



# How to Conduct a Health and Safety Risk Assessment

**\*\*WRAP requires all facilities to conduct and document health and safety risk assessments for all areas of their facility.\*\***

## What is risk assessment?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your workplace, could cause harm to people, so that you can determine whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. Workers and others have a right to be protected from harm caused by a failure to take reasonable control measures. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives and affect your business too if output is lost, machinery is damaged, insurance costs increase or you have to go to court. WRAP and the law in many countries require you to assess the risks in your workplace so that a plan is put in place to control the risks.

## Why does WRAP require facilities to conduct risk assessments?

WRAP requires facilities to conduct risk assessments with the intention of eliminating or greatly reducing the risk of harm or loss of life in your facility. It helps you focus on the risks that really matter in your workplace – the ones with the potential to cause real harm. In many instances, straightforward measures can readily control risks, for example, ensuring spillages are cleaned up promptly so people do not slip, or cupboard drawers are kept closed to ensure people do not trip, flammable chemicals are kept in fire proof containment, and electrical connections are not overloaded. For most, that means simple, cheap and effective measures to ensure your most valuable asset – your workforce – is protected.

WRAP does not expect you to eliminate all risk, but you are required to protect people as far as 'reasonably practicable'. This guide tells you how to achieve that with a minimum of fuss. This is not the only way to do a risk assessment, there are other methods that work well, particularly for more complex risks and circumstances. However, we believe this method is the most straightforward for most facilities.

## How to assess the risks in your workplace

Follow these five steps:

- **Step 1** Identify the hazards
- **Step 2** Decide who might be harmed and how
- **Step 3** Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
- **Step 4** Record your findings and implement them
- **Step 5** Review your assessment and update if necessary



Don't overcomplicate the process. In many facilities, the risks are well known and the necessary control measures are easy to apply. You probably already know whether, for example, you have employees who move heavy loads and so could harm their backs, or where people are most likely to slip or trip or where blocked or locked escape routes are a fire hazard. If so, check that you have taken reasonable precautions to avoid injury or loss of life.

If you run a small facility and you are confident you understand what's involved, you can do the assessment yourself. You don't have to be a health and safety expert. If you work in a larger organization, you could ask a health and safety advisor to help you. If you are not confident, get help from someone who is competent. In all cases, you should make sure that *you involve your staff or their representatives in the process*. They will have useful information about how the work is done that will make your assessment of the risk more thorough and effective. But remember, you are responsible for seeing that the assessment is carried out properly.

## 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.

## Step 1: Identify the hazards

First you need to work out how people could be harmed. When you work in a place every day it is easy to overlook some hazards, so here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter:

- Walk around your workplace and determine what could reasonably be expected to cause harm.
- Ask your employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious to you.
- Check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets for chemicals and equipment as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them in their true perspective.
- Have a look back at your accident and ill-health records – these often help to identify the less obvious hazards.
- Remember to think about long-term hazards to health as well as safety hazards.
- If you are a member of a trade association, contact them. Many produce very helpful guidance.

### Examples:

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| -cord running through the aisle                  | -exposure to harmful substances |
| -product sitting in front of emergency exit door | -missing needle guard           |
| -high levels of noise                            | -cracks in the wall             |

**\*\*Please note these are a small sampling of the types of risks and/or hazards you may find in your factory. Do not limit yourself to only these examples.**

## Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed; it will help you identify the best way of managing the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people.

In each case, identify how they might be harmed (i.e., what type of injury or ill health might occur).

### Remember:

- Some workers have particular requirements (e.g., new and young workers, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities may be at particular risk).

### *Extra thought will be needed for some hazards;*

- cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance workers etc., who may not be in the workplace all the time;
- members of the public, if they could be hurt by your activities;
- if you share a facility with another operation, you will need to think about how your work affects their workforce, as well as how their work affects your staff – talk to them; and
- ask your staff if they can think of anyone you may have missed.

