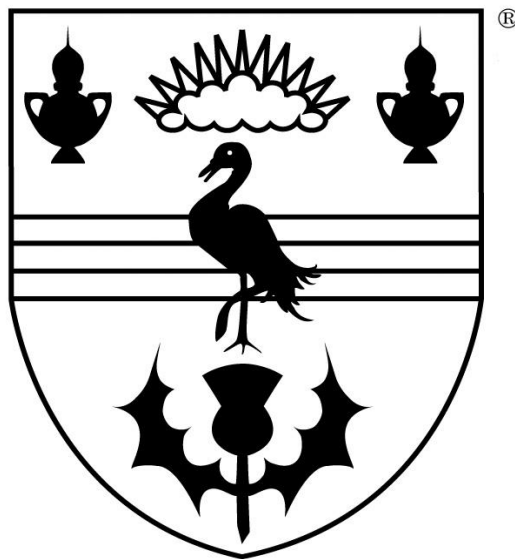


***The Royal Environmental Health  
Institute of Scotland***



***Risk Assessment Course***

***Syllabus and notes for presenters***

***Minimum teaching time – 3 hours***

## HSE Statement on Risk Assessment

Sensible risk management **is** about:

- Ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected
- Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those which arise more often and those with serious consequences
- Enabling innovation and learning not stifling them
- Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action
- Enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility

Sensible risk management **is not** about:

- Creating a totally risk free society
- Generating useless paperwork mountains
- Scaring people by exaggerating or publicising trivial risks
- Stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risks are managed
- Reducing protection of people from risks that cause real harm and suffering

For more information about risk assessment visit the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/>

This short course explains the principles and practice of Occupational Health & Safety risk assessment and why it is necessary. Trainers should tailor the content described here to match the candidates own needs, taking into account the nature, level and complexity of their work activity.

### **Course content**

1. Introduction
2. Definitions
3. What is Risk Assessment?
4. When to use the risk assessment procedure
5. Who might be harmed and how?
6. Control measures
7. Record keeping
8. Employer's obligations
9. Key Action Steps
  - Conducting Risk Assessments
  - Hazard spotting – initial stage
10. Purpose and Objectives of record keeping
11. Assessment review
12. Employee awareness of risk assessments

## **Introduction**

This course explains the principles and practice of Occupational Health & Safety risk assessment and why it is necessary. It is important to stress to candidates that organisations should tailor the approach described here to match their own needs, taking into account the nature of their work and the seriousness and complexity of their risks.

## **Definitions**

**Hazard:** *something with the potential to cause harm;*

**Risk:** *the likelihood that harm from a particular hazard will be realised and consequences*

## **What is Risk Assessment?**

A hazard is something which has the potential to cause harm, e.g., a substance, machine or situation, such as working at heights. A risk is the likelihood that the harm will occur combined with its severity (i.e., the number of people likely to be affected and whether the hazard would cause minor or major injuries or even a fatality). Risk assessment is an evaluation of the chance that harm will occur.

## **When to use the risk assessment procedure**

All employers and self employed people have a legal duty to assess the risks from their work activities. The risk assessment procedure described in this course is intended to be used:

- for situations where hazards appear to pose a significant threat and it is uncertain whether existing or planned controls are adequate in principle or in practice;
- by organisations seeking continuous improvement in their Occupational Health & Safety management systems, in excess of minimum legal requirements.

The risk procedure described in this course is not necessary or cost-effective when it is quite clear from preliminary study that risks are trivial, or a previous assessment has shown that existing or planned controls:

- conform to well-established legal requirements or standards;
- are appropriate for the tasks;
- are, or will be, understood and used by everyone concerned.

Here no further action is required other than to ensure, where appropriate, that controls continue.

## **Employer's obligations**

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations implement the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act by extending employer's obligations to include:

- developing a general framework for safety management
- enhancing any control measures provided
- conducting risk assessments of work activities and
- identifying the action needed to control the health and safety risks in the workplace.

The assessment of hazardous operations must not be seen as a paper exercise but a practical one taking the opportunity to review and evaluate operations and seek improvements.

## **Conducting Risk Assessments**

The process of conducting risk assessment can be summarised as follows:-

### **Hazard spotting – initial stage**

- Appoint a small group (usually 2- 3 persons) to walk round the workplace
- Identify what could cause harm, concentrating on significant hazards which could have severe consequences.
- During the walk round ask employees for their opinions and what they consider to be significant
- Use accidents/ill health records and manufacturers' instruction/data sheets to aid in your hazard spotting.

### **Who might be harmed and how?**

- In deciding who might be harmed and how, consider not only employees but also people who may not always be present in the workplace, e.g., cleaners, visitors, delivery personnel, contractors, maintenance workers, etc.
- Decide for each hazard whether the risk is high, medium, low or not significant.
- Ask yourself several questions, such as:-
  - Have you done everything that the law says you have to?
  - Are industry standards in place?

(Note: the law requires that you must do what is reasonably practicable to keep your workplace safe).

### **Control measures**

Improving health and safety need not necessarily be costly and some control measures can be very simply implemented with no major restraints on budget such as, non-slip material on slippery steps.

Preventative and protective measures will be implemented as a result of the assessment so some of the following should also be considered:-

- Can the hazard be removed altogether or, if not, can it be controlled so that harm is unlikely
- Can the risk be avoided by elimination, substitution or reduction (e.g. buying dangerous substances in lesser quantities)
- Can the risk be combated at source (e.g. remove spillages from floor areas instead of introducing warning signs)
- Is the personal protective equipment used only because there is nothing else reasonably practicable

### **Record keeping**

There is a legal requirement to record the significant findings of a risk assessment.

What should be included :-

- a list of hazards identified in the assessment
- highlighting the types of people who may be at risk
- identifying existing control measures if they are in place
- indicate that all risks have been assessed
- but only record significant risks

## **Purpose and Objectives of record keeping**

Keeping a record of an assessment is to indicate that it was done soundly, addressed the significant issues and reached justifiable conclusions.

The amount of effort put into recording will be related to the degree of risk and the complexity of the issues involved. The purposes are to enable management to identify:

- the basis for monitoring health and safety controls
- training programmes needed
- the standards against which unusual events are judged
- changes which make re-assessment necessary.

## **Assessment review**

As new hazards become apparent or where there are significant changes, for example, the introduction of new machines, substances or procedures, assessments must be reviewed.

No amendments are needed for trivial changes.

It is recommended that reviews are undertaken annually or more often where things change or risks are high.

## **Employee awareness of risk assessments**

Employers should ensure that all employees are made aware of the risk assessments, significant findings and their control measures by training and communication. Records should be kept to prove that the findings of risk assessments have been communicated.

## **Key Action Steps**

- Identify hazards by carrying out a workplace inspection.
- Decide who might be harmed and why.
- Consider the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether existing arrangements are adequate.
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- Make written records of your findings.
- Carry out periodic reviews of your assessments and make necessary revisions.
- Share the findings of the assessments -and the control measures -with employees.

## **Additional Information/Further Reading**

*L21 Management of Health and Safety at Work: Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations Approved Code of Practice and guidance*

Available from HSE Books