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# A Practical Guide to Risk Assessment

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## 1. The Purpose of Risk Assessment

A risk assessment has 3 purposes:

- i) The first is to identify all the things which **may cause harm** to employees and others (the HAZARDS).
- ii) The second is to consider the chance of that harm actually occurring to anyone in each particular case, and the possible consequences which could come from it (the RISKS).
- iii) The third is to enable employers to plan, introduce and monitor preventative measures to ensure that risks are continually controlled. Without effective assessment there can seldom be effective control.

The assumption on the above is that so far, nothing has been done already about complying with existing law. This assumption is incorrect because risks will have been identified in the past (though probably not all!) and will be being controlled in conformity with existing requirements. At best, therefore, the formal exercise of risk assessment will confirm that the Company's hazards are identified and already adequately controlled. At worst, assessment will identify potential hazards and the risk they present in time for effective action to be taken to correct them before any incident takes place.

## 2. Definition of Hazard and Risk

'HAZARD' means the potential to cause harm, including ill-health and injury, damage to property, plant, products and the environment etc.

'RISK' means the likelihood that a specified undesired event will occur multiplied by the severity of the outcome.



3.

## Key Points About Assessment

A brief summary of key points contained within the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations will help in gaining a better perspective:

- ◆ Assessments must be adequate. They must be sufficient to guide employers' judgements about the measures they should take to fulfil their legal obligations.
- ◆ Assessments must cover all the risks to the health and safety of employees to which they are exposed at work.
- ◆ Assessments should cover risks to non-employees who may be foreseeably affected by what the employer does (e.g. contractors, visitors).
- ◆ Wherever new or changed risks are encountered the employer must revise his original assessment. A regular review is advised as part of good management practice.
- ◆ Where employers employ 5 or more employees the assessment must be in writing.
- ◆ Where groups of employees are especially at risk, the groups must be identified as part of the assessment (e.g. new starters, handicapped workers).
- ◆ How far an assessment proceeds beyond a **common sense estimate** of particular hazards and situations will depend on the complexity of the undertaking and the degree of risks present e.g. a petrochemical plant may warrant more detailed assessment than a warehouse.

Assessments should not be regarded in awe but **dealt with in a realistic way by those on the spot.**



4.

## Procedures

The Health and Safety Executive, in their booklet 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment' have suggested a protocol for assessment along the following lines:-

### 1. **Identify the Hazards**

Walk around the workplace and look afresh at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm (the assessment proforma has been designed as an aide -memoir to help you identify hazards). Ignore the trivial and concentrate only on significant hazards which could result in serious harm.

### 2. **Decide who might be harmed and how**

Apart from operatives and other employees such as cleaners, administration staff and maintenance staff, think about people who may not be in the workplace all the time e.g. visitors, contractors.

### 3. **Evaluate the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done**

"Even after all precautions have been taken, usually some risk remains. What has to be decided for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low". Is what the law requires being carried out (e.g. machinery guarding) and are generally accepted industry standards in place? Think for yourself - the real aim is to reduce risks by adding to current precautions if necessary. This need not cost a lot - remember the term **Reasonably Practicable**, which balances the level of risk with the amount of effort, time and money required to reduce the risk. Also remember to select the hazards that you can **reasonably foresee** and assess the risks from them.



#### 4. **Record the findings**

Assessments need to be suitable and sufficient, not perfect. The real points are:

- ◆ are the precautions reasonable?; and
- ◆ is there something to show that a proper check was made?

#### 5. **Review the assessment from time to time and revise it if necessary**

If there is any significant change, review the assessment to take account of the new hazard e.g. is new machinery is brought in etc. Do not amend the assessment for **trivial** changes, but major ones.

There is no one protocol for undertaking risk assessments since trade and industry varies significantly and circumstances are different. You may choose to undertake assessments of a department as a whole of a particular task or, of a particular machine. The protocol that has been produced for you to use acts as an aide - memoir on the type of hazards you may encounter, but the list is not exhaustive and you are likely to discover some additional ones of your own. This is an important point - an assessment is a judgement, your own judgement. It indicates that you have **thought** about the hazards and risks and whether controls are adequate or need amending. Therefore, if you have anything to add, please continue on separate sheets of paper. The important things you need to decide are whether a hazard is significant and whether you have it covered by satisfactory precautions so that the risk is small.

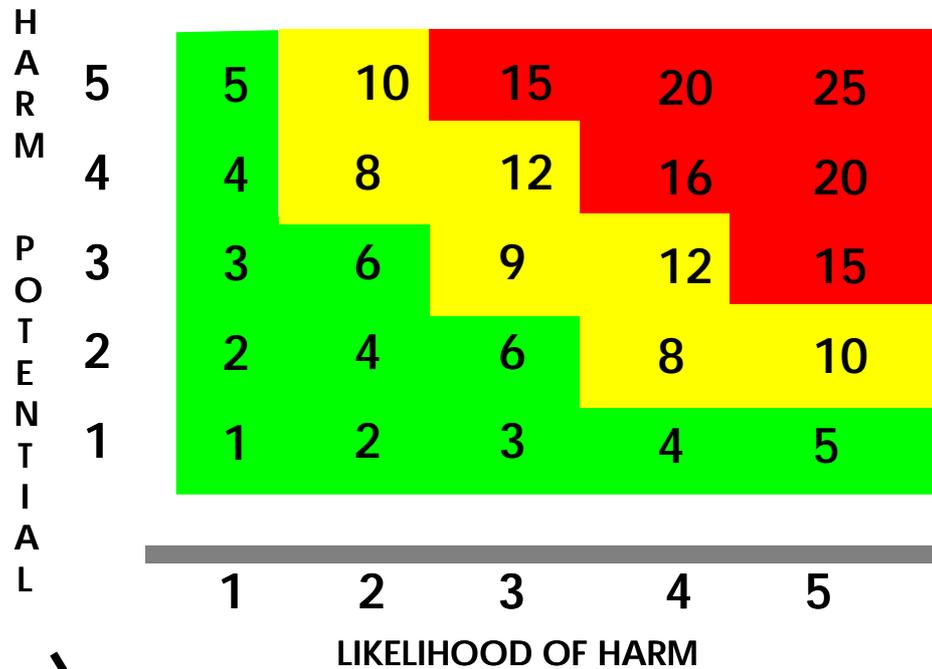
The whole purpose of assessment is to identify the significant risks within the workplace in order that a budgetary decision can be made to deal with these risks on a priority basis. The big risks need to be dealt with first, the trivial risks can be left 'till later or even dispensed with'.

For further information on risk assessment services or training, please contact [enquiries@eighty20consulting.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@eighty20consulting.co.uk) or call 07814 010830



Is a SIGNIFICANT HAZARD present after current controls? If yes, place a tick in the yes column and consider the level of risk. Use the Risk Matrix overleaf to determine Likelihood, Severity and hence risk.	Indicate the level of risk by recording the rating from the matrix (eg, likelihood of 4, severity (harm potential of 3, risk = 15 or High)						
	Yes	L	S	R	Low	Med	High
Manual Handling		If yes, complete manual handling assessment					
Gasses / Dust / Fumes / Fibres		If yes, complete COSHH assessment					
Chemicals/Harmful Substances/Flammables		If yes, complete COSHH assessment					
Harmful Bacteria		If yes, complete COSHH assessment					
Mineral Oils / Coolants		If yes, complete COSHH assessment					
Display Screen Equipment (VDU)		If yes, complete VDU assessment					
Confined Space							
Pressure							
Fire / Explosion							
Contact with liquids / splashes							
Heat / cold / burn / scald							
Noise							
Vibration							
Molten Metal							
Metal /sharp edges							
Machinery / entanglement							
Crushing / trapping							
Flying particles /ejection from work equipment							
Storage / containers							
Vehicles							
Falling objects / lifting gear							
Fall / trips / heights							
Electrical Shock / static / arcing							
Portable power tools							
Guarding Provisions							





5 = Fatality  
 4 = Major  
 3 = Minor  
 2 = Negligible  
 1 = None

1 = Improbable  
 2 = Remote  
 3 = Possible  
 4 = Probable  
 5 = Certainty

Action Priorities
1 – 7 Low Risk
8 – 14 Medium Risk (judgement needed)
15 –25 High Risk







## Medium Risk Action Sheet

No	HAZARD IDENTIFICATION	Significant risk associated with this hazard		
No	RISK EVALUATION - Events which cause risk	Reason for event occurring	Existing preventive measures	
No	HEALTH AND SAFETY ACTION PLAN - ACTION REQUIRED	Person / Cell leader actioned	Required Completion	Sign on completion by originator / H&S officer

