

Section 3 Risk Assessment Procedures

Contents

- 3.1 Hazard Identification / Risk Assessment Methodology**
- 3.2 Control Measures**
- 3.3 Assignment of Responsibilities**
- 3.4 Resources**

Safety Statement

3.1 Hazard Identification / Risk Assessment Methodology

IADT is committed to achieving and maintaining high standards of health and safety for all staff, visitors and others. To do this requires the identification of hazards which threaten health and safety, an evaluation of the risks which arise from those hazards and a careful selection of sensible, practical precautions which will protect against them. This process is termed risk assessment.

Risk assessments are carried out periodically as a check on our performance in safely managing the work and protecting health. These checks look into the buildings we occupy, the equipment we use and the methods of work we employ. Risk assessments are conducted by members of staff who are trained and are competent in this process, but it is essential that everyone participates, co-operates and contributes skill and knowledge to make it a success.

For specific risk areas we have specific policies, covering everything from access equipment to window cleaning. This statement is our general policy on risk assessment and management. Even if a formal risk assessment is not taking place, please take time to check for health and safety. Every member of staff should report hazards in their work area and feel free to make suggestions for improvements in health and safety. Talk to your manager or safety representative as soon as possible.

In the workplace there are many potential risks, but numerically quantifying the risk of someone falling down unlit stairs is an unnecessary waste of time if there is a policy and implemented procedure to maintain the stairwell lighting, including providing emergency back-up in the event of a power failure. Therefore for many organisations, a great number of the everyday risks have been assessed, and the outcome of the assessment is embodied in safe systems of work, safe work practices, standard operating procedures, permits to work, method statements, good practice manuals etc. The legislation does not require all this material to be pulped and everyone to start again from scratch. In other words, the sequence is as described in the Five Steps, identify the hazard, consider the risks in the context of the current preventative measures and evaluate the residual risks. Do not carry out a risk assessment as if there were no safety arrangements in place, as a theoretical exercise, but assess the real risks your staff face in the real workplace. The residual risks are those which remain when the precautions are taken into account, and the only important question is "do we need to do more to eliminate or control the risks?" There are three reasons why you may decide that more needs to be done:-

- The risk is not being controlled in full compliance with specific legal duties.
- The risk is not being controlled as effectively as "current practice" in similar organisations, as described by Trade Associations or discussed in journals.
- In your judgement, or on advice, it is felt that there is more which could be done to control the risk, and the extra steps are "reasonably practicable", that is not disproportionately expensive or disruptive to introduce.

Safety Statement

3.1 Hazard Identification / Risk Assessment Methodology (Continued)

In some areas, the risks associated with hazards identified in the hazard spotting exercise will be covered by specific legislation requiring specific recorded assessment of risk. Where there are statutory standards, these often represent the embodied risk assessment therefore, if the rules are followed, the risk may be regarded as being satisfactorily controlled. That the statutory rules may be inadequate is, of course, a separate argument. Nevertheless, in the main the statutory standards may be taken as providing some sort of guide to the social acceptability of risk, or at least as an absolute minimum below which we should never go.

The specific matters which are required to be assessed to comply with individual sets of regulations are:-

- Display screen workstation
- Manual handling tasks
- Hazardous substances
- Lead and asbestos
- Biological agents
- Carcinogens
- Pregnancy
- Noise
- Ionising radiation
- Work equipment
- Personal protective equipment

The purpose of the General Principles of Prevention is to provide a framework within which risk can be mitigated. To assist in applying those principles they are outlined below for your information.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PREVENTION

- i) The avoidance of risks
- ii) The evaluation of unavoidable risks
- iii) The combating of risks at source
- iv) The adaptation of work to the individual, especially as regards the design of places of work, the choice of work equipment and systems of work, with a view to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined rate and to reduce their effect on health
- v) The adaptation of the workplace to technical progress
- vi) The replacement of dangerous articles, substances or systems of work by non dangerous articles, substances or systems of work.
- vii) The development of an adequate prevention policy in relation to safety, health and welfare at work, which takes account of technology, organisation of work, working conditions, social factors and the influence of factors related to the working environment.
- viii) The giving to collective protective measures of priority over individual protective measures.
- ix) The giving of appropriate training and instruction to employees.

