

Information Pack

Unit 210

Maintaining a Healthy and Safe Work Environment



INTRODUCTION

As part of managing the health and safety in an organisation, 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.

Health and Safety (H&S) is evident in all organisations and has been put in place to help prevent people from being harmed by work activities or becoming ill due to the workplace. Its aim is to aid the organisations in identifying hazards and taking the right precautions which would result in the provision of a satisfactory working environment.

A good risk management strategy will help ease some of the tension associated with planning for the unknown. Here, we outline the various stages of risk management.

This process is known as risk assessment and it is something you are required by law to carry out. 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.

SAMPLE

GUIDANCE

This document is prepared to break the unit material down into bite size chunks. You will see the learning outcomes above treated in their own sections. Therein you will encounter the following structures;

Purpose

Explains *why* you need to study the current section of material. Quite often learners are put off by material which does not initially seem to be relevant to a topic or profession. Once you understand the importance of new learning or theory you will embrace the concepts more readily.

Theory

Conveys new material to you in a straightforward fashion. To support the treatments in this section you are strongly advised to follow the given hyperlinks, which may be useful documents or applications on the web.

Example

The examples/worked examples are presented in a knowledge-building order. Make sure you follow them all through. If you are feeling confident then you might like to treat an example as a question, in which case cover it up and have a go yourself. Many of the examples given resemble assignment questions which will come your way, so follow them through diligently.

Question

Questions should not be avoided if you are determined to learn. Please do take the time to tackle each of the given questions, in the order in which they are presented. The order is important, as further knowledge and confidence is built upon previous knowledge and confidence. As an Online Learner it is important that the answers to questions are immediately available to you. Contact your Unit Tutor if you need help.

Challenge

You can really cement your new knowledge by undertaking the challenges. A challenge could be to download software and perform an exercise. An alternative challenge might involve a practical activity or other form of research.

Video

Videos on the web can be very useful supplements to your distance learning efforts. Wherever an online video(s) will help you then it will be hyperlinked at the appropriate point.

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Risk Assessment

In addition to appointing competent people to undertake H&S policy, an employer needs to do a risk assessment to find out about the risks in the workplace and put sensible measures in place to control them, and make sure they stay controlled.

A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in the workplace, could cause harm to people. Risk assessment should be a practical exercise, aimed at getting the right controls in place.

An organisations H&S policy clearly set out how to manage H&S in the workplace by defining who does what; and when and how they do it. Employers retain ultimate responsibility for the assessment, and for any steps that they need to take to eliminate or control risk.

The HSE says risk should be assessed 'every time there are new machines, substances and procedures, which could lead to new hazards'. Also, if a new job brings in significant new hazards, then that job should be fully risk-assessed. If there is high staff turnover, then the way new employees do their work should be checked against the risk assessment, and training provided in safe working practices if necessary.

A risk assessment:

- Is a systematic method of carefully examining workplace activities to assess what could cause harm to people.
- Identifies suitable control measures to eliminate/reduce/minimise loss, damage or injury in the workplace.
- Assesses the effectiveness of precautions that the employers have put into practice to prevent harm.
- Can reduce the accidents and ill health which can ruin lives.
- Acknowledges that an organisation can have output loss, damaged machinery, an increase in insurance costs or be issued court proceeding if reasonable control measures are not in place.
- Employers must assess all work activities that could cause harm in order to decide whether they are doing enough to meet their legal obligations.
- It is an important step in protecting employees and the organisation, whilst complying with the law.
- Gives focus to the risks that really matter in the workplace i.e. the ones with the potential to cause real harm.

- In many instances, straightforward measures can readily control risks e.g. ensuring spillages are cleaned up promptly, so people do not slip.
- The law does not expect an organisation to eliminate all risk. However, an employer is required to protect people as far as 'reasonably practicable'.
- 'Reasonably practicable' is a legal term that means employers must balance the cost of steps that they could take to reduce a risk against the degree of risk presented.

Content in a Risk assessment

- The aim should always be to reduce the risks as much as is 'reasonably practicable'.
- There are no set rules as to how Risk Assessments should be carried out. Content may vary depending on the nature of the work. Hence, may require a slightly different approach.
- The Assessment must consider everyone who could be affected by workplace activities. This includes contractors, temporary workers, volunteers and the general public.
- Some groups are considered more vulnerable e.g. young persons under 18 and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. The legislation specifically asks employers to consider the risks posed to these groups and put in place additional controls if they are required.

It's important that Risk Assessments are carried out systematically and consider all of the foreseeable risks.

- To assess risks it is important to be aware of the distinction between hazard and risk.

Watch this video for a breakdown of risk management.

[Video](#)

Definition of Hazard:

Anything with the potential to cause harm e.g. electricity, hazardous substances and noise.

Definition of Risk:

The likelihood that damage, loss or injury will be caused by a hazard and how severe the outcome may be.

Controlling Risk

When deciding on control measures the following principles should be applied:

- can the risk be avoided or eliminated?
- can the risks be contained at source?
- can the work be adapted to suit the individual? e.g. layout of workplace, choice of equipment and methods of working?