

HEALTH & SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENTS

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS



# LEGISLATION

* Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
* Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
* Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
* Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
* Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
* Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981
* Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992
* Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

* Establish what is to be risk assessed
* Identify who will carry out risk assessments
* Ensure that those risk assessing are competent to do so
* Utilise a risk assessment methodology that is appropriate
* Ensure actions arising from risk assessments are implemented
* Keep a register of risk assessments undertaken
* Ensure that risk assessments are regularly reviewed

## INTRODUCTION

A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of what in the school environment could cause harm, so that it can be determined whether enough precautions have been taken or whether more needs to be done to prevent harm.

This will involve identifying significant hazards in the school and, taking into consideration the precautions already in place, determining the level of risk that remains.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, along with many other pieces of legislation require every employer to make suitable and sufficient assessments of the risks that work activities may present to:

* Employees (for example, teachers, technicians, ancillary staff, caretakers etc)
* Non-employees (for example, pupils, members of the public, parents, visitors, contractors etc)

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR RISK ASSESSMENTS

Under the local management of schools regime, Governing Bodies and Headteachers must:

* Ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are completed for the establishment
* Ensure that all significant risks to the health and safety of employees and other persons have been recorded and brought to their attention
* Ensure that where necessary, more specialized risk assessments are undertaken (e.g. pregnant workers, SEN pupils)
* Ensure that risks are appropriately controlled and safe systems of work adopted, based upon the risk assessment findings
* Ensure that designated staff receive adequate training in risk assessment procedures so that suitable and sufficient risk assessments can be completed

## WHAT HAS TO BE RISK ASSESSED

The first stage of risk assessing is the establishment of what is to be assessed. There are no fixed rules on this and assessments can be aimed at general work activities, specific work activities (for example, manual handling), specific persons (for example lone workers or pregnant employees), pieces of equipment (for example, woodworking machinery) or environmental factors (such as noise).

### Primary Schools

Within the primary school sector, the following is a suggested list of risk assessments that should be completed:

* Premises risk assessment: this would cover building elements, plant and equipment as well as site manager activities etc
* Site grounds: this would cover the playgrounds, play equipment and gardens (including trees) found within the school grounds
* Staff work activities such as those of the site care team and a generic assessment for teaching staff members
* Fire risk assessment: this should be a separate risk assessment and should cover all premises that are on the schools grounds
* Legionella risk assessment: this should be completed for all water systems and is most likely to be undertaken by an external competent person
* Asbestos risk assessment: this should be completed as part of the schools asbestos management plan
* Security risk assessment: this should cover both physical security arrangements as well as procedural arrangements
* Classroom risk assessment: each classroom should have an easy to use template that covers curriculum and teacher well-being issues
* Educational visits: trips involving overnight stays, travel abroad or adventurous activities should be subject to a full risk assessment

The following risk assessments may have to be completed where deemed necessary:

* Children with special needs: a risk assessment should form part of the overall care plan for the pupil in question and can also cover the administration of medications
* Expectant mothers: staff who are pregnant must have a risk assessment undertaken on them
* Extended services: activities such as breakfast clubs and after school clubs or children’s centres can be covered
* Workstation assessments: where staff use computers for long-periods of time they can complete a DSE assessment
* Manual handling risk assessment: any member of staff required to lift children or heavy loads should have an individual assessment completed
* Contractors risk assessment: where contractors are undertaking any works, repairs, refurbishments etc an assessment should be completed

### Secondary Schools

In addition to the above, the following risk assessments should be completed for specific classroom activities:

* Design and Technology: to cover the use of each piece of equipment and be included in lesson plans and/or technicians risk assessment following CLEAPSS
* Textiles: to cover the use of each piece of equipment and be included in lesson plans and/or technicians risk assessment following CLEAPSS
* Chemistry: to cover use of all substances including use of radioactive substances and be included in lesson plans and/or technicians risk assessment following CLEAPPS
* Food: to cover food safety and hygiene and to be included in lesson plans
* Physical Education: to cover all physical education activities and to form part of lesson plans following AFPE guidance

## ESTABLISH WHO WILL CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENT

The risk assessment process needs to take account of the views of employees and/or their safety representatives who will have practical knowledge to contribute.

It should also involve management, whether or not advisers or consultants assist with the detail.

Even where the team approach is adopted, it is important that a nominated person is given ‘ownership’ of the risk assessments completed so that there are clear responsibilities and accountabilities for ensuring the risk control measures required are effectively implemented.

## RISK ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The HSE website on risk assessing states that the “level of detail in a risk assessment should be proportionate to the risk” and that “there are no fixed rules about how a risk assessment should be carried out; indeed it will depend on the nature of the work or business and the types of hazards and risks”.

Although the Health and Safety Executive do not prescribe one particular methodology for risk assessing, they do produce guidance that identifies various elements that need to be included in an assessment process, these being:

* the identification of the potential hazards
* the identification of those who could be harmed
* the evaluation of the risks
* recording the significant findings
* reviewing the risk assessment

In general terms, the level of risk arising from the work activity should determine the degree of sophistication of the risk assessment which suggests some level of foresight and planning is required to ensure the most appropriate techniques are selected.

This basic approach will be suitable for the majority of organisations particularly in lower risk environments. It is counterproductive to apply elaborate assessment methods to risks that are manifestly low risk.

## RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

### STEP 1: HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

Having decided what risk assessments need completing, establishments need to identify the hazards present. This may include:

* Following local authority or HSE guidance
* Manufacturers/suppliers instructions for safe use
* Talking to staff and their representatives
* Physical inspection of the premises
* Previous accident and incident data

**Note**: Hazard spotting exercises or workplace inspections are **not** risk assessments. They can however help identify risks or monitor the effectiveness of risk control measures and practices.

A full risk assessment may not be necessary. As a useful preliminary, or coarse filter, a risk appraisal can eliminate those risks which are either:-

1. Not significant: That is the risk is one of everyday life and the activities do not worsen it. A good example is falling down stairs which is an 'everyday' risk. However, falling downstairs whilst carrying a load is a risk to be appraised.
2. Eliminated or significantly reduced by controls: This may include ways of guarding machinery, ways of preventing dust exposure, ways of stopping falls from height etc. If this good practice is adopted the legal duty will be deemed to have been met.

It is advisable to conduct a preliminary risk assessment to ensure that all significant risks are identified and whether a risk assessment required by specific regulations is needed. Then the remaining risks are dealt with using this procedure.

### STEP 2: DETERMINE WHO MIGHT BE HARMED

In deciding who is at risk you will need to consider:

* The number of people likely to be exposed to the hazard
* The type of persons likely to be exposed
* The duration of exposure
* Those who may be at particular risk (e.g. young persons, trainees, students, visitors, expectant mothers, contractors etc)

In deciding how a person may be harmed, consider:

* The methods of work and other work-related factors (e.g. lone work)
* Provision and levels of information, instruction or training provided
* Experience/technical knowledge of the persons undertaking activities
* Disabilities or special needs of those who may be at risks

### STEP 3: RISK EVALUATION

Risk evaluation involves looking at what risk control measures are currently in place and deciding whether they adequately control the risk, in other words ‘what is being done now and how effective is that?’

It is important to distinguish between hazard and risk. A ***hazard*** is a source of, or situation for, potential harm. A ***risk*** is a combination of the likelihood of the hazard being realised and the severity of the harm caused, in other words:

RISK= PROBABILITY x CONSEQUENCE

For example, electricity can kill and therefore has a high hazard potential, however, in an office environment the risk is very small, provided that ‘live’ parts are insulated and metal casings are earthed. When evaluating risks:

* consider what you’re already doing to control the risks
* identify what further action you need to take to control the risks (for example from best practice)
* decide who needs to carry out the action
* determine when the action is needed by (prioritising higher risks)

### STEP 4: TAKING ACTION

The question to ask is ‘Do we need to do more to eliminate or control the risk’? The outcome of the risk assessment should be a plan of action which sets out, in priority order, what additional controls are necessary. It should also specify who will be responsible for taking action and when such action must be taken by.

Risk control should be based upon the following hierarchy:

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| --- | --- |
| Elimination | Can the job or work activity be discontinued? Can it be contracted out to specialists? |
| Substitution | Can a less hazardous method of work be adopted? Can the chemical or article used be substituted for something less harmful? |
| Engineering Controls | Can the hazard be enclosed e.g. machine guards? Can the hazard be separated from people e.g. noisy machinery in a sound proof enclosure? |
| Time and Distance | Can the time of exposure be reduced by job rotation? Can people be kept safely away from the hazard by distance?  |
| Personal Protective Equipment | For example, eye protection to protect against flying materials, steel toe capped boots to prevent foot injuries, acid resistant gloves to prevent burns to the skin*(Personal protective equipment should only be considered as a last resort when all other controls have been considered and rejected)* |

## Key Support Measures

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| Training | Are people sufficiently trained? This can be achieved through formal training, tool box talks, on the job training and specific health and safety training to deal with particular risks. Don’t forget refresher training! |
| Information and Instruction | Are there written working procedures, written instructions and safe systems of work readily available to the workforce? Are the procedures working effectively? Do they need to be reviewed? How do you communicate to workers on health and safety issues? |
| Supervision | Is the activity adequately supervised? Is the level of supervision provided proportionate to the risk and competence of the workers? |
| Maintaining, inspecting and checking | Are workplaces, plant and equipment regularly inspected and maintained? Does the workforce carry out visual checks before using equipment? Are there any statutory tests that need to be carried out on your equipment, for example, lifting equipment and local exhaust ventilation plant. |
| **Welfare Facilities** | Are washing facilities and toilets available? Do people have access to a rest room or a facility to eat and drink away from the work place? Is drinking water readily available where people work? |

### STEP 5: RECORD FINDINGS

The significant findings of the risk assessment must be recorded. The assessment should be available to people working with the hazards.

There is no general consensus on how a risk assessment form should be laid out. However, the forms detailed in the Appendix are recommended.

## MONITORING AND REVIEW

The risk assessment should be reviewed when it is no longer valid. This may be due to changes within the organization, external changes (e.g. new legislation), the identification of new hazards, accidents, new work methods, new employees. Assessments should also be reviewed following any incident or accident.

## REGISTER OF RISK ASSESSMENTS

It is good practice to keep a record or register of risk assessments that have been undertaken with the following information being recorded:

* Risk assessment that has been completed
* Name of person/s owning the risk assessment
* Any significant findings and associated control measures
* Review date for the risk assessment