

# **Risk Assessment – an introduction**



## Why do we need risk assessments?

To meet the legal requirements of H&S legislation

They are an effective tool in assisting us to manage the risks from our activities (It actually works)

They show evidence that we comply with the legal requirements




## So what are the legal requirements ?

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974  
(HASWA)

and

The Management of Health and Safety at  
Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW)



# **The Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974 places a general duty on employers and employees**

## **Employers**

- To protect the health and safety of employees and others who may be affected by their work activities

## **Employees**

- To take reasonable care of their own health and safety and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions
- Employees must also cooperate with their employer and others to enable them to fulfil the duties
- Must not misuse or interfere with anything provided in accordance with their health & Safety



## The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 duties

Every employer must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks to employees and other affected by their acts and omissions

Additional consideration must be given to new or expectant mothers and young persons

Where an employer has 5 or more employees the risk assessment must be recorded, reviewed regularly, recording any changes



# Moral Duty

In addition to the legal duties, employers and employees have a moral duty, which is as important if not more so.

Poor culture and practices can lead to injury, illness and disease in the workplace and from a human perspective this can lead to:

- Long lasting health issues affecting both the individual and their family.
- Absence from work
- Low staff moral
- Reputational damage



# Moral Duty

Moral reasons are based on the concept of an employer owing a duty of reasonable care to his employees. A person does not expect to risk life and limb, or physical health, as a condition of employment

Society expects every employer to demonstrate a correct attitude to health and safety to his workforce. It is unacceptable to place employees in situations where their health and safety is at risk



## Moral Duty

Employers also have a moral obligation to protect other people whose health and safety may be affected by his undertaking, e.g. contractors or members of the public

Health and Safety legislation is in place to enable you to “Go home safe and sound at the end of the day”

It is not in place to limit your activities, unless those activities are dangerous in any way



# What is a risk assessment?

“A risk assessment is nothing more than 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.” (HSE)

There are no fixed rules about how a risk assessment should be carried out. It will greatly depend on the nature of the work or business and the types of hazards and risks

# Types of risk assessment

Generic: Pre-prepared assessment for a task or activity that is repeated regularly

Specific: Where an activity or task is new or has additional hazards to that of a generic task. A one-off activity would be a specific assessment

Dynamic: Where a situation arises that requires an 'on the spot' assessment of the risk to be carried out. This will normally be an 'informal' assessment



# Types of risk assessment

## Remember

A risk assessment is not about creating lots of unnecessary paperwork

It is about identifying and putting in place sensible measures to control risks in the workplace

# Types of risk assessment

The degree of detail in a risk assessment should be proportionate to the level of risks involved in tasks or present in working environments:

- Small offices may have few or simple hazards resulting in the risk assessment being a fairly simple process
- At the other end of the scale we have building operations where high risk activities are carried out in a high-risk environment. Due to the nature of the hazards and degree of risk a more detailed risk assessments will be required

# Who should carry out the risk assessment?

A competent person or group:

- You do not necessarily need specific training or qualifications to carry out a risk assessment although an understanding of the process is required
- Person/s carrying out the risk assessment should be able to demonstrate competence in the tasks and environments that are being assessed through a combination of skills, knowledge, and experience

# Who should carry out the risk assessment?

It should involve management:

- Managers need to be involved to ensure implementation and application of the controls and measures identified and of course compliance

Where necessary advice should be sought:

- An employer 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 to manage health and safety
- It may be that you need additional information and advice which can be obtained from a variety of sources



# Sources of advice and guidance

## HSE Regulations/guidance notes

The HSE website is an excellent source of information to help when carrying out risk assessments e.g. Noise, Vibration, Display Screen Equipment, Manual Handling, Electricity at work, Work Equipment, and the Workplace

## Operators Manuals

Manuals provide information on the safe use and maintenance of equipment, and where relevant, information on exposure levels such as noise and vibration



# Sources of advice and guidance

## Similar organisations (Other LA's)

Other organisations will generally be providing similar services and may be able to provide information to assist with risk assessments

## Subject specialists

Where tasks and environments are more complex expert advice may be required for carrying out risk assessments

## Corporate H&S team

Aberdeen City Council Corporate Health & Safety Team has the expertise to provide advice and guidance across the organisation.





