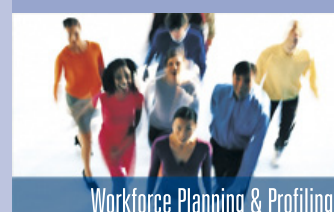


HR & OD POLICIES

HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Risk Assessment Guidance



Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act states that it is the duty of every employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all their employees, and that the employer has in place control measures to ensure this requirement is met. This would include both physical (guards, personal protective equipment) and procedural controls (safe systems of work, information, instruction and training).

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations have a specific legal requirement that all work activities are assessed with regard to their risk to the health, safety and welfare of those who might be affected by them.

Anyone who is carrying out an activity should be aware of the risks involved and the measures to take to control those risks. The completed risk assessment is an excellent tool that, if used appropriately, can be used to communicate the relevant risk information to those affected by the activity.

2. WHAT IS A RISK ASSESSMENT?



A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent

harm. Workers and others have a right to be protected from harm caused by a failure to take reasonable control measures. Risk Assessment is an essential part of any Health and Safety Management system. If suitable risk assessments are carried out for the activities undertaken by the council, and the suggested controls applied, then accidents will be much less likely to occur.

This will not only protect the employee from injury but also go a long way to prevent the employer from prosecution for being in breach of health and safety law.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require that we identify the hazards in the workplace and decide whether they are putting our employees at risk, if this is the case the employer is expected to reduce this risk to its lowest level, so far as is reasonably practicable.

This reduction may be by removing the hazard all together, carrying out training to make staff aware of the risks, introducing safe systems of work or, as a last resort, issuing personal protective equipment.

Risk assessment is a systematic process to which it is generally accepted that there are 5 steps.

3. WHO SHOULD CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENT?

A risk assessment should only be carried out by a 'competent' person or group. In other words, a person/s who have the necessary skills, experience and knowledge to be able to recognise the hazards and risks associated with the activity. Where this is not possible expert advice should be sought.

It is the role of management to ensure that risk assessments are undertaken. Advice may be taken from professionals with regard to specific problems, such as noise surveys, dust sampling, Vibration assessments etc

The use of a group helps to ensure consistency of approach as individual concepts of what can be seen as high or low risks varies considerably

STEP 1 Identify The Hazards

The first step is to identify the hazards.

A hazard is defined as 'anything with the potential to cause harm'.



A useful way to assist in identifying all significant hazards is to split the hazards into four categories:

- Physical
- Chemical
- Biological
- Psychological

In any given workplace there are likely to be hazards presented by the equipment contained and its physical layout as well as the activity to be carried out.

It will be useful to compile a full list of hazards so that these can be assessed in a systematic manner. From our hazard list we must now assess the risk that each presents to any individual or group that may be present

Each individual hazard should be assessed to establish whether or not they present a significant risk to any individual or group.

For example, if we take persons cutting wood on a table mounted circular saw (picture) then the hazards might be as follows.

Physical

- The blade of the saw
- Sharp edges on machinery
- Sharp edges or splinters on the wood being cut
- Electricity
- Noise
- Lighting levels
- Vibration

Chemical

- Any oils or coolants used
- Wood dust

Biological

- None identified

Psychological

- Noise
- Heat
- Lighting levels

As can be seen from the above categories hazards can fall into more than one section, i.e. Noise and Lighting Levels can be identified in both the physical and psychological categories.

Noise can cause both physical damage to the inner workings of the ear and can be a psychological stressor if the affected person/s are subjected to working in a noisy environment for prolonged periods.

Poor lighting can contribute to errors when working with machinery and can also be a psychological stressor.

Once we have our list of hazards we must then assess the risks they present (remember only to record significant risks. i.e. There is always a risk of paper cuts when filling a photocopier with A4 paper, but is there a significant risk?).

