

Regulations

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, all employers and the self employed must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to both employees and other people. Also where there are 5 or more employees the findings of the risk assessments must be recorded.



Definition

A risk assessment is basically a careful evaluation of what aspects of your working environment are potentially harmful. A risk assessment should:

- Identify hazardous events and situations
- Consider the likelihood of those hazardous events occurring
- Determine the nature and severity of harm from those hazardous events and situations
- Review existing and possible control measures
- Assess risks and prioritise actions



This enables the employer to assess whether the precautions are adequate or that more needs to be done in order to prevent harm. It is the duty of employers to make sure that no one gets hurt or becomes ill because of work. Accidents and ill health can be very damaging both to the employee and the employer.

Hazards and risks are both fundamental elements of a risk assessment. A hazard means anything with the potential to cause harm (eg chemicals, noise, workplace equipment etc.). A risk is the likelihood that anybody will be hurt by the hazard, the severity of the harm and how many could be affected.



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Risk assessments MUST:

- Be "suitable and sufficient"
- Address "significant" hazards and risks
- Inform staff about the control of risks and any additional safeguards
- Be effectively communicated
- Be reviewed at appropriate intervals

Procedure

The HSE highlights 5 steps to assessing risks in the workplace. They are:

- Identify the hazards
- Decide who is at risk – identify the persons
- Determine likelihood of risk occurring
 - What is the severity of the risk?
 - Are the existing precautions adequate or should more be done?
- Record the findings
- Review the assessment and revise if necessary



Control Measures

A control measure is, "An action put in place to reduce the likelihood that a hazard will cause harm". Control measures should be implemented if it is not possible to completely get rid of the hazard.

The following should be considered:

- Substitution - use a less risky option
- Eliminate or minimise the hazards
- Prevent access to the hazard
- Reduce exposure to the hazard
- Work at a distance from the hazard.
- Issue personal protective equipment
- Apply technology
- Provide additional information and training
- Provide support facilities
- Identify any residual risks

An action put in place to reduce the likelihood that a hazard will cause harm.



Risk assessments should be reviewed on a regular basis. It is important to ascertain whether the precautions for each hazard still adequately control the risk. If not then further action needs to be taken.

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