## New and expectant mothers

Additional consideration must be given to new and expectant mothers as the degree of risk for work activities may increase e.g.

- Workstations may require reassessment
- Manual handling activities
- Fatigue
- Working with hazardous substances



# Young Persons

A young person is someone under the age of 18 and additional consideration must be given to ensure young persons are not exposed to risk due to their:

- Lack of experience
- Unawareness of existing or potential risks
- Level of maturity



## Other considerations

Employers must consider:

- The layout of the workplace
- Any physical, biological and chemical hazards they will be exposed to
- How they will handle work equipment
- How the work and processes are organised
- Additional training requirements



# Risk Assessment a systematic approach

## Step 1 - Identify the hazards

Firstly, how do we define hazard?

A hazard is anything with the potential to cause harm

- It is important when carrying out a risk assessment that the potential hazards are accurately identified, so how do we do this?
- Have a walk round your workplace identifying the work activities, and processes that occur and also any substances that are used. During any walk round you must also consider the working environment



# Risk Assessment a systematic approach

What else can we do to help identify hazards?

- Manufacturer's instructions, user manuals, and chemical safety data sheets provide information on associated hazards
- Accident and ill health statistics can point to areas where there are hazards
- Always consider maintenance, and cleaning operations
- Think about the long-term hazards to health e.g. exposure to noise



# Risk Assessment a systematic approach

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how.

- Consider the tasks, processes, equipment being used, and the working environment and identify all persons that may be exposed to the hazards that have been identified:
  - Staff, Contractors, Pupils, Visitors, Volunteers or Passers by.
- At this stage you must make yourself aware of workers who have particular requirements:
  - New and expectant mothers, Young Persons, Persons with disabilities, and Lone workers



## Risk Assessment a systematic approach

You have now identified the who might be harmed, now you have to look at how they might be harmed:

- Manual handling could result in persons suffering from musculoskeletal disorders
- Hot work could result in persons getting burns
- Prolonged use of display screen equipment may result in musculoskeletal disorders



# Risk Assessment a systematic approach

## Step 3 – Evaluate the risks

Firstly how do we define risk?

- Risk is defined as the likelihood of a hazard causing harm and the severity of the harm caused
- You must also take into account of the number of people being exposed to a hazard and the frequency of exposure to a hazard
- Higher number of persons exposed and/or a higher frequency of exposure will result in an increased risk





