

A Quick Guide To RISK ASSESSMENT

An introduction

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what, in your workplace, 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. 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.

The Meaning of:

Hazard: Something that can cause harm

Risk: Is the chance high or low, that somebody will be harmed by the hazard

Why do we have to do a Risk Assessment?

As an Employer/Self Employed person you must carry out these regular "Risk Assessments" under the Health and Safety law - "The Health and Safety at work Act 1974". This is to ensure that you provide a safe working environment for your employees, the general public and any one coming in contact with your business operations.

Whose responsibility is it to complete the Risk Assessment?

If you are a small company with fewer than 5 employees and are confident you understand the assessment procedure then you can complete this yourself (you do not have to be a health and safety expert), you do not have to record your findings but it is always advisable to do so. If you are a larger firm with more than 5 employees then you legally do have to record your findings and display in your workplace for the employees to see, you can either complete the assessment yourself, ask a responsible employee to take on the job or ask a Safety Representative/Officer to help you, but do remember as the owner of the company the legal responsibility lies with you to see the risk assessments are complete and adequately reviewed.

When should you complete your first Risk Assessment?

You should carry out a risk assessment before undertaking any work that involves dangers – no matter how small. That means you should complete your assessment before commencing work as a business, so that you can put the control measures in place from the start.

Five easy steps to assessing the risks in your work place

1. Look for the hazard
2. Decide who might be at harm and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide if the existing precautions are sufficient or whether more needs to be done
4. Record your findings on a simple chart (see overleaf)
5. Review your assessment and revise it if necessary

A Sample Basic Risk Assessment Form

Risk Assessment for:		Assessment Undertaken by:	Assessment Reviewed on:
Company Name:		Signed:	Date:
		Date:	
List significant hazards here:	Danger & result of hazard:	List groups of people who are at risk from the significant hazards you have identified:	List existing controls or note where the information may be found. List risks which are not adequately controlled and the action needed:
<p><i>Example:</i></p> <p><i>Helium – an Inert, colourless and odourless gas.</i></p>	<p><i>Inhalation causes slow suffocation (Asphyxiant) = Dizziness/ Hospital visit. Death possible if serious prolonged exposure.</i></p>	<p><i>Employer Employee, Public, Self Employed</i></p>	<p><i>Staff trained regarding dangers, suitable ventilation during use, correct storage of tank, correct equipment used to suit pressure. Written notification of risks on all tanks and literature making clients aware of dangers of inhalation from helium balloons.</i></p>

For more information on completing your risk assessment and all the government laws on health and safety contact the HSE Info line on: 08701 545500 or the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk