

Do I really need a Risk Assessment?

Reg. 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 state that Risk Assessments are required by Law.

Every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of:

the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and

the risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by him of his undertaking

It is important to remember that Risk Assessments must be appropriate; i.e. 'suitable and sufficient' with regards to the nature and scale of the task or location; the likelihood of hazards; the extent and severity of the risks; and be understandable and repeatable.

Failure to carry out a proper risk assessment could result in an accident occurring and people being injured or property damaged. An offence can be committed even if no harm was in fact caused. Tougher sentencing guidelines were introduced in February 2016 for Health and Safety offences, Corporate Manslaughter and Food Safety and Hygiene offences. Under the guidelines the size of any fines levied will be based on the severity of the incident, why it occurred, and the size and financial status of your company. In the most serious cases the Court could potentially levy fines that would put the offender out of business altogether if the Court deems that this is an acceptable consequence of the committing of the offence.

Moreover, if the Court finds the directors of a company to be guilty of "consent, connivance or neglect" in connection with the most serious offences, they can potentially give the director an unlimited fine or even a prison sentence up to a maximum of 2 years. So there are many reasons to make sure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out.

So What are Hazards and Risks?

A **hazard** is something with the potential to cause harm (this can include articles, substances, plant or machines, methods of work, the working environment and other aspects of work organisation);

A **risk** is the likelihood of potential harm from that hazard being realised. The extent of the risk will depend on:

the likelihood of that harm occurring;

the potential severity of that harm, i.e. of any resultant injury or adverse health effect; and

the population which might be affected by the hazard, i.e. the number of people who might be exposed.

A **risk assessment** will therefore involve identifying the hazards present in any working environment or arising out of work activities, and evaluating the extent of the risks involved, taking into account existing control measures or precautions and their effectiveness.

The Assessment should identify how the risks arise and how they impact on those affected. This information is needed to make decisions on how to manage those risks so that the decisions are made in an informed, rational and structured manner, and the action taken is proportionate.

There are Five Steps to Risk Assessment.

Look for and identify the hazards.

Decide who might be harmed and how.

Evaluate the level of risk(s) arising from the hazards and decide whether the existing precautions are sufficient or whether more should be done.

Record your findings.

Review your assessment and revise it if needed

Pr ob	5	10	15	20	25
	4	8	12	16	20

	3	6	9	12	15
ab					
ilit	2	4	6	8	10
	1	2	3	4	5
	Severity				

The risk assessments are usually based around a 5 x 5 matrix:

$$\text{Probability} \times \text{Severity} = \text{Risk}$$

Probability	Severity
5 = Very likely	5 = Fatal
4 = Likely	4 = Severe/life changing
3 = Quite possible	3 = Moderate
2 = Possible	2 = Slight
1 = Unlikely	1 = Negligible

Risk

16-25 = High risk	Stop, implement controls
9-15 = Medium risk	Ensure adequate controls in place
0-8 = Low risk	No action needed

The important thing to remember is an acronym – SMART

In health and safety terms this stands for:-

S	Specific
M	Manageable or measurable
A	Achievable
R	Relevant or Realistic
T	Time tabled/ time specific

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Businesswise Systems will be pleased to provide a free 30-minute telephone consultation and review your health & Safety needs.

Please call on 07805 658299 or email on greg.richards@businesswisesystems.com