

# HSG 013 – Risk Assessment & Safe Systems of Work

## Health & Safety Guidelines for Line Managers

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## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Risk assessments help you identify what may cause harm, who is at risk, how likely something will happen and how serious the consequences might be. Once you have this information you can make decisions on how to get rid of the risk or adequately manage it.

It is a [legal requirement](#) to carry out health and safety risk assessments where significant risk has been identified. You must also communicate the findings, implement any controls identified and regularly review.

### **Before you carry out a Risk assessment**

Identify anything in your workplace that could cause injury or ill health and what could be done to protect people. The best approach is to use your staff to assist in gathering this information; they are best placed to assist as they are doing the work and are likely get to see any potential hazards that may arise from work activities.

Consideration should be given to ensuring that any person carrying out risk assessments are appropriately trained. Responsibility for ensuring risk assessments are completed can be found in the [Health and safety Policy](#)

[Managing health and safety](#) including risk assessments is an integral part of good management and forms the basis of a positive safety culture. It is crucial to ensure everyone involved has the same values about good health and safety, knows what is going on and what their role is in the process.

There are various risk assessment courses that can be delivered for those who carry out risk assessments.

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### **Carrying out a risk assessment**

Risk assessments need not be complicated but can be a simple and straightforward process. To help with their completion it is recommended the information and guidance here is used. The Sharepoint Health & Safety Risk Assessment Register will contain specific Health & Safety topic assessments. These assessments can be used and adapted to individual needs and to suit various situations. All risk assessments will need to be communicated to the people at risk.

<https://sp.falmouth.ac.uk/sites/fxestates/health/Lists/Risks/Indexed.aspx>

## Identify work tasks and people at risk

Before you carry out the risk assessment you need to first identify the work tasks you manage and who can be harmed. This is easy if you are the responsible line manager. However if you're an assessor doing it on behalf of a manager you may need to work together in identifying the work tasks and any associated hazards.

Consider the following questions. This is a productive way of gathering information you need and can help identify the hazards.

- What are the locations where the activities are taking place; i.e. office, grounds, residences, working with display screen equipment, using noisy equipment etc.
- What work equipment is being used and what substances could people be exposed to, i.e. machinery, chemicals etc.
- What are the activities being performed
- Who are the people involved in these activities, i.e. staff, contractors and the number that could be affected.
- Is there people at increased risk, i.e. children, people with disabilities

Here are some initial pointers to assist and get you started:

- Observe the physical layout at each location, take photos, and notes
- Speak to people, workers and Union appointed safety representatives to identify if they consider anything in the workplace a hazard
- Refer to inspection records, incident reports or manufacturer's instructions, data sheets etc.

### [Risk Assessment Task list](#)

## Identify the hazards, hazardous events and consequences

A risk assessment should identify hazards, hazardous events and consequences:

- **Hazards:** something with the potential to cause harm
- **Hazardous event:** is how someone or something interacts with the hazard
- **Consequences:** the likely nature of the most probable harm that could occur.

For example working at height (the hazard) on the DDM building could cause someone to fall (hazardous event) leading to serious injury, fractures (consequences)

Understanding the differences between these and how they connect will help working through the process logically and efficiently.

It will also help the end users understand what could cause them harm. This will help you to correctly assign the risk controls by breaking down the risk into its component parts of likelihood of the hazardous event and the severity of the consequences.

### **Top Tips**

- Hazard descriptions should be adequate to inform the end user, the end user may be new to the job or not aware of abbreviations, local arrangements and terms.
- Work with one hazard at a time. Grouping hazards can mix-up the hazardous events and consequences.
- Make the hazards obvious within your risk assessment. Clearly identifiable hazards will help the end user quickly understand what can cause them harm.
- Some hazards may have more than one hazardous event. You will need to consider these multiple events separately with their consequences to successfully manage the risks arising from that one hazard.
- Different groups of people can be affected by different hazards. Identifying who is at risk from your hazards will make it relevant to them and help you target your risk controls.
- Hazards can present either health or safety consequences, or both. Sometimes the harm is immediate and obvious or may not be apparent and only realised years after exposure. Think both short and long term consequences.

To ensure you're up to date, use common, industry, sector or expert knowledge to help identify reasonable foreseeable hazards.

[The Universities Safety and Health Association \(USHA\)](#)

[A-Z of guidance by topic \(Health & Safety Executive\)](#)

### **Estimate and evaluate the risk**

The next step is to estimate and evaluate the risk from a hazard. Risk is the product of two factors:

- *Likelihood* of a specific undesired event occurring within a specified period
- *Severity / Consequence* of a specific hazard being realised.

Once you've assigned the risk you need to take appropriate action to adequately manage it.

## Top Tips

- Remember to take into account existing risk control measures when you determine the risk
- Record how you got your risk rating and the residual risk. This is important information about the scale of likelihood and severity / consequence, as well as helping to highlight if there is a dominant risk factor. In doing so you'll be able to target risk controls to bring risk down.
- Check you have assigned the correct values to the risk factors. The likelihood and severity / consequence factors to have a realistic values assigned to make the risk representative for the hazard.
- Make sure you are correct in your calculation of risk. Remember  $\text{risk} = \text{likelihood} \times \text{severity} / \text{consequence}$ .
- The risk rating is applied to each hazard, hazardous event and consequence sequence rather than to the overall assessment.
- The residual risk should always be lower than the original risk after the additional risk control measures have been put in place.