Safety Statement

3.2 Control Measures

1. Define the policy for assessment

This should be a corporate (or Departmental) commitment to identify hazards to health and safety for staff, visitors and others, and to evaluate the risks created by those hazards so as to decide upon effective controls.

2. Set up a group or team to achieve this policy

Appoint persons, through their job descriptions or directly, to take responsibility for carrying out the hazard identification and risk assessment process. This can be done by supported managers, teams of staff, external consultants or others. Ensure that the people concerned are either competent in the health and safety legal sense and / or have access to competent persons for assistance in their work.

3. Plan and implement suitable arrangements

The implementation group should work to a formal plan to carry out the risk assessments, discuss the findings and draw up an implementation programme for the controls which are identified as necessary or desirable.

4. Measure performance and review progress

Risk assessment and control is not a one-off activity, but part of a cycle of evaluation and control designed to keep the workplace and the work within it safe.

5. List type of premises, the sort of tasks, being carried out including any occasional or non-routine tasks

Use a basic understanding of the structure of the organisation, what its activities are and where they are located. This does not have to be perfect, because the inspections and walk-through together with discussions with staff and managers will enable missed areas and activities to be picked up during the assessment process. Try to anticipate future tasks. Take this on an area by area or department by department basis. One of the best ways of doing this, and obtaining the support and participation of staff and managers, is to arrange a "brainstorming" session in a meeting room - use a flip chart and just get everyone to contribute to descriptions of what is going on and where. This process can lead directly into the next step if you wish.

6. Draw up an inventory of hazards to health and safety the subsequent risks of accidents

This should encompass not only normal working activities, but also the unusual, contingency arrangements such as breakdowns, maintenance activities etc. Don't get bogged down with trivia, but think of every realistic eventuality from simple trips and falls in the entrance lobby to maintenance staff falling off the roof when visiting the plant room. Discussing the hazards with the staff involved is usually fruitful, and so the next step may be combined with this.

Safety Statement

3.2 Control Measures (Continued)

7. List those individuals who may be exposed to these hazards

The list should include not only employees, but contractors and visitors as well. Look at the hazards from every viewpoint – who is doing the work, who may be in the area when it is being done, residual hazards which may be left for the next occupant.

8. Quantify the risks of injury, disease and other loss from these hazards

Rating of the severity of the risk against the likelihood of its occurrence is a key part of the process. The aim is to establish priorities: “low” (no need to take action except possibly alert staff to a danger they may be unaware of), “medium” (will need some precautions adopted and this can be programmed in the coming period) and “high” (need to do something right away, even if it is only a temporary measure to make things safe while reviewing longer-term solutions) is a sufficient categorisation. If numerical systems are appealing there are several options based upon a score for severity (for example from 4 for risk of fatality to 1 for a trivial effect) and likelihood (from 4 for certain to 1 for very unlikely), with a weighting for effects on vulnerable persons (from 1 for staff to 2 for customers or children).

9. Decide how adequate current procedures are to control the risks

Once you have decided on the risk rating, for medium to high risks (or those which have scored a higher value than your “action” level), it is time to consider the adequacy of existing controls. For low risk such as those arising from walking around a tidy, well kept office the control is no more than occasionally reminding staff of the need to take care whenever moving around the building. If, on the other hand, it is found that window cleaners are working off ladders at second floor windows the checks may show that ladder ties are not available to secure the ladders.

10. Decide what could be done to eliminate the risk altogether or substantially reduce it.

This may mean reducing the likelihood of someone being harmed or alternatively it may reduce the severity of harm if an accident occurs. The assessment should always look to improve (i.e. reduce further) the risks wherever possible. In the examples cited above, the options may include reminding staff through e-mail or an IADT newsletter of the need to participate in good housekeeping to minimise tripping hazards, and to install eye-bolts as ladder ties and request that the window cleaners make use of them.

