

How to carry out a risk assessment and create a safety statement

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) provides the publication Guidelines on Risk Assessments and Safety Statements available to purchase a hard copy version or download free from their website www.hsa.ie.

Carrying out risk assessments, preparing and implementing a safety statement and maintaining both will not in themselves prevent accidents and ill health but they will reduce the likelihood of an occurrence. Under Section 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, employers and those who control workplaces must identify any hazards in their control and assess the risks associated by these hazards. A risk assessment is the ideal way to produce this analysis.

Section 20 of the Act, requires that an organisation produce a written programme to safeguard the safety and health of employees while they are at work and also the safety and health of other people who may be at the workplace including customers, visitors and members of the public. This takes the form of a Safety Statement.

The HSA recommends the following steps are taken in a risk assessment and documented in a safety statement:

- ❖ Safety and Health Policy – This should start with a declaration signed by senior management to give a commitment to ensuring that a workplace is as safe and healthy as is reasonably practical and that all statutory requirements are complied with. It should also state the duties of the employer.
- ❖ Identify Hazards – A hazard is anything that could cause harm – although in this scenario it should be work-place generated. Hazards can be related to materials, equipment, work activities, untidy workplaces, chemicals etc. Hazards that are not so obvious tend to be working temperatures, unsuitable lighting, noise, violence and unpredictable clients. A good place to start would be to review the accident records at the workplace.
- ❖ Assess Risks – A risk is the likelihood, great or small, that someone may be harmed by the occurrence of the hazards identified. Risk depends on the number of people exposed to the hazard, the likelihood of the risk causing injury to workers or others, how serious the injury would be should the risk occur, and the current levels of controlling the risk.
- ❖ Decide Precautions – Precautions can be reviewed once the hazards/risks have been identified. These precautions should prevent the risk from occurring, or at least minimise the effects of it. It may not be reasonable to prevent a risk from occurring entirely, but there should be some methods of controlling the risk – eg, providing adequate training and supervision.
- ❖ Record the Findings – The Safety Statement should record the findings of the Risk Assessment. It should also record how the precautions are to be organised and responsibilities assigned. It may include specific procedures, for example, the operating instructions or health and safety procedures, and also outline the responsibilities of certain members of staff with regards to health and safety (for example risk assessments or monitoring).
- ❖ Review and Update – As the Safety Statement needs to be relevant at all times it is extremely important that it is reviewed regularly and updated. It should also be available for inspection.

The guidance notes provided by the HSA provide a risk assessment proforma to assist in completing this process. Risk assessments are not difficult, but they do take time. It is sensible, therefore, to spread the load as far as is possible and for people to carry out risk assessments in their own particular area, where they best know about any hazards.

Because charities vary so much, it is difficult to be specific as to who should do what. However, as an example, the office manager should look at offices, the catering manager or head chef the supply of food and drink, the sales manager any retail outlets, the distribution manager the warehouse etc. The process should be overseen and co-ordinated by the person who has overall responsibility for health and safety. Systematically look at each area of the premises and note all of the hazards and risks, and any existing

safety measures. Note also any person who may be specifically at risk. You must then note any additional safety measures or 'controls' which will reduce those risks as far as possible. As well as the interior of the buildings, you must also look at the yards, car parks and other external areas and also events and activities away from your premises. In order to help you, a checklist is given on the next page, of common hazards which you should look for in each area being assessed. If any of these hazards are present, then record them and what you need to do about them. Look for any other hazards which may not be included in the checklist, such as specific activities or pieces of equipment which may cause harm.

You can calculate a risk rating in order to prioritise the implementation of the additional safety measures required.

It is not necessary to do this if you don't want to. Just leave the likelihood, severity and risk rating columns blank and note any existing safety measures and any additional ones that you decide to implement. However, any risk, which could result in a fatality, must receive priority attention.

Risk assessment checklist

Accidents and First Aid

- ❖ Provision of First Aid equipment
- ❖ Persons with First Aid training
- ❖ Procedures to deal with accidents
- ❖ Transport arrangements to hospital
- ❖ Examine existing arrangements and assess what is needed
- ❖ Accident report book

Fire safety

- ❖ Combustible materials, flammable liquids and accumulations of waste
- ❖ Heaters, smoking and other sources of heat
- ❖ Provision of fire exits, escape routes and signage
- ❖ Provision of fire detection equipment and fire fighting equipment
- ❖ Evacuation plans and training

Note: Regulation 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 requires every employer and every person controlling a workplace to identify the hazards of the place of work under his or her control and to assess the risks presented by those hazards. The employer must be in possession of a written assessment of the risks as they apply to employees, including any single employee, group, or groups of employees who may be exposed.

Electrical safety

- ❖ Condition of fixed electrical installation, including switches and sockets
- ❖ Condition of portable electrical appliances, including leads and plugs
- ❖ Use of unauthorised electrical appliances and temporary wiring
- ❖ Mechanical damage to wiring

Gas safety

- ❖ Condition and maintenance arrangements for fixed gas boilers and heaters
- ❖ Condition and arrangements for use, including storage and changing of cylinders for portable Liquid Petroleum Gas heaters

Control of hazardous substances

Internal

- ❖ Cleaning materials
- ❖ Paints, solvents, adhesives and other chemicals

- ❖ Types, amounts, storage arrangements
- ❖ Fumes and dusts
- ❖ Provision of personal protective equipment

External

- ❖ Pesticides, herbicides, petrol
- ❖ Types, amounts, storage arrangements
- ❖ Provision of personal protective equipment

Plant and machinery

Internal

- ❖ Woodworking machinery
- ❖ Metalworking machinery
- ❖ Lifts, hoists and other lifting equipment
- ❖ Ladders and scaffolds including storage and accessibility
- ❖ Display screen and computer equipment
- ❖ Any other machinery and equipment

External

- ❖ Forklift trucks
- ❖ Lawnmowers, gangmowers, strimmers, etc.

Slips, trips and falls

Internal

- ❖ Loose carpets, rugs, mats and other floor coverings
- ❖ Loose and uneven tiles, stone paving and floorboards
- ❖ Trailing leads and other obstructions
- ❖ Spillages of water and other liquids
- ❖ Worn, steep and uneven steps and stairs
- ❖ Inadequate lighting, lack of handrails

External

- ❖ Uneven and poorly maintained yards, car parks, paths and steps
- ❖ Potholes, tree roots and unprotected drops
- ❖ Long grass and undergrowth
- ❖ Poor drainage of paths and growth of algae
- ❖ Inadequate lighting and lack of handrails

Lighting

Internal

- ❖ Adequacy of lighting
- ❖ Pay particular attention to stairs, steps, cellars and basements

External

- ❖ Paths, steps, drives, car parks, boiler room steps and entrances

Falls from a height

Internal

- ❖ Arrangements for light bulb changing
- ❖ Mezzanine floors
- ❖ Use of unsecured ladders
- ❖ Unprotected openings and walkways at high level

External

- ❖ Clearing of gutters and valleys
- ❖ Low parapets and balustrades

Food hygiene

- ❖ Extent of food preparation
- ❖ Nature of foods to be prepared and stored
- ❖ Areas used for food preparation
- ❖ Facilities for washing and preparation of foodstuffs
- ❖ Facilities for storage of foodstuffs
- ❖ Experience, training and competence of food handlers

Manual handling

- ❖ Moving and lifting of stock, plant and other equipment
- ❖ Numbers required
- ❖ Specialist equipment needed

Display screen equipment

- ❖ List all computer equipment
- ❖ Who uses it and for how long
- ❖ Check seating, workstation, screen, software

Hazardous buildings/glazing

- ❖ Loose brickwork, stonework, falling masonry, slates, tiles, gutters, flagpoles
- ❖ Detail any glass in windows below waist height and in doors or beside doors below shoulder height that is not of safety material or protected against breakage
- ❖ Narrow panes up to 250mm need not be included
- ❖ Check if any asbestos present

Personal safety

- ❖ Lone working
- ❖ Handling of cash
- ❖ Means of raising an alarm, summoning assistance

Other activities and hazards

- ❖ Events, exhibitions, work away, etc.
- ❖ Age-related hazards (children/elderly)
- ❖ Disability access/provision
- ❖ Fêtes, sponsored walks, fundraising activities
- ❖ Look for and note any other hazards that could cause someone harm, which are not included in the above checklist

Risk assessment calculator

You need to grade both the likelihood and severity of each risk from 1 to 3. The grades are then multiplied together to give a risk rating.

Likelihood

The likelihood of something happening can be graded as:

- 1 = Low (seldom)
- 2 = Medium (frequently)
- 3 = High (certain or near certain)

Severity

The severity of injury if something does happen can be graded as:

- 1 = Low (minor cuts and bruises)
- 2 = Medium (serious injury or incapacitated for 3 days or more)
- 3 = High (fatality or a number of persons seriously injured)

Having assessed both likelihood and severity, a risk rating can be calculated by multiplying the likelihood by the severity. This will give a rating from 1 to 9.

Risk rating matrix

The implementation of additional controls can then be prioritised as follows:

Risk rating:

- 1 – 2 = low priority
- 3 – 4 = medium priority
- 6 – 9 = high priority

- ❖ With low priority, no action at all may be required
- ❖ With medium priority additional control measures or a change to systems of working may be required
- ❖ With high priority, it may be necessary to stop the particular activity or restrict access to the area until action has been taken