



P4P Compliance Management Limited

Simplifying Compliance

The Importance of Risk Assessments



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Introduction

Aimed at employers, managers, safety representatives and others with health and safety responsibilities, this guide is an overview of workplace hazards and the importance of risk assessments to help organisations protect employees and others from harm.

By law, The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires organisations to protect employees and others from harm in the workplace.

Section 3 of this regulation requires every employer by law to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of:

- The risks to the health and safety of employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work
- The risks to the health and safety of persons not in their employment whilst visiting your place of work.

To do this, employers need to think about what might cause harm to people and decide whether they are taking reasonable steps to prevent harm.

Risk assessment is the approach to preventing harm and occupational accidents by identifying the hazards that exist or may appear in the workplace.

A risk assessment identifies which workplace hazards are likely to cause harm to employees and visitors and what reasonable measures to put in place to control the risks in your workplace.

Organisations with five or more employees, should have processes and procedures in place to meet the legal requirements, as a minimum:

- A documented health and safety policy
- Documented instruction and training for employees about the risks in your workplace and how they are protected
- Access to competent health and safety advice

Organisations should regularly take a thorough look at their workplace to identify potential hazards and risk factors that may negatively impact, cause injury to individuals, harm assets, or the environment to avoid hefty fines.

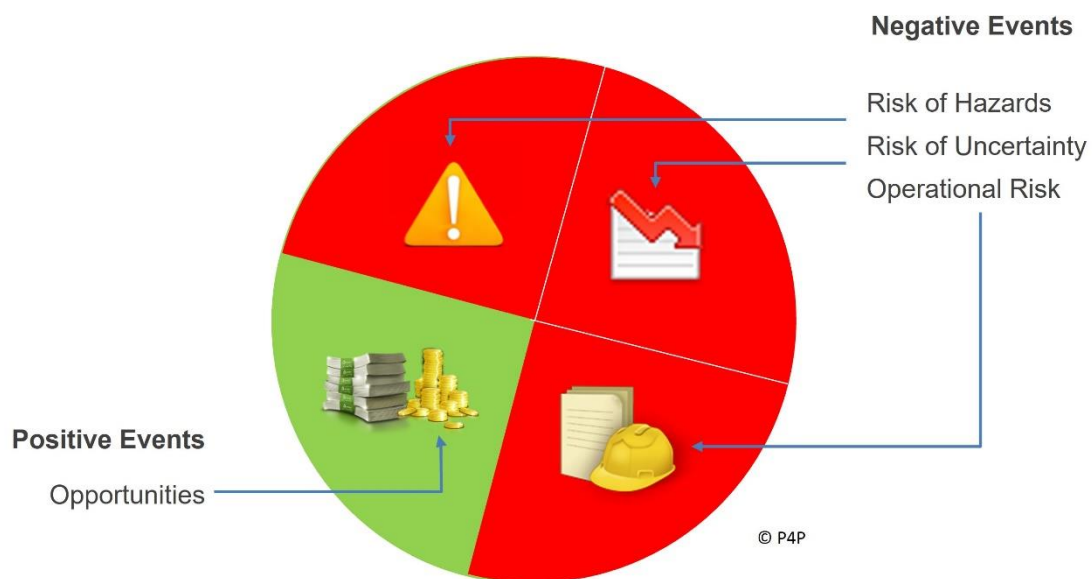
Risk Events

A Risk is the chance, high, medium, or low, that someone could be harmed by a hazard.

Risk Management is the identification, evaluation, and prioritisation of risk to prevent a risk event that can result in injuries or illness to a person or the possibility of losing something of value including, financial assets and social status.

Risks events can be any occurrence or situation that can come from various sources among other things, uncertainty in financial markets, legal liabilities, accidents, natural causes and disasters, deliberate attacks from opposition, project failures, fire, flood or failing to act on an opportunity.

Risks events may be classified into four main categories:



Risk of Hazards

The risk of hazards is often caused by improper or poor workplace safety that present a danger to people or cause severe damage to equipment and or property.

Electrical Accidents

- Unprotected exposure to high voltage electrical outlets
- Un-insulated, un-isolated or poor wiring
- Broken circuits
- Faulty extension cables
- Unsafe equipment or installation
- Lack of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Lack of training

All of which can result in a fire, electrical burns, electric shock, cardiac arrest or even death by electrocution.

Exposure to Dangerous Chemicals

- Corrosives such as hydrochloric acid can cause irreversible bodily harm.
- Irritants, including strong solvents in direct contact with the skin causing inflammation.
- Sensitisers such as an isocyanate that is widely used in the manufacturing of foams, fibers, paint coatings and varnishes, all of which can cause sensitisation or cause an allergic reaction in the lungs and/or skin after exposure to them.
- Mutagens including flame retardants, hair dyes and benzene (commonly used in the pharmaceutical industry) when exposed to, can lead to negative gene mutation (change to a gene's DNA) and damage to the chromosomes.
- Carcinogens may occur naturally in the environment such as ultraviolet rays in sunlight, asbestos, automobile exhaust fumes, and cigarette smoke capable of causing cancer.