11. Put the risk control measures arrived at in steps 5 and 6 into practice

This can include revising the safety statement, job descriptions of relevant competent persons and notifying and training staff. Once it has been decided

Safety Statement

3.2 Control Measures (Continued)

what to do, the important aspect of risk management is to take action and do it. It may be helpful at the planning stage, perhaps at a formal meeting, to log each of the actions, agree who is responsible (responsibility may be direct implementation, or alternatively to cost options and report back) and agree timescales and the date for a report-back meeting to discuss progress. Whatever happens, try to maintain a sense of momentum.

12. Record the findings and use the records as part of the review process

Create an assessment file, either by work area or by activity, but typically a mixture of the two (thus assessments for maintenance work will largely relate to risks almost independent of the specific location where the work is being carried out, whereas workstation assessments are location specific). These assessments should be used to drive the safety improvement programme defined in step 7, but also used to review matters at a later stage if situations have changed sufficiently to warrant a fresh assessment.

13. Monitor the measures

This can take the form of annual reviews (a suggested minimum for all risks), quarterly and monthly reviews. Each Module gives suggested review and check frequencies. If an assessment indicates an extra precaution which should reduce a particular type of accident, monitor the outcome to see if it works. If an extra control involves training staff, raising their awareness about the hazards, check after 3 months with a questionnaire to see if the message has struck.

14. Inform and communicate

Pass on any action taken as a result of the risk assessment to staff and other relevant persons (e.g. contractors, visitors, customers etc). This may mean a warning notice "No Smoking", or an amendment to the fire instruction printed on the back of visitors' passes. Within Departments, some organisations have found it helpful to have an annual meeting to advise on the review of risk assessments and invite participation, and then a follow-up session to discuss any changes. The communication should be devised to win support, not simply pass on information to a passive audience. A sample wording follows:

The Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989 formally requires all employers to have a written Safety Statement which must be signed by the Chief Executive or a Director with responsibility for a relevant aspect of the organisation such as Personnel (Human Resources). A good Safety Statement makes a commitment to looking after the health and safety of people who may be affected by the organisation and its staff, and is ideally written in the same language as other policies and statements – including those used for marketing. The Safety Statement should make clear in the health and safety arrangements section who is responsible for assessing risks, and the role of the competent persons in providing assistance. Where there are particular hazards these should be addressed in the final section of the Safety Statement, covering matters such as housekeeping and premises, electrical equipment, hazardous substances and similar matters.

Safety Statement

3.2 Control Measures (Continued)

The law also requires that our commitment to achieving this and how it is to be done are both documented in our Safety Statement which is kept under review and updated as necessary.

The key mechanism for achieving and maintaining safety is risk assessment by which we identify hazards which have the potential for harming health or causing accidents, evaluate the risks arising and select and implement appropriate precautions. This process needs to involve all the staff, but can only be successful if managers such as you show a personal commitment and give a lead. Whilst our immediate aim is to initiate a process of risk assessment, it is important that your support is visible. Accordingly you are requested to carry out the following actions:

- *attendance at a management briefing on health and safety within the organisation (date to be agreed)*
- *brief your staff on the risk assessment process we are engaged in, inviting participation and assistance*
- *express a commitment to improve health and safety performance, and an intolerance of unsafe situations*
- *participate in the risk assessments, discuss and prepare an implementation plan for any controls required*
- *assist in regular performance standards and monitor achievement*
- *participate in regular reviews of health and safety in your area of control, including audits*
- *assist with any necessary reviews and update of the health and safety policy*

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

3.3 Assignment of Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the various managers, technicians, academic and non-academic staff and others are outlined in Section 2.

In principle those in control of a workplace and in a position to instruct and direct persons and activities are responsible for ensuring the safety of those persons and activities.

3.4 Resources

The Institute will continue to ensure that adequate financial and material resources are in place to maintain its obligations as an Employer in the context of the Safety Health & Welfare at Work Act 1989 insofar as is reasonably practicable.