

2015

Risk Assessment Guidance



FUTURES
Community College

Review Framework

The document should be reviewed in conjunction with the Health and Safety Policy

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Risk Assessment Guidance

HEADTEACHER/MANAGER CHECKLIST

- Nominate sufficient risk assessor(s)/Competent Person(s)
- Provide your risk assessor(s)/Competent Person(s) with suitable training
- Prepare a risk assessment programme listing all the risk assessments that need to be carried out; prioritise the list, set timescales for completion and keep the schedule updated
- Ensure that adequate time, resources and support are made available to your risk assessor(s)/Competent Person(s)
- Approve the risk assessments and ensure that action plans are followed through meeting the timescales set
- Record and keep risk assessments
- Share the findings of risk assessments with staff
- Review risks assessments annually, sooner if required
- Oversee and monitor the risk assessment programme

Schools:

- Review the risk assessment programme each term with the nominated School Governor for health and safety
- Document your local health and safety procedure for risk assessment

1.0 Introduction

Risk assessment is a legal requirement. The process involves a careful examination of what could cause harm to people in the workplace to enable you to weigh up whether enough precautions have been taken or should more be done to prevent harm. The aim is quite simply to make sure that no one gets hurt or becomes ill as a result of work activities.

On a personal level, work-related accidents and ill health can ruin lives; however, organisationally the effects can be far reaching in terms of cost, time and effort, the adverse impact on an organisation's quality of delivery and outputs and damage to its reputation.

This guidance is intended to provide Headteachers/managers with a step by step approach to undertake these assessments.

The law does not require that we eliminate all risk but to protect people as far as 'reasonably practicable'.

For significant risks these assessments should be formally documented and all staff affected made aware of them.

2.0 The law

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR) require employers to carry out a general risk assessment of all significant hazards in the workplace or linked to the work activity. Other pieces of legislation require specific types of risk assessment, for example, manual handling, fire, noise and display screen equipment (DSE).

3.0 Definitions

Hazard: something with the potential to cause harm. For example a hazardous substance, working at height from a ladder or the behaviour of a young person

Risk: the likelihood of potential harm occurring, for example ingesting the hazardous substance, determining the level of risk whilst working at height from a ladder would take into account the likelihood of someone falling and the severity in terms of outcome should that risk be realised.

Control Measure: Action taken to prevent someone being harmed. For example labelling and storing hazardous substance securely, training in the safe use of ladders etc.

MHSWR states that risk assessments must be 'suitable and sufficient'. To achieve that standard you need to be able to demonstrate that:

- a proper check was made
- you consulted those 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

4.0 What is a Risk Assessment?

A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of how people could be harmed from a particular activity or situation.

The assessment helps to identify the likelihood of harm and whether adequate precautions have been taken or if further control measures should be introduced to reduce the risk of harm to as low a level as possible.

Although the prospect of risk assessment may seem daunting it is worth noting that in the majority of cases an assessment simply requires managers, and others, to think about what can go wrong and deciding if enough has been done to prevent it. An assessment can be seen as nothing more than a systematic examination of the work activities and work area, within a given area of responsibility, in order to identify potential hazards, thereby enabling consideration to be given to introducing appropriate preventative measures.

When risk assessing the reliability of controls in place we are generally guided by reference to the 'preferred hierarchy of risk control principles', which have been incorporated into regulations such as COSHH and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999.

A summary of the preferred hierarchy is as follows:

- 1. Eliminating** risks e.g. by avoiding the use of certain processes or materials
- 2. Substituting** a less hazardous material or process
- 3. Combating** risks at source by engineering controls, positively isolating or separating individuals from the hazardous part or substance
- 4. Minimising** the risk by the design of suitable systems of work
- 5. Minimising** the risk by the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) which should only be used as a last resort.

5.0 Who should carry out risk assessments?

The responsibility rests with the Headteacher/Manager; however, the task of risk assessment can be delegated to a suitable member or members of their team. In terms of who that might be, any individual involved in risk assessment should have a thorough understanding of the school's/work areas operation, activities and workplace. Furthermore, to be considered competent to undertake risk assessments, SBC recommends risk assessors to attend a suitable training course delivered by a competent trainer, e.g. the one day Risk Assessment course (NVQ Level 2) currently offered at the Tickfield Centre.

