

CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF

CODE OF GUIDANCE

RISK ASSESSMENT

Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Guidance is to provide a background to the legislation requiring risk assessments and to give an outline of how risk assessments should be undertaken. A standard Council risk assessment form is attached in Appendix A.

The Code of Guidance Addresses the following:-

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- 3.0 What is a Risk Assessment ?
- 4.0 Five Steps to Risk Assessment
- 5.0 Recording
- 6.0 Review and revision
- 7.0 How thorough should Risk Assessments be ?
- 8.0 Preventive and protective measures
- 9.0 Influencing working practice

[Appendix A – Cardiff County Council, Risk Assessment Form 4.C.219.](#)

1.0 Introduction

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 applies to all work activities and work premises and everyone at work has duties and responsibilities under the Act. The County Council, as an employer, has a general duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of both employees and anyone else who may be affected by its activities. Employees also have duties under the Act to take reasonable care and to co-operate with the employer in matters of health and safety.

In addition to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 there is other legislation which specifically requires the employer to assess risks in the workplace. These Regulations are:-

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended)
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
- Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002

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- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006
- Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1998
- Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999

This Code of Guidance outlines the process for carrying out a risk assessment under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. For details of assessing risks in relation to the other Regulations listed above, it is necessary to refer to specific Codes of Guidance on those subjects.

2.0 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

These Regulations require every employer to undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the Health and Safety of employees and other people. The significant findings of the risk assessments must be put in writing and employees must be informed of the findings.

3.0 What is a Risk Assessment?

An assessment of risk is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in the work activity, could cause harm to people. It is a means of deciding if sufficient measures have been taken to reduce harm or if further measures are required. It is a proactive measure to ensure that all risks to health and safety are properly under control. The aim is to minimise the likelihood of injury or ill health.

The risk assessment provisions of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require an assessment of all risks in the workplace that is, what could cause harm to employees or members of the public, and the likelihood that harm will occur in practice.

A risk assessment should usually involve identifying the hazards present in any undertaking (whether arising from work activities or from other factors, e.g. the layout of the premises) and then evaluating the extent of the risks involved, taking into account whatever precautions are already in place.

There is no expectation to eliminate all risk, but people should be protected 'as far as is reasonably practicable'. This means taking action to control the health and safety risks except where the cost (in terms of time and effort as well as money) of doing so is 'grossly disproportionate' to the reduction in the risk.

When carrying out a risk assessment, a distinction should be made between "hazard" and "risk"

Hazard is something with the potential to cause harm eg electricity, chemicals, moving parts of machinery, work at height, methods of work etc.;

Risk expresses the likelihood that the harm from a particular hazard is realised;

The severity of the risk depends on the number of people who might be exposed and the consequences for them.

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Risk therefore, reflects both the likelihood that harm will occur and its severity.

Where all the hazards are known and the risks are readily apparent this detailed approach may not be necessary.

4.0 Five Steps to Risk Assessment

The Health and Safety Executive, in their publication entitled "[Five Steps to Risk Assessment](#)" suggest the following practical approach:

Step 1 - Look for hazards

Walk around the workplace and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Concentrate on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people. Ask employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things which are not immediately obvious. Manufacturers' instructions or datasheets and accident, ill health or violent incident records can also help you spot hazards and put risks in their true perspective.

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed, and how

Think about people who may not be in the workplace all the time and consider the times they may need to work within a 24hour period, e.g. cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance personnel, etc. Include members of the public, or people you share your workplace with, if there is a chance they could be injured or their health affected by your activities.

Step 3 - Evaluate the risks arising from the hazard, and decide whether

Existing precautions are adequate or more should be done. Even after all precautions have been taken, usually some risk remains. What you have to decide for **each significant hazard** is whether this remaining risk is **low, medium or high**. **First**, ask yourself whether you have done all the things that the law says you have got to do. For example, there are legal requirements on prevention of access to dangerous parts of machinery. **Then** ask yourself whether generally accepted industry standards are in place. But don't stop there – think for yourself, because the law also says that you must do what is reasonably practicable to keep your workplace safe. Your real aim is to make all risks small by adding to your precautions if necessary.

Improving health and safety need not be expensive. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents, putting some non-slip material on slippery steps, are inexpensive precautions considering potential risks.

If you find that something needs to be improved, ask yourself:

- (a) Can I **get rid of the hazard** altogether?
- (b) If not how can I **control the risks** so that harm is unlikely?

Only use personal protective equipment when there is nothing else that you can reasonably do e.g. it should generally be considered as a last resort.

If the work you do tends to vary a lot, or if you or your employees move from one site to another, select those hazards which you **can reasonably foresee** and assess the risks from them. After that, if you spot any unusual hazard when you get to a site, get information from others on site, and take any appropriate action.

If you share a workplace, tell the other employers and self-employed people there about any risks your work could cause them, and what precautions you are taking. Also, think about the risks to your workforce from those who share your workplace.

Step 4 - Record your findings

If you have five or more employees you must record the significant findings of your assessment. This means (1) writing down the more significant hazards and (2) recording your most important conclusions - for example, "Electrical installations: insulation and earthing checked and found sound", or "Fume from welding: local exhaust ventilation provided and regularly checked". You must also inform your employees about your findings.

There is no need to show how you did your assessment, provided you can demonstrate that:

- a proper check was made;
- you asked **who** might be affected;
- you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the **number** of people who could be involved;
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low
- you involved your staff and / or their representatives
- there is an adequate process established and put into practice for monitoring work activity in which checks are made to establish whether identified control measures are being implemented, stay in place and remain effective. A suitable monitoring programme will take all risks into account but should be properly targeted and **documented** . For example, low risks might be dealt with by general monitoring every month or two covering a wide range of workplace precautions such as the condition of premises, floors, passages, stairs, lighting, welfare facilities and first aid. Higher risks need more frequent and detailed monitoring, perhaps weekly or even, in extreme cases, daily or before use.

Make a plan of action to deal with the most important improvements first. A good plan of action often includes a mixture of different things such as:

- Improvements which are needed immediately
- simple improvements that can be done quickly, perhaps as a temporary solution until more reliable controls are in place;
- long-term solutions to those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health;
- long-term solutions to those risks with the worst potential consequences;
- arrangements for training employees on the main risks that remain and how they are to be controlled;

- clear responsibilities – who will lead on what action, and by when.

Keep the written document for future reference or use. It could be scrutinised by a Health and Safety Executive Inspector or in a court of law ; It can also remind you to keep an eye on particular matters.

To make things simpler, you can refer to other documents, such as manuals, the arrangements in the health and safety policy statement, , manufacturers' instructions, and other health and safety procedures. These may already list hazards and precautions. You don't need to repeat all that, and it is up to you whether you combine all the documents, or keep them separately. If other documents are referenced, the full document title should be used and the document checked to ensure it is relevant and correct .

Step 5 - Review your assessment from periodically and revise it if necessary.

All risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually and if there are any changes in the workplace ,e.g. new machinery, or after an accident or near miss incident. The review should not just be a desk top/date changing exercise but should go through the whole risk assessment process and take into consideration any new guidance, available technology and any other relevant information . Monitoring of identified risk control measures, employee feedback and accident history may indicate a need for improvement.

If there is any significant change, you should add to the assessment to take account of the new hazards. It is good practice to review your assessment periodically.

Do not amend your assessment for every trivial change, or for each new job, unless the new job introduces significant new hazards of its own. In which case you will need to consider them in their own right and do whatever you need to keep the risks down to an acceptable level.

5.0 Recording

Cardiff Council has risk assessment forms (an example is included in Appendix A), which are to be used to record the findings of all risk assessments undertaken, and they detail the following:

- the significant hazards identified in the assessment. That is, those hazards which might pose serious risk to workers or others who might be affected by the work activity if they were not properly controlled;
- the existing control measures in place and the extent to which they control the risks (this need not replicate details of measures more fully described in works manuals etc. but could refer to them);
- the population which may be affected by these significant risks or hazards, including any groups of employers who are especially at risk;

- (iv) the severity of the risk from the hazards identified;
- (v) details of existing control measures and any further actions required to reduce the risk to a more acceptable level;
- (vi) The residual level of risk after the controls in (v) have been implemented

It is the responsibility of respective line managers to ensure that risk assessments undertaken for their areas of work are placed on the CIS system. It is the responsibility of Service Areas to ensure this is monitored and risk assessment records are maintained accordingly.

6.0 Review and revision

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to review and, if necessary, modify their risk assessments, since assessment should not be a once-and-for-all activity. The nature of work changes; the appreciation of hazards and risks may develop. Adverse events may take place even if a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been made and appropriate preventative and protective measures taken. As a minimum risk assessments should be reviewed annually.

There needs to be a review of the risk assessment if there are developments that suggest that it may no longer be valid (or that it can be improved). In most cases, it is prudent to plan to review risk assessments at regular intervals - the time between reviews being dependant on the nature of the risks and the degree of change likely in the work activity. Such reviews should form part of standard management practice.

Please note – A risk assessment review should be a practical and genuine activity undertaken in a responsible manner. The time and resources involved to review each risk assessment should be proportionate to the level of risk concerned. Simply changing the date of the assessment without undertaking a meaningful review is NOT considered to be acceptable.