## [Risk rating](#)

## Risk control measures

Risk control measures are put in place to control the risk from a hazard by eliminating it or reducing the likelihood or severity / consequence or both. They should be a combination of protective and preventative controls and you should consider them from the top of the hierarchy to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the most effective controls are used to reduce the risk

## [Hierarchy of control](#)

## Top Tips

- Implement risk controls from the high end of the hierarchy of control first. They offer more effective control than those at the lower end that rely on people (eg training, or provision of personal protective equipment)
- Description of risk controls should be detailed and give information on the specific requirements needed to keep people safe and healthy.
- Be clear on what risk controls apply to which hazard. The risk assessment template helps you to do this.
- Ensure there is a way to ensure further action or risk control implementation is recorded and followed through. Line managers are responsible for ensuring risk controls are implemented within the timescales recorded on the risk assessment.

## **Record and review your findings**

Now that you have assessed all the risks, you'll need to record the significant findings. It's recommended the risk assessment is recorded using the risk assessment template

[Blank risk assessment](#)

The details at the top of the risk assessment template must be completed in full with names, and dates etc. It is recommended a Risk Assessment log is kept to keep track of risk assessments in your location(s)

[Risk assessment log sheet](#)

The last step is to review your findings and is an important part of the process even if the risk ratings are low. You need to do this in order to ensure the assessment stays relevant and valid. There is no set frequency for carrying out a review; however it needs to be reviewed if it is no longer valid or if there has been a significant change, i.e. procedure, legislation equipment or people at risk change. Reviews can also be triggered when new information comes to light, such as information about a substance or outcome of an incident investigation or enforcement action.

You should archive your old risk assessments for three years.

## **Record Keeping**

Risk assessments should be agreed with line managers and then forwarded to estates. They will then be placed on the register in sharepoint: [Risk Assessment Register](#)

## **Further Reading**

[Risk Assessment Guide INDG 163](#)

## **METHOD STATEMENT / SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK**

Many hazards are clearly recognisable and can be overcome by separating people from them physically e.g. using guarding on machinery. There may be circumstances where hazards cannot be eliminated in this way and elements of risk remain associated with the task. Where the risk assessment indicates this is the case, a safe system of work will be required.

Examples where a method statement / safe system of work may be required as part of the control measures:

- Cleaning and maintenance operations
- Working alone or away from the workplace
- Changes to normal procedures, including layout, materials and methods

## **Developing Safe Systems**

Some safe systems can be verbal only perhaps where instructions are given on the hazards and the means of overcoming them i.e. for short duration tasks. These instructions must be given by supervisors or line managers. Leaving workers to devise their own method of work would not be a safe system of work.

A more formal method of developing a Method Statement / Safe system of work is to break the task down into stages and the precautions associated with the task and writing this down. The methodology should be as straight forward as possible and easy to follow for the end user; pictures are a good way of communicating this process. The tasks should be broken down into stages and the precautions associated with each written into a document. This document can then be used for training new workers in the required method of work. The technique is known as job safety analysis.

For all safe systems, there are five basic steps necessary in producing them:

1. Assessment of the task
2. Hazard identification and risk assessment
3. Identification of safe methods
4. Implementing the system
5. Monitoring the system

## **Task Assessment**

All aspects of the task must be looked at and should be put in writing to ensure nothing is overlooked. This should be done by supervisors / line managers in conjunction with workers involved, this will ensure that assumptions of supervisor's and line managers about methods of work are consistent with reality. Account must be taken of what is used, the plant and substances, potential failures of machinery, substances used, electrical needs of the task, sources of errors, possible human failures, short cuts, emergency work, where the task is carried out, the working environment and its demands for protection, and how the task is carried out, procedures, potential failures in work methods, frequency of the task, training needs.

## **Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment**

Against a list of the elements of the task, associated hazards can be clearly identified and a risk assessment can be made. Where hazards cannot be eliminated and risks reduced procedures to ensure a method statement / safe system of work should be devised.

## **Definition of Safe Methods**

The chosen method can be explained orally as already mentioned. Simple written methods can be established, or a more formal method known as a Permit to Work System. All of these involve setting up the task and any authorisation necessary, planning of job sequences, specification of the approved safe working methods including the means of getting to and from the task area (if appropriate), conditions which must be verified before work starts, atmospheric tests, machinery lockout, and dismantling/disposal of equipment or waste at the end of the task.

## **Implementing the System**

There must be adequate communication if the method statement / safe system of work is to be successful. The details should be understood by everyone who has to work with it, and it must be carried out on each occasion. It is important that everyone appreciates the need for the system and its place in accident prevention.

Line managers must know that their duties include devising and maintaining method statements / safe systems of work, making sure they are put into operation and revised where necessary to take account of changed conditions or accident experience. Training is required for all concerned, to include the necessary skills, awareness of the system and the hazards which it is aimed to eliminate by the use of safe procedures. Part of every safe system should be the requirement to stop work when a problem appears which is not covered by the system and not to resume until a safe solution has been found.

## **Monitoring the System**

Effective monitoring requires that regular checks are made to make sure that the system is still appropriate for the needs of the task, and that it is being fully complied with. Checking only after accidents is not an acceptable form of monitoring. Simple questions are required:

- Do workers continue to find the system workable?
- Are procedures laid down being carried out?
- Are the procedures effective?
- Have there been any changes which require a revision of the system?



- A system devised as above which is not followed is not a method statement / safe system of work

Method Statements / Safe systems of work are associated with, not substitutes for, the stronger prevention techniques of design, guarding and other methods which aim to eliminate the possibility of human failure.

[Example Method Statement](#)

[Log sheet](#)