

Risk Assessment & Reduction

What is a Risk Assessment?

As part of managing the health and safety of your business you must control the risks in your workplace. To do this you need to think about what might cause harm to people and decide whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm. This is known as a risk assessment and it is something you are required by law to carry out. **If you have fewer than five employees you don't have to write anything down.**

A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace. You are probably already taking steps to protect your employees, but your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have covered all you need to. Think about how accidents and ill health could happen and concentrate on real risks – those that are most likely and which will cause the most harm.



For some risks, other regulations require particular control measures. Your assessment can help you identify where you need to look at certain risks and these particular control measures in more detail. These control measures do not have to be assessed separately but can be considered as part of, or an extension of, your overall risk assessment.

Many organisations, where you are confident you understand what's involved, can do the assessment themselves. You don't have to be a health and safety expert.

When thinking about your risk assessment, remember:

- a **hazard** is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an open drawer etc
- the **risk** is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be

What is Risk Reduction?

Risk Assessment in isolation is of little use unless actions for Risk Reduction are considered. A strategy for risk reduction should follow a 3 step process:-

Step 1 – Inherently safe design

Step 2 – Safeguarding and complementary protective measures

Step 3 – Information for safe use

“Every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of ... the risks to the health and safety of his employees”

**Management of Health and Safety at Work
Regulations 1999**