The number of risk assessors that would be considered adequate in an establishment will vary according to its size, the general level of risk and any special risk factors that exist; however, in the case of small schools/work areas, one trained risk assessor would be acceptable.

SBC strongly endorses the team approach to risk assessment. A trained risk assessor should lead the process; however, the people who do the job should be consulted as they can give a real insight into what could go wrong and can often make a valuable contribution in putting forward possible solutions.

6.0 What should be assessed?

As a starting point, it is good practice to draw up a risk assessment programme by listing all the work-related activities, including, in schools, curriculum subjects that warrant a risk assessment and, by making an initial judgement about the possible risks, prioritise the list. Set target dates for completion and ensure that your risk assessor(s) are given adequate time, resource and support to work through and complete the programme.

Remember, when carrying out general risk assessments, do not duplicate other specifically required assessments such as manual handling or DSE. These will need consideration and cross-referencing as part of the general assessment process but do not need to be repeated.

7.0 Model and example risk assessments

Rather than create a risk assessment for common activities from scratch, authoritative models and examples can be customised to suit your local conditions, circumstances and arrangements. Risk assessment should never be viewed as a paper exercise to be carried out remotely; therefore, a model or example risk assessment can be useful as a baseline when you to set about observing an activity under assessment.

A number of example risk assessments developed by SBC for general generic activities are available on the Intranet. The work-related activities covered include e.g. traffic movements on a school site and organising a school summer fete. The examples are provided purely for guidance purposes and if downloaded for use, should be customised to suit your school/work area.

8.0 How much detail do I need to record?

The level of detail should be proportionate to the risk and, if anything, overly complicated and very detailed risks assessments tend to be unhelpful and less efficient. Keep risk assessments fairly simple and user friendly (remember the findings need to be shared with staff generally), record the significant hazards not trivial hazards and keep the assessments relevant by remaining within the scope of the subject of the risk assessment.

9.0 When should risk assessment be done?

As and when the need arises. When new equipment or activities are planned, a risk assessment should be undertaken before implementation to ensure a proactive approach to risk control. Risk assessments should be regarded as living documents so it would be appropriate to revisit the risk assessment once the new equipment or activity is up and running.

10.0 How often should risk assessments be reviewed?

As a SBC minimum standard, general risk assessments should be reviewed annually although there may be a requirement to undertake a review sooner should something change or there is an indication that the risk assessment is no longer valid. Take the example of where an incident has occurred and someone has been injured; this may suggest that the control measures for the activity concerned may not be effective, therefore, as part of the action plan to prevent the incident recurring, a review of the relevant risk assessment(s) should be seen as a routine action.

11.0 Five Steps to Risk Assessment

Step 1: Identify the Hazard

In most cases these can simply be identified by observation of the task / workplace and consulting with those staff involved in the activity. When undertaking hazard identification it is important to include reference to any relevant sources of information, e.g. equipment manuals, safety data sheets, the use of special techniques in more complex cases, accident and ill-health records etc. The focus should be on identifying the significant hazards and not the trivial.

For example:

- risks that may arise as a result of abnormal conditions (such as foreseeable emergencies, breakdowns, etc.)
- employees who are exposed to hazards whilst at work
- other people exposed as a result of the organisations activities
- hazards which arise from working with certain materials or substances
- hazards which arise from working with certain machinery and equipment
- hazards specific to the location itself, i.e. overhead power lines or working over water
- hazards from foreseeable emergencies

