

# INFORMATION DOCUMENT

## RISK ASSESSMENT

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As part of managing the health and safety of a business, you must control the risks in your workplace. To do this you need to think about what might cause harm to people and decide whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm.

A risk assessment is the formalized process of identifying hazards and dangers to peoples' physical and mental health, safety and wellbeing that may be posed by a task, process or operation; evaluating risk and then identifying sensible measures to eliminate or control these risks to an acceptable level before they can cause any harm.

If the risk is unacceptable then controls must be introduced to either eliminate hazards or create a safe place or person. Any residual risk must be acceptable.

There are five steps to risk assessment:

1. Identifying the hazards
2. Identifying the people who might be harmed
3. Evaluating the risk
4. Recording significant findings and implementing them
5. Reviewing the risk assessment

### 1. Identifying the hazards

The first step in the risk assessment process is to accurately identify all the significant hazards associated with the activity. A good starting point is to walk around your area where the activity takes place and think about the different things that could potentially injure participants or employees or harm their health. Remember that you should identify all the significant hazards that exist in a place, not only the ones that are poorly controlled.

When you are the same space every day it is easy to overlook some hazards. To help you identify the ones that matter:

- Check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets for chemicals and equipment as they can be very helpful in explaining the hazards and instructions for safe use, cleaning and maintenance.
- Look back at accidents and ill-health records – these can help to identify less obvious hazards. External data, such as national statistics published by the authorities, can also be useful.
- Take account of non-routine operations (i.e. maintenance or cleaning operations).

### 2. Identifying the people who might be harmed

The second step is to identify how participants, employees and others might be harmed by the hazards that you have identified.

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed, as this can help identify the best way of controlling the risk. Consider that some people might be particularly vulnerable to harm, such as elderly people, children, people with reduced mobility, pregnant women, etc.

Employees are often aware of the hazards of the activity and notice things that are not as obvious, and probably have some good ideas on how to control the risks

### 3. Evaluating the risk

Having identified the hazards and the people who might be harmed by them, you then have to decide how likely it is that harm will occur. Risk is a part of everyday life and you are not expected to eliminate all risks, but you should be aware of which of these risks are acceptable, and which need to be managed or reduced.

You need to do everything that is 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk.

The level of risk posed by a hazard is a combination of how severe the harm might be, and how likely it is that the hazard will cause harm. Both "Likelihood" and "Severity" are usually scored on a scale of 1 to 5. If you multiply the score you have given on the likelihood scale by the score you have given on the severity scale, you will get the overall Risk Score.

$$\text{Risk} = \text{Likelihood} \times \text{Severity}$$

The risk score will determine the control measures that you need to put in place.

The following matrix shows how risks are classified:

LIKELIHOOD		1	2	3	4	5
5	5	10	15	20	25	
4	4	8	12	16	20	
3	3	6	9	12	15	
2	2	4	6	8	10	
1	1	2	3	4	5	
	X	1	2	3	4	5
		SEVERITY				

When hazards are identified through the risk assessment it is necessary to decide on the control measures needed to reduce risk to an acceptable level. Identifying the further action that is needed and taking that action is the most important part of the risk assessment.

There is a list of priorities to put in place control measures to minimise risk, and different types of controls can be implemented at once:

1. Elimination  
Eliminating the hazard should always be the preferred option, since the risk associated with that hazard is also eliminated. However, if this is not possible, there are some other practical steps you could take.
2. Substitution  
If it is not possible to eliminate the risk, you should substitute the risk for something that creates less risk.
3. Engineering controls  
If it is not possible to substitute the risk, you should look to use engineering controls such as preventing access to the hazards, or safety devices and features that ensure that the item is used in the correct way.
4. Administrative controls  
If it is not possible to put in place engineering controls, you should put in place administrative controls. For example, you can give a safety briefing before an activity.
5. PPE  
If it is not possible to put in place administrative controls, you should make sure you use personal protective equipment (PPE). For example, ensure that customers on snowmobiles are wearing helmets.

You should put in place control measures to reduce to as low as reasonably practicable. If you feel risk remains high, then you should put in place further control measures. Safety needs must be prioritized.

#### 4. Recording significant findings and implementing them

Significant activities must have a documented risk assessment that is able to demonstrate that all major risks have been carefully considered and controlled. Generic templates can be found online and can be useful to get you started and to help guide your own specific risk assessment. However, you should modify and adapt it to reflect the risks that you have identified. Risks and controls should be added or removed to make the risk assessment relevant to your specific site or operation.

If your risk assessment identifies a number of hazards, the most serious risks should be addressed first. You should also establish whether there are improvements that can be implemented quickly, even temporarily, until more reliable controls can be put in place.

Some tips for completing a specific risk assessment include:

- Go and have an actual look – Do not just sit in an office and think about what the risks are from afar. You must go to the place you are risk assessing and examine all areas first-hand. If you are risk assessing an activity, make sure you actually watch the activity in progress and/or participate in it so that you really understand what's involved.
- Involve the whole team – Do not just do the risk assessment on your own, make sure you solicit feedback from other people who have might have a better insight. Ask them what they think the hazards are, and what might be done about them.
- Think hypothetically – Don't just examine the place on a specific day and assume it is like that always. Always ask, 'What if...?'; for instance; what if someone with reduced mobility wants to participate in the activity? If it could happen, think about the consequences and what you will do as a result.

Once you have documented the control measures you will put in place, make sure everyone knows exactly what they are. You may be relying on other people to implement the control measures you have suggested so they need to know exactly what they should be doing.

You need to check that all the controls measures detailed on your risk assessment are actually being implemented on a consistent basis. If your control measures are not being implemented fully, your risk assessment becomes just a bit of paper with no value. A risk assessment must guide action.

You can find an example risk assessment template on the next page.

<b>Description of Activity/Activities/Location being Risk Assessed</b>												
<b>Risk Assessment Location Name and Address</b>												
<b>Risk Assessor Name(s) (Detail all Persons Involved in Assessment)</b>				<b>Date of Initial Risk Assessment</b>			<b>Time of Initial Risk Assessment</b>					
<b>Risk Assessment Reviewed on</b>												
<b>Reason For Review</b>												
<b>Reviewed by (Detail all Persons Involved in Review)</b>												
Hazard	BEFORE controls have been implemented			Who might be harmed	Controls implemented to mitigate risk	AFTER controls have been implemented			Do control measures reduce risk to ALARP?	Person(s) responsible for implementing control measures	Deadline for implementation	Date Completed
	Likelihood (0 – 5)	Severity (0 – 5)	Overall risk (L, M, H)			Likelihood (0 – 5)	Severity (0 – 5)	Overall risk (L, M, H)				

## 5. Reviewing the risk assessment

Risk assessments should be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect changing circumstances and risk. They should be reviewed once per year, but also following an accident or incident and after any change in any operations or processes.

The following questions can help you decide whether the risk assessment should be reviewed:

- Have there been any significant changes (i.e. process, equipment, legal standards)?
- Are there improvements you still need to make?
- Have the employees spotted a problem?
- Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses?

Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.