RISK ASSESSMENTS

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) employers are required to protect their employees, and others, from harm.

It is a business's responsibility to identify sensible measures to control the risks within a workplace. This is done by:

- Identifying Hazards
- Assessing The Risks
- Taking Action
- Recording The Findings
- Reviewing The Assessment

IDENTIFYING HAZARDS

The first step is to ask yourself what could cause an injury or an illness within your business? Think about anything that could cause harm; machinery, dangerous substances, working at a height (eg: is a ladder required?), and so on.

An easy way to do this is to look at everything required to complete work within your business and ask yourself 'could someone come to harm?' in relation to what you are looking at.

It is also worth discussing this with all members of your team as they may have a different experience of interacting with the workplace that you may not consider.

All of the hazards identified should be written down and recorded as part of the risk assessment.

ASSESSING THE RISKS

Once the hazards have been identified, the risk of each causing harm must then be assessed; There are several questions one must ask themselves when assessing the risks within their business:

- How likely is it that a hazard could harm someone?
- How seriously could someone be harmed by a hazard?
- Who could be harmed by a hazard?
- Could different people be harmed in different ways by the same hazard?
- Could the hazard cause short term or long term harm?

The above is by no means an exhaustive list of the questions that should be asked, but they are certainly the minimum one should be asking themselves when doing a risk assessment.

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TAKING ACTION

Once the hazards have been identified and the risks assessed, the next step is to remove the hazard(s). Where this is not possible you must minimise the risk as best as possible.

As per the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), employers are required to do everything "reasonably practicable" to protect people from harm.

The measures you can put in place will vary and depend on the type of business you run and the individual hazards it faces. However, the below are a list of potential actions you could take to minimise the risk(s) where removing the hazard entirely isn't possible:

- **Signage**: do all hazards and their associated risks have clear signage to alert people (staff and visitors / non-staff) to the potential dangers?
- **Training**: do your staff need training in how to minimise risks? For example; how to properly lift heavy items, or Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) training.
- **Redesign**: can the workspace or the work itself be redesigned to minimise the hazards and their risks?
- **Replacing**: can equipment, materials, etc. be replaced with less hazardous items?
- **Protective Equipment**: are you able to provide your staff and visitors with personal protective equipment? If so, ensuring they have access to it and an understanding of its importance is key. Policies can then be put in place by you to ensure that the wearing of such equipment is done.

RECORDING THE FINDINGS

All of the findings made when identifying hazards, assessing the risks and the action taken to address these must be recorded. This will help you to ensure that nothing gets missed when undertaking the assessment as well as prove due diligence on your part.

REVIEWING THE ASSESSMENT

Once you have taken the actions to address the hazards and risks identified, you must review the controls you have put in place to ensure that they are working.

Following this, regular reviews of the risk assessment should take place to see if the risks have changed in any way, or if new hazards have emerged. Alongside regular reviews, new risk assessments / reviews of existing risk assessments should take place if there are any changes in the workplace, changes in materials or equipment used, if there are any accidents or incidents in the workplace, or if any reports are made to you about hazards and risks by staff or visitors.

Update your risk assessment record with any changes you make.

USEFUL LINKS

- Managing Risks And Risk Assessment At Work (HSE):
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm
- Risk Assessment Templates (HSE):
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm

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