



RISK ASSESSMENT FACT SHEET

Risk assessment is the key activity that underpins most workplace health and safety in the UK today. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a requirement on employers to carry out 'suitable and sufficient' assessments of the risks to the health and safety of their employees whilst at work and of persons not in their employment arising from or in connection with the business or undertaking.

The HSE states that the risk assessment is 'a careful examination of what could cause harm to people in your work so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm'.

Risk assessments need to be undertaken irrespective of the number of employees you might have, even sole traders should undertake the process. However, if you have more than 4 employees then the main findings must be recorded and kept. The record needs to cover all significant risks and clearly state the current position.

This nature of this assessment will vary dependent on the complexity of the risks, processes and personnel involved and the specific legal requirements and current standard safety procedures and codes of practice.

Risk assessments should be extensive and detailed enough to identify the significant risks arising from work, enable the employer to identify and prioritise the measures that need to be taken to protect people from harm and be appropriate to the nature of work.

Special attention needs to be given to certain categories of workers including young persons, expectant and nursing mothers, disabled workers and those employees who may need to work alone.

Risk assessments concentrate on two key areas 1) hazard ; an article, substance or situation that has the potential to cause harm or damage and 2) risk; the likelihood of harm occurring. Hazards will always exist in the workplace but the risks arising from them can be controlled in such a way that the likelihood of harm from the hazard is reduced to an acceptable minimum

A well executed risk assessment not only looks at the current workplace environment and work activities but will also consider accidents, incidents and any ill-health over previous years in order to identify any trend or condition that may not be immediately apparent.

Risk assessments are not one-off events but an on-going process whereby work methods and safety precautions are kept under regular review. All assessments need to be reviewed when there is a reason to suspect that it is no longer valid or when there has been a significant change in the matters to which it relates. Automatic reviews should be triggered if certain events take place. This may include a change in legislation, new equipment or work practices, recurrent accidents or enforcement action.