### Examples

Who is at risk?	What are they at risk of?
1. Workers in the storage room	1. In danger of something falling on them from a shelf.
2. Pregnant female using chemicals	2. Unborn child may be at risk of developing disease or illness
3. Any/all workers in areas with blocked exits/escape paths	3. Not being able to escape in case of emergency

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### Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. WRAP and some laws require you to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. The easiest way is to compare what you are doing with best practice.

First, look at what you're already doing; think about what controls you have in place and how the work is organized. Then compare this with best practice and see if there's more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. In asking yourself this, consider:

1. Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
2. If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

**When controlling risks, apply the principles below and, if possible, in the following order:**

- try a less risky option;
- prevent access to the hazard;
- organize work to reduce exposure to the hazard;
- issue personal protective equipment; and
- provide welfare facilities (onsite clinic, eye washing station, etc.).

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents is a low-cost precaution considering the risks. Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

Involve staff, so that you can be sure that what you propose to do will work in practice and **won't introduce any new hazards.**

#### Examples:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| -switch to a less hazardous chemical                      | -block off dangerous sections (boilers)     |
| -keep escape routes unblocked                             | -keep emergency exit doors unlocked         |
| -provide first aid boxes                                  | -have well-functioning washing stations     |
| -provide proper clothing, footwear, gloves, goggles, etc. | -put barriers between pedestrians & traffic |

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### Step 4: Record your findings and implement them

Putting the results of your risk assessment into practice will make a difference when looking after people and your business.

Writing down the results of your risk assessment, and sharing them with your staff, encourages you to do this.

When writing down your results, keep it simple, for example 'Tripping over rubbish: bins provided, staff instructed, weekly housekeeping checks', or 'Fume from welding: local exhaust ventilation used and regularly checked', or "all fire doors to be kept clear at all times" or only one electrical plug to be used per electrical socket".

We do not expect a risk assessment to be perfect, but it must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that:

- a proper check was made;
- you asked who might be affected;
- you dealt with all the significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved;
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low; and
- you involved your staff or their representatives in the process.

- ***You must show documented evidence of this process.***

***There are examples and there is a template at the end of this document that you can print off and use as guidance during your facility's own risk assessment.***

If, like many businesses, you find that there are quite a lot of improvements that you could make, big and small, don't try to do everything at once. Make a plan of action to deal with the most important things first. WRAP acknowledges the efforts of businesses that are clearly trying to make improvements.

A good plan of action often includes a mixture of different things such as:

- a few cheap or easy improvements that can be done quickly, perhaps as a temporary solution until more reliable controls are in place;
- long-term solutions to those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health;
- long-term solutions to those risks with the worst potential consequences;
- arrangements for training employees on the main risks that remain and how they are to be controlled;
- regular checks to make sure that the control measures stay in place; and
- clear responsibilities – who will lead on what action, and by when.

***Remember, prioritize and tackle the most important things first. As you complete each action, tick it off your plan.***

## **Step 5: Review your risk assessment and update if necessary**

Your workplace will inevitably change over time. Sooner or later, you will bring in new equipment, substances and procedures that could lead to new hazards. It makes sense, therefore, to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis. WRAP recommends conducting a risk assessment, at the minimum, once a year or more to make sure you are still improving, or at least not sliding back.

Look at your risk assessment again. Have there been any changes? Are there improvements you still need to make? Have your workers spotted a problem? Have you learned anything from accidents or near misses? **Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.**

When you are running a business it's all too easy to forget about reviewing your risk assessment – until something has gone wrong and it's too late. Why not set a review date for this risk assessment now? Write it down and note it in your calendar as an annual event.

During the year, if there is a significant change made at your facility, don't wait. Check your risk assessment and, where necessary, amend it. If possible, it is best to think about the risk assessment when you're planning your change – that way you leave yourself more flexibility.

Facilities are required by WRAP to conduct health and safety risk assessments. These steps taken will be an important part of your internal monitoring, which is also a WRAP requirement. To review these requirements, please refer to Principle 1.4, 8.3 and 8.4 in the Production Facility Self-Assessment document which can be found on our website at <http://www.wrapcompliance.org/handbooks>.