The table below is a guide to the sort of things you may need to consider.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slipping/tripping/falling hazards e.g. poorly maintained floor coverings, trailing cables etc. • Fire e.g. flammable substances • Chemicals, dust, fumes e.g. carpet tile adhesive • Moving parts of machinery • Work at heights e.g. use of ladders, putting up displays on classroom walls • Violence and aggression e.g. unauthorised visitors or angry parents • Lone working e.g. out of school hours, visiting service users. • Manual handling e.g. dealing with deliveries of supplies • Noise e.g. teaching music/machinery • Poor food hygiene • Work-related disease/ illness e.g. Weils disease, Legionella • Weather e.g. sun, heat, cold, wet, snow, ice, etc. • On or near water e.g. swimming pool, educational visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ejection of material e.g. dust or spark from machine • Pressure systems e.g. steam boilers • Cuts and penetration injuries e.g. use of knives etc. • Vehicles e.g. traffic management on site • Electricity e.g. portable appliances, work on or near live electricity, etc. • Poor lighting • Low or high temperatures • Asbestos • Radiation • Repetitive movements e.g. intensive data input • Confined spaces e.g. inspecting roof spaces • Collapse e.g. collapse of an unsafe structure • Unsafe glazing • Hot surfaces, liquids, steam • Falling objects e.g. books from shelves
<p>Please note that this list should NOT be considered to be a comprehensive list of ALL the hazards that may affect your work.</p>	

Step 2: Identify who might be harmed and how

The next step is to decide who might be affected by the hazard/s. This could include staff, students, contractors, visitors, cleaners, lone workers and/or members of the public depending on the nature and location of the activity. It will even include trespassers.

Some individuals may have particular requirements e.g.

- **New employees.** Such persons, even if qualified, may be at high risk in certain activities until they have adequate supervised experience.
- **Pregnant women and nursing mothers.** Certain hazards, may adversely affect a pregnant worker and her unborn child, or a nursing mother and her child e.g. smoking, chicken pox, stressful and repetitive work.
- **Less able bodied persons** or those suffering from medical conditions that will increase the risk of a hazard resulting in harm. This does not mean that such persons should be excluded from the area or activity but extra control measures may be required to protect them.
- **Lone workers.** Tasks that are often, or normally, carried out by one person must be identified and carefully considered. High-risk activities will always require more than one person (e.g. swimming pool activities). Where required workers must be supervised.
- People who may not be in the workplace all the time such as cleaners and contractors
- Temporary staff and agency workers
- Visitors to the school or people you share your site if there is a chance they could be hurt by your activities

At this stage you will need to consider the probable severity of injury and those groups or individuals exposed to significant risks.

Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having identified the hazards you must now decide what to do about them by considering the existing procedures and controls in place and determine if any additional actions need to be taken, i.e. whether you have done all that is reasonably practicable to reduce the risk of harm occurring.

Ensure all of the control measures you have in place against each identified hazards are listed.

In evaluating the risk, the likelihood of harm occurring and the severity of potential injury should be considered along with the number of persons likely to be exposed. This will help identify the urgency of control measures and whether, following the implementation of controls the risk can be reduced sufficiently.

This may be done using a simple High, Medium and Low system as outlined in the following table.

		SEVERITY				
		Minor injury (e.g. Superficial injury or temporary discomfort or distress)	First aid injury	Lost time injury (e.g. Sprains, minor fractures etc.)	Major injury (e.g. major fractures, amputations, life shortening illnesses)	Fatality/ permanent disability
PROBABILITY	Remote Possibility	VERY LOW		LOW		
	Might happen			MEDIUM		
	Feasible				HIGH	
	Highly probable	LOW		HIGH	VERY HIGH	
	Invariably happen				VERY HIGH	

Very High	Unacceptable risk - immediate action required. You need to identify further controls to reduce the risk rating if activity is to continue.
High	Risk reduction required - high priority May only take place if good control measures can be implemented.
Medium	Medium risk - action required if practicable. If it is not possible to lower risk further, you will need to consider the risk against the benefit so far as is reasonably practical
Low	Low priority - further risk reduction if practicable, may not be feasible or cost effective.
Very Low	Low risk - no further action required.

Notes

- Risk estimation is not an exact science. This matrix is simply a tool to help prioritise actions; it enables managers and Headteachers to focus on the key risks and better prioritise resources.
- The colours on the matrix represent the degree of risk and the priority to be attached to the risk i.e. red is the highest priority with urgent attention and action required. Amber risks represent a medium risk and follow up action must be taken to lower the risk within the earliest possible timescales. Finally green risks represent the lower risks which should not be ignored and control measures must be maintained.