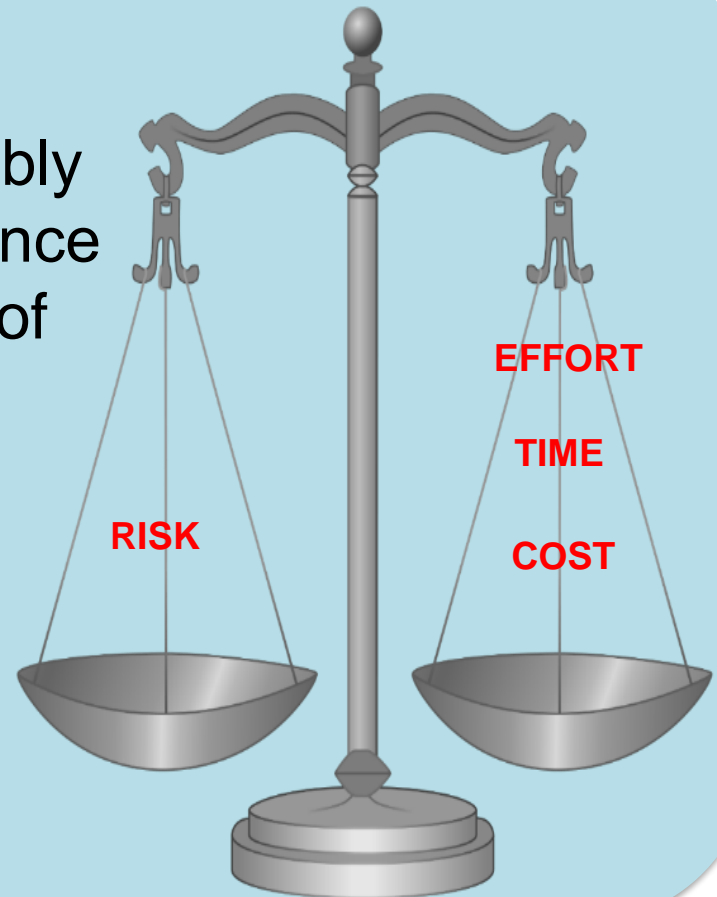
# Risk Assessment a systematic approach

Remember risk is a part of day to day life so it is not expected that all risks are eliminated, it must be determined what poses a significant risk to all exposed.

Where significant risks have been identified you must do everything so far as is reasonably practicable to manage the risk.

# Risk Assessment a systematic approach

“So far as is reasonably practicable” is a balance between the degree of risk and measures required to be put in place to control the risk in terms of time, cost and effort.



# Risk Assessment

## a systematic approach

When carrying out a risk assessment it can be helpful to break the risk factors down into separate categories and look at them separately.

**Physical**



**Biological**



**Chemical**



**Psychological**



# Example of Hazards

## Physical



**Manual  
Handling**



**Sharps**



**Slips &  
trips**

## Chemical



**Oil & Fuel**



**Solvents**



**Cleaning Products**

# Example of Hazards

## Biological



**Viruses**



**Bacteria**



**Animal Bi-products**

## Psychological



**Verbal Abuse**



**Noise**



**Working in a stressful environment**

# Hierarchy of Risk Control

**Effectiveness**

Elimination

Substitution

Engineering controls

Management  
controls

PPE

# Hierarchy of Risk Control

Elimination – if possible, avoid the risk altogether.

- Can you remove the hazard?
- Can you reorganise work processes?



Substitution – use something less dangerous

- Use less hazardous chemicals e.g. water based rather than solvent based
- Use less hazardous power tools e.g. lower vibration levels

# Hierarchy of Risk Control

## Engineering controls:

- Isolate equipment by introducing guards or barriers.
- Extraction installed to remove fumes, gases, and wood dust etc.
- Use mechanical lifting aids.

## Management controls:

- Safety signage.
- Safe systems of work.
- Training.
- Adequate supervision.





# Hierarchy of Risk Control

## Personal protective equipment (PPE).

Should only be used as a last resort as it:

- Generally it only protects the person wearing it.
- Relies on people wearing the equipment at all times.
- It must be used properly.
- It must be replaced when faulty or no longer offers adequate protection.

## A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of three overlapping geometric shapes: a purple parallelogram, an orange parallelogram, and a brown triangle.



Line Manager name:		Line Manager signature	Assessment No:
Date:	Assessed by:	Location:	Review date:
	Signature:	Activity: Putting up displays	

<b>What has the potential To cause harm (hazards) and what harm might result?</b>	<b>Who and how many people might be at risk?</b>	<b>What measures are already in place?</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Risk rating</b>	<b>What further action (s) needs to be taken to reduce risk</b>	<b>By whom and by what date</b>
<b>EXAMPLES OF HAZARDS</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>	<b>EXAMPLES OF Control measures</b>				Review position of displays throughout the school.	
Falls from height  Use of wrong equipment (e.g. table, desk, chair) > fall, contact with furniture > Person using ladder / step ladder / kick stool overreaches causing equipment to topple  Persons – e.g. employees / pupils walk under / into ladder.  Falling objects – person drops display / person falls from ladder attempting to put up / take down an awkward display. > contact injuries	Employees  Others (e.g. pupils)	Prohibit placing displays where they are difficult to access – e.g. above cupboards, cabinets  <i>Avoid working at height</i>  Restrict displays to head height.  Displays placed at a height so that access equipment – (ladders, steps, kick stools) do not need to be used.  Review areas where artwork / information is displayed – e.g. frequently used items are easily accessible.  <i>If need to work at height</i>  Room layout – display boards easily accessible.  Displays prepared as far as possible before putting them up.				Consider height / shape of the display. Is suitable access equipment being used for the task?	

