

Carrying out a Risk Assessment

In carrying out a risk assessment you need to be able to show that:

- A reasonable and proper check was made.
- You asked who might be affected.
- You dealt with the obvious hazards and took into account the number of people who might be affected.
- The precautions are reasonable and the remaining risk is low.

The chief responsibility for checking out a building rests with the building owner or landlord; however, this doesn't absolve you from all responsibility. For example, if you discover a light fitting hanging by a thread or a broken window or a damaged stair tread then you have a responsibility to report that to the building owner – you may even have to consider cancelling your activity or group until the matter is put right.

How to Carry Out a Risk Assessment

The five steps of assessing risk that the Health and Safety Executive suggest are as follows:

Step 1 – Look for the hazards and write them down

Hazard means anything that can cause harm (e.g. slipping/tripping hazards, fire, chemicals, moving parts of machinery, working at heights, lifting and carrying, storage, electricity, gas, water pipes, cables, flooring and lighting, cleaning chemicals, stairs/ladders). Check them by walking around the building and look for hazards that could cause serious harm or affect a number of people.

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how and then write this down

If people with special needs will be using the building then attention needs to be paid to their particular requirements, such as access and emergency evacuation assistance.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate. Write this down too.

Risk is the chance, high or low, that someone will be harmed by some kind of hazard. Think about who visits your premises and which groups operate from there (e.g. youth club, toddler group). The risks may be different for different groups of people.

How likely is it that each hazard could cause harm? A worn or frayed carpet on a step or on a dark corner, a cable running across a walkway, are higher hazard than say, cleaning materials locked in the cleaner's cupboard.

There are some legal requirements which need to be met, like fire exits and extinguishers - are you complying in these areas? Chemicals such as bleach and other cleaning materials need to be recorded and stored safely.

Risk can be measured by the likelihood of incidence/injury (i.e. 1 = Improbable, 2 = Possible, 3 = Likely, 4 = Very Likely, 5 = Certain) and severity of the consequences (i.e. 1 = Trivial (grazing, soreness), 2 = Minor (small cuts, bruising), 3 = Severe (broken bones), 4 = Major, 5 = Fatal).

By multiplying these two together risk can be quantified and assist in prioritising the action that needs to be taken.

Example

A loose carpet in an open area gives to a very likely hazard or tripping (4) with the likely consequence of soreness or grazing (1)... The risk is therefore 4.

The same loose carpet but this time at the top of the stairs however may still be very likely (4) but the consequences could be severe (3). The risk is therefore 12. This should have greater priority than the previous situation but both need attention to remedy the hazard.

As a result of the risk assessment you should then draw up an action list and prioritise those risks which are high or could affect the most people.

In terms of what action to take, question whether it is possible to remove the hazard altogether (e.g. replacing worn carpet). If it is not possible to remove the hazard then ask how you can control the risk it presents. Preventing access is one way or organising your work in a different way is another. The aim of any risk assessment should be to eliminate the hazard altogether, where reasonably practical. If this is not possible then steps should be taken to reduce the hazard to a low risk.

Step 4 – Record your findings

In law, if there are fewer than five employees it is not a requirement to write anything down. It is nevertheless good practice. If there are more than five employees a written record must be kept and all Leaders and Task Force informed of them.

Risk assessments need to be 'suitable and sufficient'. This means you need to show that a proper check was made, you identified who might be affected, you dealt with the obvious hazards, took reasonable precautions and that the remaining risk is low.

Step 5 – Review your assessment and revise it if necessary.

If you bring in new equipment or change the way you work or the people who use the building then you will need to go through the procedure again, identifying hazards, assessing risk and taking action. Add any of these findings to your original record and it will ensure that it stays up to date.

It is good practice to review your assessment from time to time to ensure that precautions are still working effectively so set a date for review and keep to it!

Risk Assessment forms are available from the Contagious Administration Office

Contagious Activities - Risk Assessment Form
Date :
Assessed By :
Venue:

Ref. No	Identified Hazards	Persons at Risk	Probability 1 – 5	Severity 1 – 5	Risk Factor 1 - 25	Action taken or proposed	Action by whom	Date of Completion

Signature:
Print:
Date:

		Minor injury/damage Disruption for individual	On site first aid treatment Disruption to others taking part	Outside medical treatment required Offence against property Have to remove individual	Extensive injuries requiring hospitalisation Offence against person Have to stop activity for others	Death
LIKELIHOOD		1	2	3	4	5
	Rare 1	1	2	3	4	5
	Unlikely 2	2	4	6	8	10
	Possible 3	3	6	9	12	15
	Likely 4	4	8	12	16	20
	Highly likely 5	5	10	15	20	25



	High Risk
	Medium Risk
	Low Risk