It is not expected that a risk assessment will be perfect, but it must be suitable and sufficient. It will need to be able to show that:

- a proper check was made
- You asked who might be affected
- you dealt with all the 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 staff or their representatives in the process

A good plan of action often includes a mixture of different things such as:

- a few cheap or easy improvements that can be done quickly, perhaps as a temporary solution until more reliable controls are in place
- long-term solutions to those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health
- long-term solutions to those risks with the worst potential consequences
- arrangements for training employees on the main risks that remain and how they are to be controlled
- regular checks to make sure that the control measures stay in place and are adequately maintained
- clear responsibilities – who will lead on what action, and by when

Step 4: Record and implement the findings

A risk assessment must be suitable and sufficient, the level of detail in a risk assessment should be proportional to the risk. The purpose is not to detail each trivial hazard but to ensure that significant hazards are adequately assessed with the aim of informing safe working practices.

In the majority of cases the use of simple bullet pointed controls would be sufficient.

Where full implementation of control measures cannot be achieved at the time of the assessment, adequate steps must be taken in the interim period to minimise the risks.

Staff should be involved throughout the risk assessment process and upon completion risk assessments should be centrally filed and shared with all those (staff, contractors etc.) who may be affected. This is important as the risk assessment can be used to determine the level of instruction, training and competence needed for each task or activity.

Completed risk assessments should be signed off by the person completing the assessment and should be agreed by the Headteacher / manager.

Step 5: Review

Risk assessments should be reviewed regularly i.e. annually or as soon as any significant changes have occurred. It is best practice to give each assessment a review date. You should always review a risk assessment immediately after there has been an accident, incident or significant change in circumstances in order to identify what went wrong and whether any additional controls are required.

A review of a risk assessment does not necessarily mean that a fresh assessment needs to be drawn up each time. When a risk assessment comes up for a review, check over the existing risk assessment to ensure that it is still valid i.e. no changes have occurred and there is nothing to suggest that the risk control measures are ineffective. You can record on the risk assessment form that a review has taken place and reflect any changes that have been made.

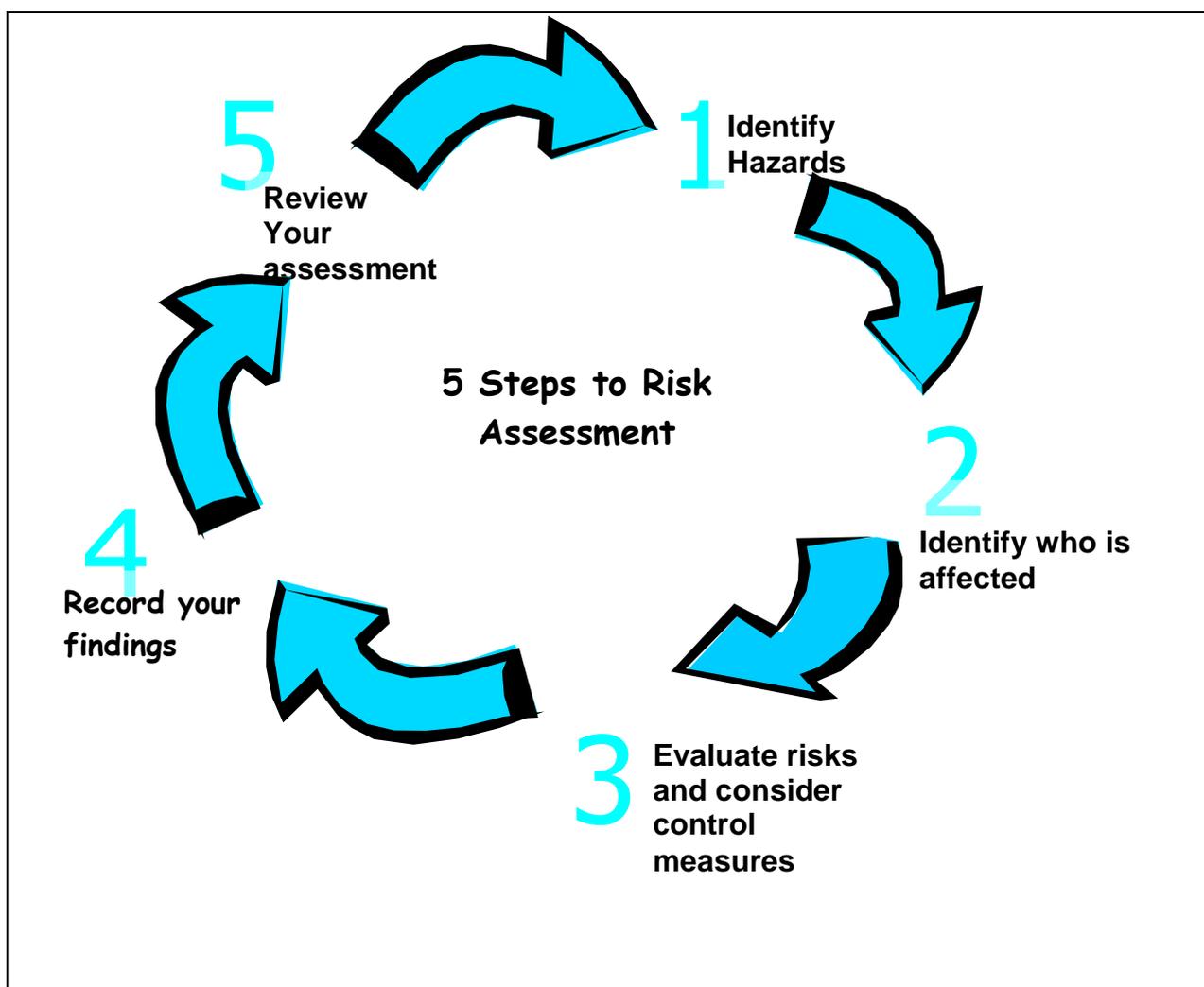
12.0 Monitoring the risk assessment programme