Machinery & Tools Hazard



- Faulty equipment in the workplace such as heaters which generate extreme heat or humidity with temperatures reaching 90 degrees and above, can cause burns and potentially lead to death.
- Poorly maintained or defective machinery can cause cuts and severed limbs
- Faulty equipment such as ladders and scaffolding can cause falls
- Negligence of stipulated safety precautions, poorly or untrained employees without adequate knowledge can result in serious injuries if the wrong methods or tools are used.
- Lack of or defective PPE such as ear defenders in a loud working environment, can result in hearing loss.
- Use of equipment without appropriate hazard protection and safety mechanisms in place, such as machine guards, could lead to crush injuries, lacerations, amputations, or loss of life.

Workers who are victims of machinery and tools accidents can be compensated for any medical bills or other damages such as product liability claim against the manufacturer of any faulty equipment that caused injury.

Fire Accidents

- Faulty electrical equipment is one of the most common types of fire accidents in workplaces. An electrical fire can be sudden, and easily spread making them destructive and difficult to contain.
- Organisations that utilise combustible materials for production in untidy, or cluttered working environments can easily result in fire accidents occurring.

Fire accidents and explosions can result in sustain minor to major injury to loss of life and property in the workplace.

Risk of Uncertainty

The risk of uncertain events such as natural disasters, pandemics like Covid-19, fire, floods, cyberattack, or even a new competitor in the market, can impact the daily operations of an organisation.

Risk of uncertainty are unknown events so cannot be controlled, however they can be anticipated, and mitigation measures should be put in place to limit damages, should they occur.

Operational Risk

Operational risk is the risk of losses in day-to-day business activities, often arising from failed, poor or lack of processes, procedures, systems, policies or events that disrupt business operations.

People making poor decisions, human error, or criminals outside the organisations such as cybercriminals tend to cause most operational risks, and external events such as:

- Natural disasters like earthquakes and hurricanes
- Pandemics such as the Covid-19
- Terrorism
- New laws or regulatory requirements including General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Outdated or insecure IT systems and software

Opportunity Risk

Also referenced as Opportunity Costs is opting to take a risk and committing resources to a particular opportunity, when there's a chance of losing out to an alternative better opportunity. Not only is there a risk of the chosen option failing to deliver to expectations, but there's the risk of not getting the return in the investment.

Consider the case of a manufacturing firm that decided to take a risk and opt for the opportunity to purchase a piece of machinery at a considerably reduced price.

The equipment is in good, clean working condition, however it's an old model, difficult to get parts for, and comes with only a six-month warranty.

After the warranty period expires, the machine starts to run slow, overheats and eventually breaks down. This results in machinists being paid to sit around waiting for an engineer to repair the machine.

Had the firm took the risk and opted to purchase a brand-new piece of machinery, with long term warranty covering parts and labor, their employees would have been fully productive, all outgoing costs recovered and potential financial profits for the organisation.

Risk Management



Risk management is a step-by-step process for controlling health and safety and managing risks in the workplace.

It involves the identification, evaluation, and prioritisation of risks to prevent injuries or illness, and the possibility of losing something of value including, protecting financial assets, and social status.

The purpose of risk management is to minimise, monitor, and control the probability or impact of unfortunate events (a risk becoming an issue) or to maximise the realisation of an opportunity.

Risks affecting organisations can have consequences in terms of damage to professional reputation, economic performance as well as environmental, safety and societal outcomes. Therefore, managing risk effectively helps organisations to perform well in an environment full of uncertainty.

Managing risks should involve doing regular routine workplace risk assessments to examine what could cause harm to people, take necessary precautions, and put in place control measures to prevent harm.

Workplace Risk Assessments

Every year, millions of people are injured at work, or have their health seriously harmed in the workplace. Therefore, risk assessments are important to maintaining a healthy workplace.

By law, every organisation must conduct risk assessments if they employ more than five employees. Results should be recorded with details of any employees particularly at risk such as pregnant or disabled people.

Risk assessment is a dynamic process that allows organisations to implement a proactive policy for managing workplace risks.

Creating a safer and healthier workplace should be a priority for all organisations, so carrying out risk assessments should form an integral part of an organisation's occupational health and safety management plan.

After identifying potential hazards and risks, you need to analyse and evaluate how likely and severe the risk is before deciding what measures should be in place to effectively eliminate or control the harm from happening.