## FAQs

### ***What if the work I do tends to vary a lot, or I (or my employees) move from one section to another?***

Identify the hazards you can reasonably expect and assess the risks from them. This general assessment should stand you in good stead for the majority of your work. Where you do take on work or a move to a new section that is different, cover any new or different hazards with a specific assessment. You do not have to start from scratch each time.

### ***What if I share a workplace?***

Tell the other employers and self-employed people there about any risks your work could cause them, and what precautions you are taking. Also, think about the risks to your own workforce from those who share your workplace.

### ***Do my employees have responsibilities?***

Yes. Employees have legal responsibilities to cooperate with their employer's efforts to improve health and safety (e.g. they must wear protective equipment when it is provided), and to look out for each other.

### ***What if one of my employee's circumstances change?***

You'll need to look again at the risk assessment. You should carry out a specific risk assessment for new or expectant mothers, as some tasks (heavy lifting or work with chemicals for example) may not be appropriate. If an employee develops a disability then you are required to make reasonable adjustments. People returning to work following major surgery may also have particular requirements. If you put your mind to it, you can almost always find a way that works for you and your employees.

### ***What if I have already assessed some of the risks?***

If, for example, you use hazardous chemicals and you have already assessed the risks to health and the precautions you need to take under the requirements of the chemical information sheet (MSDS), you can consider them 'checked' and move on.

## ***Getting help***

If you get stuck, don't give up. There is a wealth of information available to help you.

External resources:

- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/riskassessment>
- U.S. Department of Labor - Occupational Safety and Health Administration: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3071.pdf>
- Consult your local government websites that relate to specific laws regarding risk assessment.

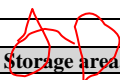

**Sample risk assessment sheet**

Risk Assessment		
<b>Risk assessment for:</b>		<b>Assessment undertaken by</b>
Company		Date
		Completed by
Address		
		Signature
<b>Sheet number</b>	<b>Floor/department/area</b>	
<b>Step 1 – Identify hazards</b>		
<b>Step 2 – People at risk.</b>		
<b>Step 3 – Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from the risk</b>		
Evaluate the risk.		
Evaluate the risk to people		
Remove and reduce the risk hazards		
<b>Step 4 Assessment review</b>		
Assessment review date	Completed by	Signature
<b>Review outcome (where substantial changes have occurred a new record sheet should be used)</b>		
Next risk assessment review date:		

**Example of a completed Risk Assessment:**

Scenario: As you walk through a storage area, you notice boxes stacked against the room heater unit outlet pipe. What would your risk assessment look like? (See sample photo and completed Risk Assessment sheet below)



Risk Assessment – Record of significant findings		
<b>Risk assessment for</b>	<b>Assessment undertaken by</b>	
ABC Textiles and Garments Co., Ltd	Date: 10/23/2013	
	Completed by: John Doe	
2345 Luk Road, Republic of Goobaba	Signature: 	
<b>Sheet number 1</b>	<b>Floor/area:</b> Storage area.	<b>Use:</b> General storage area.
Step 1 – Identify hazards		
Sources of ignition: heat from hot air ventilator pipe Sources of fuel: cardboard boxes Sources of oxygen: air flow *All components needed to start/support a fire are present (sources of ignition, fuel, and oxygen)		
Step 2 – People at risk		
-All persons working in the storage area.  -General factory employees and all visitors to the factory.		
Step 3 – Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk		
<b>Evaluate the risk</b>	High risk. Flammable materials touching heat source.	
<b>Evaluate the risk to people</b>	High risk of serious injury or death due to fire.	
<b>Remove and reduce the hazards that may cause a fire</b>	1. Remove all boxes from around the heat and ventilation pipe.	
<b>Remove and reduce the risk hazards</b>	1. Wire mesh guard to be placed around heat ventilation pipe. 2. Place warning signs on the heater unit 3. Educate storage area employees not to place boxes near the heater unit.	
Step 4 Assessment review		
<b>Assessment review date</b> 10/23/2013	<b>Completed by</b> John Doe	<b>Signature</b> 
<b>Review outcome (where substantial changes have occurred a new record sheet should be used)</b>		
<b>Next risk assessment review date:</b> April 5, 2014		