Records should be kept for the review history for each risk assessment. This demonstrates the ongoing management of health and safety for the subject of the risk assessment over time. The records are also important as evidence e.g. to show a relevant enforcing authority on request or in the event of criminal prosecution or a civil claim for personal injury against the Council

7.0 How thorough should the Risk Assessment be?

The risk assessment provisions in the Management Regulations require that the assessment of risks must be “suitable and sufficient”. This indicates that they do not have to be over elaborate. In deciding the amount of effort that is put into assessing risks the assessor has to judge whether the hazards are significant and whether they are covered by satisfactory precautions so that the risks are small. In general the level of detail and degree of complexity of a risk assessment should be proportionate to the overall level of risk e.g. an activity presenting a low risk of injury should not lead to as detailed or complex risk assessment as an activity presenting a high level of risk.

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“Suitable and sufficient”

A suitable and sufficient risk assessment should:

- (i) identify the significant risks arising out of the work activity.

Lower priority can be given to trivial risks and those risks arising from routine activities associated with life in general, unless the work activity compounds those risks, or there is evidence of significant relevance to the particular work activity.

Employers are expected to take reasonable steps, e.g. by reading HSE guidance, the trade press, company or supplier manuals etc. to familiarise themselves with the hazards and risks in their work.

- (ii) enable the employer to identify and prioritise the measures that need to be taken to comply with the relevant statutory provisions.

- (iii) be appropriate to the nature of the work and such that it remains valid for a reasonable period of time.

For relatively static operations, the risk assessment should be such that it is not necessary to repeat it every time someone is exposed to a hazard in comparable circumstances.

Where the detailed work activity may change fairly frequently or the workplace itself changes and develops e.g. on a temporary work site or where the work involves peripatetic workers moving from site to site, the initial broad assessment must be supplemented by more task/location specific assessments.

The assessment must be undertaken by a competent person i.e. someone who has the appropriate knowledge, experience or training in the risk assessment process and a good working knowledge of the work processes / tasks being risk assessed. The assessor should also involve management and others who are actually involved in the work activity as well as safety representatives.

The assessment will depend on the nature of the undertaking and the type and extent of the hazards and risks. In some cases it will not be possible to make a suitable and sufficient assessment without specialist advice in respect of unfamiliar risks, such as those requiring some knowledge of ergonomics or the more complex processes and techniques in the Council.

For small undertakings presenting few or simple hazards a suitable and sufficient risk assessment can be a very straightforward process based on judgement and requiring no specialist skills or complicated techniques. At the other extreme, there may be complex situations requiring special techniques such as quantified risk assessment.

In some cases a single exercise covering all risks in a workplace or activity may be appropriate; in other cases separate assessment exercises for the risks arising from particular operations or groups of hazards may be more effective. In all cases, it is important that a structured approach to risk assessment is adopted.

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A range of example risk assessments are available on the Health and Safety Executive website (at the following internet address <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/index.htm>) which give an indication of what a straightforward risk assessment for small businesses or workplaces might look like.

8.0 Preventive and protective measures

The preventive and protective measures that have to be taken following the risk assessment depend upon the relevant legislation - both the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and legislation covering particular hazards or sectors of work - and the risk assessment. In deciding upon the measures the following principles should be applied:

- (a) avoid a risk altogether, e.g. by not using or stocking a particular dangerous substance or article if it is not essential;
- (b) combat risks at source i.e. if steps are slippery, treating or replacing them is better than providing a warning sign;
- (c) wherever possible, adapt work to the individual especially as regards the design of workplaces, the choice of work equipment and the choice of working and production methods, with a view in particular to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined work rate. This helps reduce possible adverse effects on health and safety;
- (d) take advantage of technological and technical progress, which often offers opportunities for improving working methods and making them safer;
- (e) risk prevention measures need to form part of a coherent policy and approach having the effect of progressively reducing those risks that cannot be prevented or avoided altogether, and which will take account of the way work is to be organised, working conditions, the working environment and any relevant social factors. Health and safety policies required under Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 should be prepared and applied by reference to these principles;
- (f) give a priority to those measures which protect the whole workplace and all those who work there, and so yield the greatest benefit;
- (g) the avoidance, prevention and reduction of risks at work needs to be an accepted part of the approach and attitudes at all levels of the organisation and to apply to all its activities, i.e. the existence of an active health and safety culture affecting the organisation as a whole needs to be assured.

9.0 Influencing Working Practice

The significant findings of risk assessment should be communicated to those employees who are affected.

Working practice may be influenced to a greater degree with the production of work instructions for the required work activity rather than simply providing the risk assessment itself to employees. Adequate instruction is essential to the correct performance of actions and the work instructions should provide a documented process sequence for employees to perform work activity in the safest and most efficient method.

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The effective monitoring of work activity can also be a method of influencing working practice.

Further Information:

Health and Safety Advisers , Corporate Services 02920 872635

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the associated Approved Code of Practice and Guidance – L21

HSE Leaflet Five Steps to Risk Assessment (IND(G)163L).

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>

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