

Every employer, and self employed person, is under a legal duty to assess the risks to their employees and other people who may be affected by the undertaking (*The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*). Employers with more than 4 employees must also record the *significant findings* of that assessment.

If you have already carried out a risk assessment required by other legislation e.g. COSHH or manual handling, then you will have satisfied in part the need for assessment.

However you must still assess other areas of your business.

## Why carry out an assessment

- So that you can identify what measures you need to take in order to satisfactorily control the risks in your workplace.
- It will enable you to target your resources on the most important risks.
- It will help you to comply with the law.

## What you must do

### 1. Identify the hazards present

- A hazard is something with the *potential* to cause harm e.g. substances, machines, or work methods.
- Be systematic in looking at hazards e.g. look at them in groups such as machinery, or transport.
- Ensure all aspects of your work are covered including non-routine operations and interruptions to work activity.
- Specific Acts or Regulations may help to identify hazards e.g. lifts and pressure vessels.
- If there are no hazards then there are no risks.

Further information:

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 & Approved Code of Practice (HSE) ISBN 0 7176 0412 8; 5 Steps To Risk Assessment (IND(G)163L)

## 2. Evaluate the risks

- Risk is the *likelihood* that the harm will occur. The extent of the risk relates to the number of people who might be exposed and the consequences for them.
- Identify the *significant* risks i.e. ignore trivial and everyday life risks, and focus on those arising from your work activity.
- It may be necessary to obtain specialist advice for unfamiliar risks e.g. complex processes or ergonomic design (this means designing the work to fit the person).
- Look at what actually happens in the workplace.
- Remember to take account of existing control measures.

## 3. Identify preventive and precautionary measures

- Use your assessment to decide how to control the risk e.g. avoid a risk by not using a dangerous article if it is not essential; tackle root causes of risks rather than treating the symptoms; examine the ergonomics of a work activity; use the latest technical advances to improve work processes.
- Ensure you comply with any relevant legal requirements.
- Give priority to measures which protect the whole workplace.
- Ensure that all workers understand what they need to do i.e. give instruction and training in precautions, control measures, etc.

## 4. Record the significant findings

These should include:

- Significant hazards identified.
- The existing control measures, and the extent of control.
- The people who may be affected by these risks.
- Details of how the assessment was made in order to demonstrate its suitability and allow for informed review.

## 5. Review and revise

- When the nature of the work changes.
- When your experience suggests that the assessment is insufficient or no longer valid.
- On a regular basis depending on the nature of the risks and the degree of change.