

Risk assessment

Guidance Note 28
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Risk Assessment

Introduction

This Guidance Note gives practical information about undertaking risk assessments in for work on client's sites / construction sites.

Sample templates have been included in Appendices 1 & 2 and a sample completed risk assessment in Appendix 3. If you wish to use these templates to construct your own documents, you must ensure that all references to **Alcumus SafeContractor Certification** have been removed and the final documents are clearly incorporated into your existing safety management system.

Legal Obligations

Whether you are an employer or self-employed, you have a legal obligation to assess the risks in your workplace and arising from your work practices. Improving health and safety need not be costly, but a failure to make simple adjustments to the way you work and/or your workplace may have very expensive consequences.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, require that employers, and the self-employed, must undertake a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. These regulations also require employers to take particular account young people and new and expectant mothers.

A risk assessment is simply an examination of the work you are undertaking and the environment in which this takes place. It does not have to be over complicated, but should be appropriate to the size of your company and the risks involved in the work you undertake and the environment in which this takes place.

The purpose of a risk assessment is to identify anything with the potential to cause accidents and ill health to you, your employees, members of the public, client's staff or other contractors on site. If this assessment identifies a significant a risk to health and safety, you as an employer or self-employed person must implement measures to either eliminate or control the risk to a reasonable level. The law does have an appreciation for the fact that it is not possible to eliminate all risk, however, it does require all risks to be controlled.

Only employers who employ 5 or more employees have a legal duty to record the significant findings of the assessment. However, it is considered good practice for all assessments to be recorded irrespective of employee number. It should be noted that when tendering for contracts, some companies might require a written risk assessment to demonstrate a commitment to health and safety.

The risk assessment must be reviewed on a regular basis, as and when there are any changes in the environment, personnel, equipment used etc. Although the employer/self-employed

person has the responsibility to ensure that the risk assessment is carried out, they must also ensure that whoever undertakes the risk assessment is competent to do so. This may be via formal training or simply by virtue of time served in that particular discipline.

What is risk assessment?

A **HAZARD** is defined as “anything, which has the potential to cause harm”

Examples of typical hazards are as follows: -

- Working at height with no edge protection
- Working in the presence of asbestos containing materials
- Working with chemicals.

Once the hazard has been identified it is possible to consider the risk from that hazard.

A **RISK** is defined as “the likelihood of a particular hazard causing harm”

Examples of typical risks are as follows: -

- A person falling from height
- Exposure to asbestos fibres
- A burn caused by a spillage of a chemical on to exposed skin.

In order to differentiate between the severities of the identified risks, it is important to give them a risk rating. Some systems use complicated scoring systems, although this is not necessary and a simple ‘Low, Medium or High’ will usually suffice.

In order to assist you with this, consider the following:

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Minor impact/damage quickly repaired	Moderate impact/partial loss of operations	Disaster/very serious consequences

Risk assessments do not need to be over complicated; it is essential only to judge whether the hazards are significant and whether or not the precautions in place are satisfactory.

Conducting Risk Assessments

In most cases, where work is undertaken for a one-off project, the risk assessment will need to be site or project specific. The assessment therefore needs to take into consideration the specific risks related to the work activities being undertaken in that specific project and the

work environment in which it is taking place. This is particularly relevant for construction work where site conditions will change over time and from job to job. For example, a roofing job on a domestic property may involve some different hazards to one undertaken on a factory unit and even work on two different factory units may present some differing hazards. These risk assessments should last for the length of the project only or until there are significant changes which require it to be revised.

In some cases, where work is of a general nature (i.e. the service and maintenance of equipment supplied by your Company, a lengthy contract for the maintenance of specific plant and equipment, cleaning of offices etc.), it may be reasonable to have a generic risk assessment which is reviewed on an annual basis. However, there should still be provision for adding site specific information should any changes in work environment and therefore hazards present themselves.

In either case, you must identify the significant hazards associated with the work, identify who is at risk, and record in a concise easily understandable manner sufficient control measures.

Below are detailed the '5 steps to risk assessment'. This is not the only way to do a risk assessment, there are other methods that work well, particularly for more complex risks and circumstances. However, this is the simplest method that works for common workplaces.