Risk assessments should be simple to carry out, and follow a process that includes:

- Identifying the hazards
- Evaluate and document the risks to health and safety arising from identified hazards
- Identify who may be at risk of harm including employees, visitors, and members of the public, and how they may be harmed
- Assess the risks, and identify how to avoid or reduce the risk
- Determine if existing control measures for hazards are adequate and effective, or if new controls need be implemented
- Record risk assessment findings and implement improvements
- Record any risk or hazard concerns with the measures that should be implemented to mitigate
- Meet health and safety and environment legal requirements
- Provide employees with health and safety instructions, training on how to deal with hazards and risk in the workplace

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the minimum organisations must do is:

- Identify the hazards that could cause injury or illness in your business
- Decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously
- Take action to eliminate the hazard, or control the risk

Health & Safety Representative



Organisations should look to appoint a Health and Safety representative to carry out risk assessments, this is to ensure assessments are suitable, sufficient, systematic, and thorough.

Health & Safety representative role is to:

- Talk to people who do the jobs and have a practical understanding of the hazards and the day-to-day risks involved
- Obtain documentation on the processes and procedures for staff working where hazards and risks are involved
- Observe activities to monitor and ensure staff follow the correct processes and procedures where hazards and risks are involved
- Check documentation is up to date to ensure that all the risks are being covered
- Have a clear strategy for improving health and safety in the workplace

A Health and Safety representative has extensive rights under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations (SRSC).

They have the right to:

- Investigate health and safety matters
- Be consulted
- Inspect the workplace, at least four times each year
- Receive information, including risk assessments
- Take paid time off to perform health and safety functions and undergo training

Preventing Risk Events

Preventing Electrical Hazards

To prevent electrical shock accidents in the workplace, both employers and employees should:

- Always inspect the working area prior to commencing work for dangers such as broken wires, and exposed electrical circuits
- Report and document any broken wires, or exposed electrical circuits
- Never use faulty electrical equipment
- Always wear personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Ensure all electrical equipment is isolated
- Report and document any electrical shock incidents in the workplace
- Train staff and update them regularly on workplace safety best practices

Preventing Exposure to Dangerous Chemicals

To prevent exposing staff to dangerous chemicals in the workplace organisations should consider:

- Providing specific training and work instructions for staff who work with dangerous chemicals
- Ensure employees read and follow instructions provided on the container or labels of the chemicals
- Put in place a restricted work area where chemicals are used
- Always wear PPE such as gloves, masks, coveralls, and respirators while handling chemicals in the workplace
- Limit individual's exposure to chemicals by giving employees regular breaks
- Use placards, posters or hazard warning signs
- Enhance housekeeping and cleaning regimes and the provision of spill clean-up equipment in the areas where chemicals are used
- Encourage employees to change clothes or take a shower before leaving work to avoid carrying contaminants from the workplace on their clothing

Preventing Machine and Tool Accidents

To avoid machine and tool accidents in the workplace, organisations should consider:

- Ensuring tools and machinery are maintained regularly
- Replace tools and machinery when they are faulty or unable to be repaired
- Provide employees with appropriate PPE and ensure they are worn in the workplace where required
- Ensure employees undergo training on how to use machinery and tools
- Put in place appropriate safety guards for dangerous equipment
- Have in place incident report forms so employees can swiftly report machinery or tool accidents

Preventing Workplace Fire Accidents



Organisations need to ensure that adequate and appropriate fire safety measures are in place to minimise the risk of injury or loss of life in the event of a fire.

Regular fire safety risk assessment should be carried out, which can be performed as part of an overall risk assessment or as a separate exercise.

To avoid fire accidents in the workplace organisations should consider:

- Establishing several fire exits in the workplace, to match the size and structure of your buildings
- Keep fire exits and escape routes unobstructed at all times
- Install smoke detectors and fire alarms, and provide sufficient fire extinguishers
- Have clear and appropriate signage or posters for fire exits and escape routes
- Keep sources of ignition and flammable substances apart
- Do not place inflammable materials near ignition sources like electrical outlets
- Nominate fire wardens and train them on how to perform fire drills, including roll calls to account for people
- Ensure everyone in the workplace receives appropriate training, so they are familiar with the procedures to follow in the event of a fire drill
- Ensure there are fire assembly points and everyone in the organisations are familiar with where they are
- Carryout regular, compulsory fire drills

Conclusion

As a business, you're required by law to protect your employees, and others, from harm under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The law applies to you if:

- You are an employer
- Your work activity is specifically mentioned in the regulations, such as construction, agriculture, railways, gas or asbestos
- Your work activity poses a risk to the health and safety of anyone else

You can't just think about how employees could be harmed, you must also consider contractors, visitors, or members of the public.

If in doubt this law applies to you, ask yourself, can other people be affected by my work activities, or the services I provide? Could I cause harm to their health or safety?

Consider:

- Your working environment such as a garage, workshop, or a place where other people have access
- The equipment, materials, or substances that you use

If the answer is yes to any of the above, then it is likely that your work activities may pose a risk to the health and safety of another person, and the law will apply to you.

To comply with this legislation the minimum you must do is:

- Identify hazards
- Assess the risks
- Control the risks
- Record your findings
- Review the controls

To manage risks in the workplace, businesses need to perform regular risk assessments, to identify the hazards in the workplace, and the steps to take to manage the risks.

Risk assessments can be used as a record that your organisations is complying with Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

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