STEP 2 Decide Who Might Be Harmed And How

Once we have identified the significant hazards and their associated risks we should establish who will be affected and how

It is simple to see that the person/s carrying out an activity and/or persons in close proximity might be at risk, but if the activity is being carried out in a school and the hazard still exists after the class, what about the cleaners or janitorial staff? There have been many occasions where broken glass or sharps have been disposed of safely in regard of class work but no consideration has been given to informing the cleaning staff of their presence.

STEP 3 Evaluate The Risks And Decide On Precautions

A risk is defined as 'the likelihood that any hazard will actually cause harm' and the level of risk is set in line with the severity of the outcome, in other words a small cut or bruise would be low whereas a broken bone or eye damage would be high.

i.e. If we take for example an experienced kitchen porter' preparing vegetables in a kitchen' the outcome is likely to be a minor cut to the finger. The risk level would be LOW. If we have a trainee kitchen porter performing the same task the risk level might be MEDIUM.

If we take the example given in the assessment above, 'cutting wood on a circular saw with no guard in place' then the likely outcome would be severe cuts or possible amputation. The risk level would be HIGH.

If we take the Physical section from the previously identified hazards then the risk would be as follows (decided risk level in brackets)

Physical

- The blade of the saw – severe cuts, possible amputation from contact with moving blade (High)
- Sharp edges on machinery – cuts from contact with sharp edges (Med)
- Sharp edges or splinters on the wood being cut – splinters and cuts from sharp/rough edges of wood to be cut (Med)
- Electricity – electrocution or burns from contact with live conductors (Med)
- Noise – damage to hearing through exposure to high levels of noise (High)
- Lighting levels – errors in judgement through poor visibility (Med)
- Vibration – Hand Arm Vibration symptoms through prolonged periods of cutting wood. (Med)

Remember that the initial risk level is set without any controls in place.



From the information we have gathered we should now be able to suggest suitable control measures that will ideally eliminate the risk or where this is not possible, reduce the risk level to an acceptable level. These controls could be physical or procedural, i.e. Our table top saw would require suitable guarding of the blade etc but would also require that operators are suitably trained. When the controls are in place there should be a visible reduction in the risk level.

STEP 4 Record Your Findings And Implement Them

From the information gathered we should now be able to complete a **formal risk assessment**, an example of one is shown in the Resource Pack.

Remember that the example assessment is intended as guidance and does not reflect any activity carried out. In general it will require a degree of knowledge of any specific activity and existing service procedures before an accurate assessment can be undertaken.

Further worked examples of risk assessments are included in the Resource Pack. **Carrying out a home visit** and **General replacement of lamps**.

STEP 5 Review Your Risk Assessments And Update If Necessary

Once the risk assessments have been completed and recorded on the standard forms, it is essential that they are monitored and reviewed in line with any changes to the activity or process.

4. GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENTS

If the activity is a standard one, covering an activity that is undertaken on a regular basis by the same group of persons, it is acceptable to use the same risk assessment for that activity, provided it is periodically reviewed and signed by the assessor to show evidence that a review has been undertaken. These assessments are commonly known as generic risk assessments and it is good practice to review these yearly and certainly no longer than every two years.

If there are significant changes to the process or activity being carried out, i.e. Different location, change of equipment, different staff group, then the assessments should be reviewed accordingly as should be the case where vulnerable persons or those with additional needs are involved in the activity.

5. SPECIFIC RISK ASSESSMENT

Where a 'one off' or unique activity is being undertaken a risk assessment, specific to this activity, must be undertaken and recorded.

6. YOUNG PERSONS AND THOSE WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Particular care should be taken when carrying out risk assessments for activities involving young persons and those with additional needs. These categories of persons may not be able to perceive or understand risks due to a lack of experience or general inability to understand certain instruction/controls.

It is more likely that specific risk assessments will be required in this case.

Further information on risk assessment can be obtained via the **Health and Safety Executive** website. Specific Guidance is available for the following related topics:

- Object Handling Assessments
- People Handling Assessments
- COSHH Assessments
- Fire Risk Assessment
- DSE Assessment

For further advice and guidance on any of the above please contact the **Health and Safety Unit**.

Guidance

Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes
27-10-2010	-	Creation of all Documents

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