

Safety Resources

RISK ASSESSMENTS

The requirement for employers and the self-employed to undertake a suitable and sufficient risk assessment comes from The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Regulation 3 of these regulations states:

- (6) Where the employer employs five or more employees, he shall record-
- (a) the significant findings of the assessment; and
 - (b) any group of his employees identified by it as being especially at risk.

Part (b) requires employers to take particular account of young people and new and expectant mothers.

It should be noted that if an employer has less than 5 employees it is still good practice to record the findings of the assessment.

Employers do not need specific training or qualifications to carry out a risk assessment. As an employer, you must appoint someone competent to help you meet your health and safety duties. A competent person is someone with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience.

A risk assessment is an examination of hazards that could potentially cause harm to people. You will need to look at the effectiveness of existing control measures and the need for further controls.

There are 5 steps to a risk assessment these are as follows:

1. Identify the hazards

First you need to work out how people could be harmed. As well as using your knowledge and experience you can do this by walking around the business, asking employees and looking at accident or ill health records.

2. Decide who might be harmed and how

You must identify which groups of people are at risk from these hazards, taking into consideration the presence of cleaners, visitors, contractors and members of the public.

3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precaution

You will need to look at the controls you have in place and compare this with best practice to see if there's more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. This may mean that additional control measures are required to reduce the risk to the lowest possible level.

4. Record your findings and implement them

Recording your risk assessments is a legal requirement where you have 5 or more employees. However it is always good practice to do this as it shows employees and clients that you have considered the risks and put relevant control measures in place. Your employees can then refer to the risk assessment and make sure they are adhering to the control measures in place.

5. Review your assessment and update if necessary

A risk assessment must be reviewed on a regular basis. It is important to review a risk assessment after significant changes within the business such as new equipment, a change in procedures or after an accident. Make sure employees are aware of the risk assessment and the control measures in place. Involve employees in the process as they will have a good understanding of the risks they come across every day.

Further information and guidance regarding risk assessments can be found using the following useful links.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Website
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/risk-assessment.htm>

5 Steps to risk assessment
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>

European agency for safety and health at work
https://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/riskassessment/carry_out

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3242/pdfs/uksi_19993242_en.pdf