Step 1 **Identify the hazards**

First you need to work out how people could be harmed. When you work in a place every day it is easy to overlook some hazards, so here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter:

- **Contact client to obtain information about site where work is to take place / Walk around work site** and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm.
- **Ask your employees** or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious to you.
- **Check manufacturers' instructions** or data sheets for chemicals and equipment as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them into their true perspective.
- Have a look back at your **accident and ill-health records** – these often help to identify the less obvious hazards.
- **Remember to think about long-term hazards to health** (e.g. high levels of noise or exposure to harmful substances) as well as safety hazards.

Refer to the Hazard Indicator Checklist in Appendix 1 of this Guidance Note for further assistance.

List the hazards in column one on risk assessment form

Step 2

Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed. There is no need to list everyone by name, but rather identify what groups of people (e.g. 'employees' or 'other contractors' or 'passers-by'), might be at risk.

In each case, identify how they might be harmed, i.e. what type of injury or ill health might occur. For example, 'construction workers may suffer back injury from repeated lifting of building materials'.

It is vital to be aware that some workers may have particular requirements, e.g. new and young workers, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities may be at particular risk.

Further consideration needs to be made for the following groups;

- Visitors, contractors, maintenance workers etc. who may not be in the workplace all the time.
- Members of the public, if they could be harmed by your activities.
- If you share your workplace, you will need to think about how your work affects others present, as well as how their work affects your staff.

List them in column 2 on risk assessment form

Step 3

Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Once the hazards have been identified, appropriate control measures need to be implemented. The law requires you to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm.

You need to look at the current work situation to see what you are already doing, consider what controls you have in place and how the work is organised. Then compare this with best practice to see if there is more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. This will mean that additional control measures are required.

With the existing and additional control measures in place you must then decide if the residual risk high, medium or low.

When looking at the situation you need to keep the following in mind:

- Am I complying with legislation and Approved codes of practice?
- Are all accepted industry standards in place?
- Is everything that is reasonably practicable being done to reduce the risk to the lowest level possible?
- Can the hazard be eliminated altogether?
- If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible in the following order:

- Try a less risky option (e.g. switch to using a less hazardous chemical);
- Prevent access to the hazard (e.g. by guarding);
- Organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard (e.g. put barriers between pedestrians and traffic);
- Issue personal protective equipment (e.g. clothing, footwear, goggles etc.); and
- Provide welfare facilities (e.g. first aid and washing facilities for removal of contamination).

List precautions in column 3 and residual risk factor once precautions have been put into place in column 4

Step 4

Record your findings and implement them

The benefits of recording the details of your risks assessments are far more than simply compliance with the law and industry best practice. It also proves to staff and potential clients that health and safety issues have been considered and relevant action has been taken to eliminate these risks and subsequently provide a safer working environment.

When recording your results, keep it simple, over complicated assessments will not be fully appreciated by those who are expected to adhere to them.

All risk assessments carried out must be suitable and sufficient. You 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 as low as possible;
- You involved your staff or their representatives in the process.

Make sure that all employees are made aware of the risk assessments and their control measures via training and communication. Appropriate supervision may be necessary to ensure that staff are adhering to control measures.

Step 5

Review your risk assessment and update it if necessary

Your risk assessments should be considered a live document and as such be reviewed on a regular basis to determine if the process, personnel or environment has altered since the time of the last assessment. Consideration must be given to changes in legislation and industry best practice. You should also consult with employees as they may have identified failings in the current control measures that have not been picked up by the risk assessment.

Risk assessments need to be revised (and a revision date documented) after:

- A change of working practice
- The delivery of new equipment
- Any adverse event, accident, equipment failure etc.

Overview

- Identify hazards
- Identify who might be harmed
- Identify the risks and if existing control measures are adequate
- Identify if further controls are necessary
- Inform, implement and monitor
- Document your findings
- Complete periodic review of assessments.

