

FIVE STEPS TO CARRYING OUT RISK ASSESSMENTS

As an employer 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, this is called a risk assessment. If you employ 5 or more people these risk assessments must be written.

By following these five simple steps you can ensure that your **risk assessment** is carried out correctly

Step 1: Identify hazards, i.e. anything that may cause harm.

Employers have a duty to assess the health and safety risks faced by their workers. Your employer must systematically check for possible physical, mental, chemical and biological hazards.

Common classifications of hazards include:

- **Physical:** e.g. lifting, slips and trips, noise, dust, etc.
- **Mechanical:** e.g. unguarded machines
- **Organisational:** e.g. excess workload, long hours, bullying, etc.
- **Chemical:** e.g. asbestos, hazardous chemicals, aerosols, etc.
- **Biological:** including tuberculosis, hepatitis and other infectious diseases normally faced by healthcare professionals.
- **Environmental:** e.g. poor lighting, inappropriate seating

Step 2: Decide who may be harmed, and how.

Identifying who is at risk starts with your organisation's own full- and part-time employees. Employers must also assess risks faced by agency and contract staff visitors, clients and other members of the public on their premises.

Employers have special duties towards the health and safety of young workers, disabled employees, shift workers, lone workers and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

Step 3: Assess the risks and take action.

This means employers must consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm. This will determine whether or not your employer should reduce the level of risk. Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains. Employers must decide for each remaining hazard whether the risk is suitably controlled.

Step 4: Make a record of the findings.

Employers with five or more staff are required to record in writing the main findings of the risk assessment. This record should include details of any hazards noted in the risk assessment, and action taken to reduce or eliminate risk.

This record provides proof that the assessment was carried out, and is used as the basis for a later review of working practices. The risk assessment is a working document. You should be able to read it. It should be made available to all.

Step 5: Review the risk assessment.

In order to keep it relevant a risk assessment must be kept under review in order to:

- ensure that agreed safe working practices continue to be applied; and
- take account of any new working practices, new machinery or more demanding work targets.