



HOW TO COMPLETE RISK ASSESSMENTS AND DECIDE ON CONTROL MEASURES

A risk assessment is a systematic examination of a task, job or process that you carry out at work for the purposes of:

- ✓ Identifying the significant hazards that are present (a hazard is something that has the potential to cause someone harm or ill health);
- ✓ Deciding if what you have already done reduces the risk of someone being harmed to an acceptable level, and if not;
- ✓ Deciding what further control measures you must take to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Risk Assessments should also be carried out to satisfy the requirements of legislation but above all to ensure the Health & Safety of employees.

WHO SHOULD DO RISK ASSESSMENTS?

Risk assessments should always be carried out by a person who is experienced and competent to do so, competence can be expressed as a combination of knowledge, awareness, training, and experience. If necessary, consult a more experienced member of staff or external professional help to assist with the risk assessment.

Remember, competence does not mean you have to know everything about everything, competence also means knowing when you know enough or when you should call in further expert help.

WHEN SHOULD RISK ASSESSMENTS BE DONE?

A separate risk assessment should be carried out for all tasks or processes undertaken by your organisation. They should be carried out before the task starts, or in the case of existing or long-running tasks, as soon as is reasonably practicable. Risk Assessments should also be reviewed on a regular basis: monthly, annually, bi-annually, depending on risk, or if something changes e.g. a new worker, a change of process or substance, etc.

NON COMPLIANCE

The penalties for failing to carry out risk assessments can be strict. The Health & Safety Executive can issue improvement or prohibition notices, and this is likely to happen where an inspector finds a situation with the potential to cause harm, for example an unguarded machine. If you are prosecuted and found guilty for more serious breaches, for example one of your staff has been seriously injured, then the courts can impose heavy fines and imprisonment. The lack of suitable risk assessments will weigh heavily against you.



WHAT ABOUT METHOD STATEMENTS?

A Safety Method Statement, sometimes called a 'safe system of work', must be produced for all jobs or tasks that contain some measure of risk. The request for a Method Statement can come at any time, Pre-Tender, Tender, Pre-start of contract, and sometimes after the contract has started, so it is best to be prepared.

HOW DO I COMPLETE A RISK ASSESSMENT?

There are 8 steps to carrying out a risk assessment:

- ✓ Identify the hazards
- ✓ Identify those at risk
- ✓ Identify existing control measures
- ✓ Evaluate the risk
- ✓ Decide/Implement control measures
- ✓ Record assessment
- ✓ Monitor and review
- ✓ Inform

Find out what the significant hazards associated with the task or processes are. There are several ways of identifying hazards - by observation, experience and talking to those who carry out the job. Look for the hazards that you could reasonably expect to result in significant harm.

Examine how you already control the risks; it is unlikely that your workers are getting injured on a daily basis, so you must have some controls in place already. To decide if those existing control procedures are adequate, and to evaluate the risk, complete a risk ranking which will determine the residual risk.



If the risk is not adequately controlled decide which new control procedures are required and ensure these procedures are implemented. The control measures are the actions performed to reduce either the probability of the accident happening or the severity of the outcome, and where possible both. When considering what measures to put in place it is important to consider both severity and likelihood, in order to minimise the overall risk.

Control measures should be practical and easy to understand (what to do and why they are doing it), applicable to the hazard, able to reduce the risk to acceptable levels, acceptable to the workforce and easy to operate. You should aim to get the risk to as low as is reasonably practicable until it is at a tolerable level.

The Ideas Distillery works directly with all types of organisations who want to improve their management systems to ISO and OHSAS standards. Our consultancy and advice will help you to embed quality, environmental and health & safety principles throughout your organisation.

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