# Record the significant findings

What has the potential To cause harm (hazards) and what harm might result?	Who and how many people might be at risk?	What measures are already in place?	Severity	Likelihood	Risk rating	What further action (s) needs to be taken to reduce risk	By whom and by what date
		<p>Employees encouraged to wear suitable footwear – (e.g. heel-less or low-heeled shoes with non-slip soles).</p> <p>Provision of suitable access equipment &gt; e.g. ladders, steps, kick steps.</p> <p>Define / segregate area where ladder / access equipment being used. May need barrier / signage.</p> <p>Trained staff to access high areas (e.g. janitorial staff)</p> <p>Suitable access equipment / working platform provided. &gt; e.g. step ladder / kick step type stools / low steps with handrails</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss method of working at team meetings / briefings – e.g. employees instructed <u>not</u> to climb / use chairs / tables / other furniture to access displays. correct positioning of access equipment. check condition of equipment prior to use.</li> </ul> <p>Information, training instruction</p> <p><b>Safe use of equipment</b></p> <p>Information, training <u>instruction</u> to those using access equipment (trained / competent individuals)</p>				<p>Ladders checked regularly to ensure safe working condition.</p> <p>Record of checks – Do Janitorial staff do this?</p> <p>Defect reporting system – e.g. ladders labelled "out of use" / repair and disposal procedures.</p>	

# Record the significant findings

What has the potential To cause harm (hazards) and what harm might result?	Who and how many people might be at risk?	What measures are already in place?	Severity	Likelihood	Risk rating	What further action (s) needs to be taken to reduce risk	By whom and by what date
		Monitor control measures through workplace supervision / workplace inspections,					
Poor manual handling technique ➤ person falls / falling objects ➤ back / <del>musculo</del> -skeletal disorders	Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal lifting policy</li> <li>Storage systems as per MHOR</li> <li>Adequate provision of handling aids</li> <li>Employees have information, instruction and <u>training</u> in safe manual handling at induction and annual refresher</li> <li>Manual handling tasks are risk assessed under MHOR</li> <li>Workplace supervision</li> </ul>				Where persons have pre-existing medical conditions or other factors which may affect their ability to use access <u>equipment</u> a separate risk assessment may be required. <u>This could be physical disability / pregnancy / young inexperienced employee.</u>	

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# Monitor and Review

Workplaces don't stay the same and things will change over time. Risk assessments should be reviewed and revised when you:


- Bring in new equipment
- Use different substances
- Change the work process, or
- The legislation changes



# Monitor and Review

Risk assessments should be reviewed on an ongoing basis, considering:

- Have there been any significant changes?
- Are there improvements you still need to make?
- Have your workers spotted a problem?
- What lessons have been learned from accidents or near misses?



**What can happen  
when things go  
wrong?**





# If you don't have risk assessments...

Having no suitable and sufficient risk assessments in place may result in:

- Injuries and illness
  - Increased absence costs
  - Low moral
  - Disruption of service provision
- Criminal proceedings:
  - Breaching health & safety legislation is a criminal offence resulting in criminal proceedings against an organisation/employer
  - Fines and prison sentences can be imposed depending on how serious any breach is

# If you don't have risk assessments...

- Compensation claims:
  - Claims could be made against an organisation/employer where there is potential negligence resulting in injury or illness
  - This can also have a knock on effect on future insurance costs
- Fees for intervention:
  - This a cost recovery scheme introduced by the Health & Safety Executive to cover costs
  - If a material breach of H&S legislation found when the HSE visit a charge of £157 per hour based on the amount of time it takes HSE to identify the breach and help you put things right

# Communication





# Communication

Risk assessments should be available to anyone who's health, safety and welfare is likely to be affected by the presence of any hazard

All persons involved in the activity should be informed of the risk and aware of the controls being applied



# Communication

## Remember

Risk assessment is a simple process that can be easily achieved by following a systematic approach.

If you need advice or assistance it is always available through the corporate health and safety team.

Email: [HSW@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:HSW@aberdeencity.gov.uk)