The Headteacher/manager should oversee and regularly monitor the risk assessment programme to ensure that assessments are carried out, up to date and reviewed as planned.

Schools:

The Board of School Governors has a monitoring role to fulfil with the aim of ensuring that risks are effectively controlled within the school. Once a term, the Headteacher and the nominated School Governor for health and safety should jointly review the school's risk assessment programme. The review should be recorded.

Remember to follow the five steps to risk assessment



13.0 General

Further guidance can be found in the HSE's guidance "Five Steps to Risk Assessment" found on the web site below:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>



RISK ASSESSMENT No.	Activity or location being assessed	
Establishment	Assessment by: <i>Who carried out this assessment</i>	Date:
Review Date: 1 <i>Record proposed date of review</i>	Approved by: e.g. <i>Head teacher, Manager</i>	Date:

Hazard / Risk	Who is at Risk?	Initial Risk Rating	Normal Control Measures <i>(Brief description and/or reference to source of information).</i>	Are Control Measures Y/N/NA		Additional Control Measures <i>(to take account of local/individual circumstances).</i>	Residual Risk Rating
				In Place	Adequate		
<i>Consider the hazards and risk and any site-specific hazards you have identified.</i>	<i>Students staff, the public etc. Consider those with special needs</i>	Before controls are applied. <i>Use the risk matrix to help you rate the risk</i>	<i>Consider the control measures in place currently.</i>	<i>Are the control measures in place?</i>	<i>Are they adequate?</i>	<i>Record any additional controls you have identified and the date they were implemented. Ensure that you address anything highlighted under normal controls as needing action.</i>	<i>Rate the risk with all controls in place. Use the risk matrix to help you.</i>
REVIEWS:							
DATE OF REVIEW: <i>Record actual date of review</i>		REVIEWED BY: <i>Who carried out the review?</i>			COMMENTS: <i>Record any comments reviewer wishes to make. Including recommendations for future reviews.</i>		
DATE OF REVIEW:		REVIEWED BY:			COMMENTS:		



RISK ASSESSMENT No.	Activity or location being assessed:	
Establishment:	Assessment by:	Date:
Review Date:	Approved by:	Date:

Hazard / Risk	Who is at Risk?	Initial Risk Rating	Normal Control Measures	Are Control Measures Y/N/NA		Additional Control Measures	Residual Risk Rating
				In Place	Adequate		

REVIEWS:		
DATE OF REVIEW:	REVIEWED BY:	COMMENTS:
DATE OF REVIEW:	REVIEWED BY:	COMMENTS: