

Waltham Forest Council

Assessing and Managing Risks Sensibly

A Brief Guide



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1. What is this guidance about?

1.1 This guidance is about assessing and managing risks sensibly in order to prevent accidents and ill health to employees and others. It aims to:

- Provide advice to managers on how to carry out risk assessments
- Provide guidance to managers on appropriate control measures
- Provide advice to managers and staff on the use of method statements

1.2 Sensible risk management is about:

- Ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected
- Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly; and
- Ensuring that individuals understand that they have the right to seek protection but they also have a duty to exercise responsibility

1.3 Sensible risk management is NOT about:

- Creating a totally risk free workplace
- Generating useless paper work mountains;
- Scaring people by exaggerating or publicising trivial tasks;
- Stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risks are properly managed.

1.4 Risk assessments is the process by which hazards are identified, the level of risk that they present is determined and the control measures required to reduce or eliminate the risk are implemented.

2. What must managers do?

- Identify the hazards associated with the work activities they manage.
- Make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks that those hazards represent to employees and others who may be affected.
- Identify the preventive and protective measures needed
- Introduce the preventative and protective measures needed to improve workplace health and safety.
- Keep a written record of the findings of the assessment and any groups at particular risk
- Ensure that all staff concerned have access to the risk assessments
- Ensure that all staff concerned understand the control measures identified in the risk assessment
- Having arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of repetitive and protective measures.
- Provide health and safety information, instruction and training for all employees
- Consult with staff and union representatives when carrying out a risk assessment
- Carry out regular checks to ensure the adequacy and validity of the risk assessments
- Reassess the risk of the work activities where changes may have occurred

Review the assessment if there is reason to believe that it is no longer valid – for example, if

- The process has changed
- The building has been refurbished, or
- An experienced worker has left

Please note: The above list is NOT exhaustive.

3. What must staff do?

- Contribute to the risk assessment process especially where their knowledge or experience could assist in the developing safer working practices
- Read and understand the control measures noted in the risk assessment
- Implement the control measures noted in the risk assessment
- Follow the safety procedures in line with any information, instruction and training provided.
- NOT interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interest of health and safety.
- Make full and proper use of control measures and any personal protective equipment (PPE) provided in line with any information, instruction and training provided.
- Promptly report to management, any defect associated with control measures i.e. engineering controls and personal protective equipment.

4. How do I carry out a risk assessment?

4.1 A risk assessment must be both suitable and sufficient.

- It is suitable if it identifies the hazards that relate to the work activity is being performed.
- It is sufficient, when it identifies and prioritises precautionary to prevent the hazards causing harm to staff or others.

The HSE adopt a message of risk assessment which consists of five steps. Use the risk assessment form available on ForestNet to record your risk assessment. A copy is also attached to this guide in Appendix 2.

Step 1: Identify the hazards

- Managers should already be familiar with the hazards and risks associated with their work areas or work activities but this can also be done by walking around the workplace, observing work activities and talking to staff.
- A link to LBWF's source "The Hub" is paced in at the end of this document. The Hub has a wealth of documents related to assessing and managing risks, including generic risk assessments. These generic risk assessments can be used as a starting point, but should NOT simply be copied.

- Concentrate on significant hazard could result in serious harm or which could affect many people. Risks specific to your work areas or activities should be recorded on the councils risk assessment form, which is attached as Appendix 2.
- Be systematic in your approach and ensure that all aspects of the work activity are considered
- Cover what you know actually happens in the workplace, not what procedure manuals say should happen and consult with employees and trade union safety representatives and where necessary, outside experts.
- If the work activity tends to vary a lot and your staff change location, ensure that the risk assessment reflects any significant risk identified
- Manufacturers' instructions or data sheets can also assist in spotting hazards and to put risks in their true perspective, so can information on accidents and illness and sickness absence.

Step 2: Decide who might be harmed

- Consider all the people who could be harmed by the hazard. Not just full time staff but also people who may not be in the workplace all the time, e.g. cleaners, peripatetic workers, contractors, visitors etc.
- In addition the law requires that special consideration should be given to people with disabilities and young people, e.g. work experience pupils or young people starting work for the first time.
- Where women of childbearing age are employed, the risk assessment must include risk consideration for new and expectant mothers

Step 3: Evaluate the risk

- The next step is to evaluate the level of risk from the identified hazards. Consider how **likely** it is that each hazard could cause harm.
- Remember the likelihood of harm occurring is about what is probable not what is possible. Probability is based on previous data and experience and knowledge of the work activity.
- If particular work activity presents a hazard, ask yourself,
 - Can I get rid of the hazard altogether? If not,
 - How can I control the risks so that the likelihood of harm is significantly reduced?
- The answers to the above questions will determine whether or not more needs to be done to reduce the risk.
- Even after precautions have been taken some level of risk may still remain. At this stage managers have to decide whether the level of remaining risk is high, medium or low for each significant hazard.
- The risk rating can be used both before and after control measures have been put in place to check on the remaining level of risk. The table below gives a general idea of how to assess the level of risk that a hazard may present

Severity of Consequence	Severity of Exposure		
	Low Exposure	Medium Exposure	High Exposure
High Severity	Medium	High	High
Medium Severity	Low	Medium	High
Low Severity	Low	Low	Medium

Step 4: Record of findings

- Records of all risk assessments must be kept in a safe place. They must be retrievable as and when required. Careful consideration should be given to the media- and way of storage.
- Staff should have access to all documented risk assessments that affects work activities and should be made aware of the control measures.

Step 5: Review and revise

- Risk assessments should be reviewed periodically and revised if necessary.
- Review when there is a change in circumstances or there is evidence to show that the risk assessment is no longer valid. See further in Point 2.13 in this guide.

5. Generic risk assessments

- In cases where similar activities are undertaken, a general risk assessment can be carried out which considers the common hazards and associated risks for the activity under assessment; this is known as a generic risk assessment.
- Appendix 1 contains a list of generic hazards that cover tasks common to local authority services.
- Appendix 2 is a generic assessment form which can be used as a starting point for assessing generic hazards.
- Managers may use such generic assessments as a starting point; however they must satisfy themselves that the generic assessment is broadly appropriate for their type of work, or can be adapted to their own actual work situations
- While generic risk assessments are a useful aid, care has to be taken to ensure that they are not accepted as being universally applicable without checking them against the actual circumstances being assessed.

6. Shared workplace

- When assessing the risks associated with shared workplaces, regular consultation with other occupiers of the building should happen so that any common and shared risks can be controlled. This must also include fire risks, fire evacuation and escape routes.
- Also think about the risks to your own staff.

7. New or expectant mothers

- Special consideration should be given to new or expectant mothers when an employer has been told in writing that a worker is pregnant, or to a worker that has given birth within the previous six months or is breast feeding
- As a general rule the employer should first consult the existing risk assessment to see whether the control measures adequately protect the pregnant or nursing employee. If not an assessment should be done to accommodate the change in circumstances and the remaining risk should be controlled
- Special consideration needs to be given to new or expectant mothers who work at night

- However, if significant risk remains, the employer should
- Temporarily adjust working conditions and/or work hours, or if this is not reasonable;
- Offer suitable alternative work if any is available or, if this is not reasonable;
- Suspend the employee from work (i.e. leave on full pay) for as long as is necessary.

8. How can risk be controlled?

There are three main strategies for risk control:

8.1 Technical

- Procedural
- Behavioural

8.2 Technical strategies control:

- The risks associated with the physical environment e.g. access and egress – provision of wide aisles, unobstructed passages and gangways, temperature, light, dust, noise, heating and ventilation etc.
- The actual work activities e.g. use of equipment – safe design (guarding) and maintenance.
- The materials (substances and articles) – choice of packaging to make handling materials easier for example in manual handling.

8.3 Procedural strategies include control systems within the organisation such as:

- Policies and procedures
- Rules
- Method statements
- Safe systems of work

8.4 Behavioural strategies consider:

- How the persons actions could affect the outcome of the risk
- Awareness, knowledge and skills
- Attitude, perception motivation and communication

- Supervision
- Health surveillance

In practice, a combination of the three strategies will be required to ensure a safe and healthy working environment.

Appendix 1: List of hazards

The following list of workplace issues may assist managers considering the typical hazards to be found in the workplace. The list is **not** exhaustive.

Access and egress: Obstructed or impeded

Asbestos: Exposure to

Assault: Verbal and physical

Biological agents: HIV, C.Diff.

Boilers and pressure systems

Building maintenance activities

Confined spaces

Contact: With hot or cold surfaces, contaminated waste, needles and syringes

Contractors' activities

Display screen equipment

Ergonomics: Work related upper limb disorders

Electrical hazards: Ill maintained equipment

Equipment: Maintenance and use

Falls: On same level; on stairs; from height; from ladders, steps or trestles

Falling objects

Furniture: Defective or unsuitable

Fire and explosion

Floors and surfaces: Slippery or uneven

Gas appliances: Ill maintained, not serviced

General public: Visitors or intruders

Housekeeping: Poor, untidiness

Hot liquids

Lighting: Levels and glares

Lifts and lifting equipment

Local exhaust ventilation

Lone working

Heating sources: LPG, electrical

Machinery: Plant and equipment, use and maintenance

Manual Handling

Noise and vibration

Remote working

Repetitive tasks

Seating

Space and room dimensions

Stress

Substances: Harmful by inhalation or swallowing; harmful by skin contact/absorption

Thermal environment: Heat and cold, poor weather conditions

Traffic routes

Tripping hazards: Uneven floors, trailing cables

Tools: Hand tools and power tools

Vehicles: Movement and maintenance, segregation from pedestrians

Violence

Visits and Excursions

Vulnerable people: Nursing and expectant mothers, young people, staff with medical conditions

Workstations

Appendix 2:

Workplace or specific task being assessed		Establishment	
Date of Assessment		Planned Review Date	
Name of assessor (PRINT)		Position	
Head of Establishment or Line Manager's sign off			
Signed		Position	
			Date

No.	What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	What is the risk?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Date completed
1								

No.	What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	What is the risk?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Date completed
2								
3								
4								
5								

No.	What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	What is the risk?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Date completed
6								
7								
8								