

A Checklist for a Health and Safety Risk Assessment

Business Information Factsheet

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Introduction

All employers, and certain self-employed workers and contractors, are required to assess the risks to the health and safety of anyone who may be affected by their work activities.

Self-employed people who carry out a business activity which may pose a risk to the health and safety of other persons, or is of a 'prescribed description' - such as agriculture, construction, quarrying, mining, offshore work or high-risk chemical sites - must protect themselves and others from risk to their health and safety.

Employers must consider all employees, but, in particular, must ensure that they are aware of the risks to:

- Young workers.
- Trainees.
- Expectant mothers.
- Staff with disabilities.
- Visitors.
- Contractors, such as cleaners and maintenance staff.
- Members of the general public.
- Home workers.

A health and safety risk assessment needs to cover all work activities, including items such as display screen equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE), hazardous substances and manual handling.

This checklist should be used in conjunction with BIF 289, A Guide to Carrying Out Health and Safety Risk Assessments, which provides more detailed information about the background to the various regulations and how to comply with them.

Before carrying out a risk assessment

Employers, and relevant self-employed people, should consider the following before carrying out a risk assessment:

- Has a competent person been appointed (ie someone who is appropriately trained and experienced) to carry out the risk assessment?

- If there is no-one in the business or organisation with the appropriate skills or competences, is it possible to appoint an external health and safety consultant?
- Has everyone been identified who may be at risk in the workplace or may be harmed by work activities, and is it understood how or why they may be affected?
- Does the business employ home workers? If so, the risk assessment must also cover their working environment at home.

What to include in the risk assessment

A hazard is anything that can cause harm, whereas risk is the chance that somebody will be harmed by the hazard. A risk assessment should assess the following:

Place of work (includes home, factory or office)

- Is there anything preventing easy access to and exit from the place of work?
- Are there any obstructions to walkways or fire escape routes?
- Can any slip/trip/fall hazards be identified?
- Is the building structure sound - both internally and externally?
- Is there a risk of falling objects from anywhere inside or outside the building?
- Is liquid and gas piped into the building and are these pipes in a good state of repair?

Security in and around premises

- Is there sufficient security in and around the premises, including security lighting?
- Is there adequate, secure door locks and door entry system?
- Is there an intruder alarm system and has it been tested recently?
- Are there any security issues that may cause risk to motorists or pedestrians during the day or at night?

Working environment

- Is the quality and flow of air good and is there sufficient ventilation or air conditioning?
- Is there an issue with humidity? Air that is too dry can lead to static shock, dry skin and respiratory problems.
- Is the lighting good, both during the day and at night?
- Can a stable, reasonable temperature be maintained in the workplace?
- Are there any issues with noise levels?
- Are there any hot or cold surfaces or liquids that people may come into contact with that could cause burns?
- Is there good general hygiene and cleanliness in the workplace?

Personnel

- Are all employees and contractors competent to carry out their duties?
- Are all staff physically fit, with no known infectious diseases?
- Have all staff, contractors and visitors been informed of good health and safety practices and warned of any known hazards?
- Are any expectant mothers or mothers who are breast-feeding employed by the business, and are there suitable facilities for them?
- Are there any employees with disabilities, and who have specific requirements as a result?

Employee health

- Are any staff suffering from visual display unit (VDU)-related eye strain or headaches?
- Are any staff suffering from repetitive strain injuries (RSI) or work-related upper limb disorders (WRULD)?
- Could staff be suffering from any musculoskeletal injuries relating to manual handling issues or the position of their chair and desk and their resulting posture?
- Do any staff suffer from respiratory or breathing problems?
- Is there any risk of staff contracting food poisoning or ingesting hazardous substances?
- Are any staff suffering from skin sensitisation, rashes or dermatitis?
- Is there a first-aid kit on site, a designated first aider and a list of emergency contacts in the event of accidents?

Electricity

- Has a visual inspection been conducted of all electrical mains points and extension leads?
- Are there any interconnected extension leads in use? These will cause a fire risk and therefore should be removed.
- Have the fuses in any mains distribution boards been checked recently?

Fire

- Do all employees, contractors and visitors have knowledge of fire safety guidelines, including the location of fire alarms, fire escapes, fire meeting points and fire extinguishers?
- Are employees aware of the emergency contacts they need to call in the event of a fire?
- Has a full practice fire drill been conducted in the past six months?
- Are there any combustible materials or waste or flammable liquids stored on any premises?
- Is there a risk of electrical overload, short-circuit or sparking from any electrical equipment?
- Has the gas central heating boiler been serviced in the past year?

Equipment

- Is all equipment stored and sited in a stable manner?
- Is all equipment fit for purpose and does it get regularly checked for faults?
- Have all electrical items, such as computers, printers, kettles and microwave ovens, been checked for faults?
- Are there any trailing cables and leads lying across floors or under desks?
- Are staff aware of the health and safety issues relating to the use of stepladders, and have the ladders been checked for stability?
- Are employees provided with guidelines on lifting and manual handling issues and are there any risks of staff hurting themselves through manual handling?

Substances/materials

- Are cleaning agents such as bleach stored in a safe place?
- Is personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves or goggles, supplied to protect staff from dangerous substances?
- Is there any risk from dust, fumes, gas or carbon monoxide, especially from gas central heating?

Evaluating risks and deciding what action to take

When evaluating risks, employers must decide whether existing precautions are adequate or if further action is necessary.

In particular:

- Can existing procedures be changed if they are hazardous?
- Can access to the hazard be prevented, for example, by putting up a guard?
- Can exposure to the hazard be reduced?
- Could risks be reduced by issuing PPE or protective clothing?

In addition, employers have a legal obligation to ensure that:

- Any precautions they have taken meet legal requirements.
- Any precautions they have taken comply with a recognised industry standard.
- Any precautions they have taken represent good practice.
- Any precautions reduce risks as far as is reasonably practicable.
- They have provided adequate instruction and training to staff, and employees have undertaken any mandatory certifications and refresher courses if working with hazardous substances.
- They have implemented adequate systems and procedures to minimise risk.

Keeping records of your risk assessment

Employers with five or more employees must record any significant findings of the risk assessment.

They must record the following:

- Any significant hazards in the workplace.
- All existing controls that are in place to deal with hazards.
- Risks that are not adequately controlled and the action that has been taken to resolve any issues.
- Details of employees and groups of people who are in high-risk categories, such as pregnant women or young workers.
- Any important conclusions reached from the risk assessment.

Employers also need to set a date to review and revise the risk assessment, and document this in their records. A risk assessment should be carried out at least once every 12 months, but if changes are made to the office layout or new equipment or machinery has been installed, a risk assessment should be carried out as soon as possible following the change.

Further information

BIF 2 An Introduction to Health and Safety Regulations

BIF 22 A Guide to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)

BIF 39 A Health and Safety Compliance Checklist

BIF 95 Choosing and Using a Health and Safety Consultant

BIF 122 A Guide to Fire Safety Measures

BIF 140 A Guide to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

BIF 289 A Guide to Carrying Out Health and Safety Risk Assessments

Useful publications

'Risk assessment: A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace'

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Website: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf

Useful contacts

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is responsible for health and safety regulation in Great Britain. It publishes guidance on the health and safety obligations of employers.

Tel: 0300 003 1747

Website: www.hse.gov.uk

The Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) is responsible for health and safety regulation in Northern Ireland. It provides information on the health and safety obligations of employers.

Tel: 0800 032 0121

Website: www.hseni.gov.uk

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work provides an online interactive risk assessment tool.

Website: www.oiraproject.eu

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