staff undertaking manual handling activities so they are aware of the risks and precautions advised.

#### 5. [Review your risk assessment and update if necessary](#)

Few workplaces stay the same. Sooner or later, you will bring in new equipment, substances and procedures that could lead to new hazards. So it makes sense to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis, look at your risk assessment again and ask yourself:

- Have there been any significant changes?
- Are there improvements you still need to make?
- Have your workers spotted a problem?
- Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses?

Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.

[For further guidance on risk assessment please see the risk assessment pages on the Health and Safety Executive website.](#)