Further Guidance

- The HSE have a section of their website dedicated to risk management. This includes examples of risk assessments for a number of work activities. These include office cleaning, bricklaying and plastering and maintenance work in factories and flats. The risk management site can be accessed here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm>
- The example risk assessments can be found here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/index.htm>

The following guidance is also available from the HSE:

- Five Steps to Risk Assessment (INDG163). Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>

Appendix 1

Hazard Indicator Checklist

Hazard Type	Yes	No
1. Fall of person from height	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Fall of object or material from height	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Fall of person on same level (e.g. slip or trip)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Manual handling (includes: pushing / pulling as well as lifting and carrying and repetitive actions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Use of machinery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Operation of vehicles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Electricity or electrical equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Drowning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Excavation work (where this is part of the task)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Stored energy (e.g. elastic cords, hydraulic & air pressured systems)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Explosions (e.g. from chemicals or dust)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Contact with excessively hot or cold surfaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Compressed air or gases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Mechanical lifting operations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Noise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Biological agents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Hot work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Asbestos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Excessive vibration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Use of hand tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Outdoor work - weather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Chemicals or substances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Storage, stacking or shelving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Lighting levels (too high or too low, glare, rapid changes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Confined spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. Temporary workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Use of display screen equipment (as part of the task)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. Lone or unaccompanied working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Exposure to personal violence or aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Transfer all hazards identified as Yes in the tick box to column one on the risk assessment form (Appendix 2).

Appendix 2

Blank Risk Assessment Template

Risk Assessment	
Company Name:	Assessment no:
Division/Department:	Date Prepared:
Address/Location:	Review Date:
Department Manager:	
Work activity being assessed:	

Key To Assessment:	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
	Minor impact/damage quickly repaired	Moderate impact/partial loss of operations	Disaster/very serious consequences

Hazard/s	People at Risk	Precautions/controls required to reduce the level of risk to the lowest practicable level	Residual Risk Low/medium/high

Sample Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment	
Company Name:	Joe Bloggs Ltd
Division/Department:	Window Cleaning
Address/Location:	Some Place
Department Manager:	J. Bean
Work activity being assessed:	Sample of different works
Assessment no:	RA001
Date Prepared:	01/11/13
Review Date:	01/11/14

Key To Assessment:	LOW Minor impact/damage quickly repaired	MEDIUM Moderate impact/partial loss of operations	HIGH Disaster/very serious consequences
Hazard/s	People at Risk	Precautions/controls required to reduce the level of risk to the lowest practicable level	Residual Risk
Window Cleaner falling off ladder	Window Cleaner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on safe use of ladder • Ladder angled correctly (4:1) • Ladder placed against non-fragile surface • Ladder supported on solid and flat flooring • Ladder secured either at the top/bottom or second footed by other person • Maintain three points of contact with ladder 	Low
Slip, Trip or Fall incident during Cleaning activities	Members of the Public, Cleaners, Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warning signs in noticeable places • Spillage procedure for clearing standing liquids • No storage of materials or waste in public walkways • Keep trailing lead distance to a minimum by using nearest electrical point • Segregate or close off areas where wet cleaning or buffing is undertaken 	Low

<p>Head injury caused by falling rubble on a construction site</p>	<p>Members of Staff, Members of Public, Contractors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of appropriate PPE e.g. hard hat • Adequate Signage notifying of hard hat area • Adequate guard rails/brick guards on scaffolding • Only minimum material stacked on scaffolding • Material adequately secured during high winds • Rubble Chutes provided into enclosed skips • Provision of pedestrian walkways to avoid work at height/skips 	<p>Low</p>
<p>Electric shock whilst undertaking maintenance work</p>	<p>Members of staff, Contractors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit to Work in place • Equipment electrically isolated with lock and tag • Adequate training provided for competent person • No live work to be undertaken • Live testing to only be undertaken with insulated test equipment, rubber matting, shielding and rubber gauntlets 	<p>Low</p>
<p>Operating electrical office equipment</p>	<p>Member of staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All electrical Equipment to be PAT tested and labelled • Area to be kept clean and tidy • Cables to be secured • No cable runs on throughway • Plug sockets not to be overloaded • Users trained in use of office equipment 	<p>Low</p>
<p>Exposure to Asbestos during building maintenance</p>	<p>Members of staff, Contractors, Visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building asbestos register requested before work commences • Training on asbestos awareness given to operatives • If fibrous material encountered stop work • Shut down tools and machinery • Segregate area • Notify client representative and head office • Do not re-enter area until adequate clearance/notification supplied by client 	<p>Low</p>

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