

## Relevant Legislation

*The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*

*(Other regulations have specific requirements for risk assessment and these are referenced in those specific sections)*

## The Purpose of Risk Assessment

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, it is a statutory requirement to carry out a risk assessment. In an organisation which employs more than five people, such as Northumberland County Council, *written* assessments must be completed for all areas of significant risk. Risk assessment is an important tool in helping to keep staff and others safe and focus on the hazards and risks that really matter.

## What is a Risk Assessment?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in the workplace, could cause harm to people. It involves identifying the *hazards* present and evaluating the *risks* arising from these hazards.

Definitions of hazard and risk are as follows:

- **hazard** is something with the potential to cause harm – for example *noise, dust, working at height, weather conditions, moving parts, flying debris*.
- **risk** is the likelihood (high, medium or low), that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be, for example *if the hazard is working at height, one of the risks might be serious injury or fatality arising from falls*.

The County Council has a corporate form (RA1) for recording risk assessments (see page 11). Separate forms have been devised for areas such as manual handling and COSHH (see page 7).

## Completing a Risk Assessment

The County Council has adopted the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) method for risk assessment which is based on 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 the findings and implement them
- Step 5 - Review the assessment and update it if necessary

The Council's risk assessment form has been designed to reflect these steps. After identifying the activity for which the risk assessment is being completed (e.g. hedge trimming, transporting a service user) the following five steps should be followed:

## Step 1 - Identify the hazards

Firstly, the manager needs to work out how people could be harmed. When employees work in a place every day or perform the same activities it is easy to overlook some hazards. The following tips will help the manager identify the ones that matter:

- Walk around the workplace or examine an activity carefully and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Anticipating risks that are not foreseeable is not expected.
- Talk to employees or their representatives and ask if they have any concerns; they may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious.
- If the Council is a member of a trade association, contact them. Many organisations produce helpful guidance. The HSE also provides useful information on various topics ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)).
- Check manufacturers' instructions for equipment as they can be very helpful in identifying hazards.
- Look back at accident statistics and ill-health records – these often help to identify the less obvious hazards.
- Remember to think about long-term hazards to health (e.g high levels of noise or exposure to harmful substances) as well as safety hazards that could result in injury.

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

For each hazard a manager will need to be clear about *who* might be harmed. This is best done by identifying groups of people rather than individuals (e.g. staff in the workshop, care staff, visitors, pupils or service users).

Identify *how* they might be harmed and what type of injury or ill health may occur (e.g. caretakers may suffer a back injury from lifting boxes).

Remember:

- some workers have particular requirements, such as new and young workers, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities who may be at particular risk. Extra thought will be needed for some hazards
- cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance workers or shift workers who may not be in the workplace all the time
- members of the public or service users who could be hurt by the Council's activities
- if a particular workplace is shared with other departments or organisations, it will be necessary to think about how the work activities taking place affect all staff – talk to them.

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

Once the hazards have been identified the associated risks can be evaluated. This is done by considering:

- the likelihood of the harm occurring
- the potential severity of the harm, such as any resultant injury or adverse health effect
- the number of people who might be affected.

The County Council has adopted a simple method for evaluating risk based on the table below, which allows a risk rating to be produced.

Type of Injury	Likely	Possible	Remote
Fatality	High	High	Medium
Serious Injury	High	Medium	Medium
Minor Injury	Medium	Low	Low
No Injury	Low	Low	Low

So, for example, if one of the risks arising from a hazard is a “serious injury” arising from a fall from height, but the chance of this happening is “remote”, then the risk is **Medium**.

The Council RA1 form requires two risk ratings to be considered:

- **“Initial risk rating”** – this is an assessment of the risk without taking into account any existing control measures.

- “**Final risk rating**” – this is an assessment of the risks taking into account the effectiveness of existing control measures.

## *Controlling Risk*

When considering the measures that are required to reduce the risk, the accepted hierarchy of control measures is as follows:

1. Eliminate the hazard if the activity can be carried out in another way.
2. Reduce the hazard by substituting for something less hazardous.
3. Isolate or segregate by use of physical barriers.
4. Where possible, combat the risks at source by employing engineering controls, enclosure, local exhaust ventilation, adapting the work to suit the individual as regards the design of workplace, the choice of work equipment etc.
5. when all reasonable measures have been taken, and are still insufficient to control the risks then issue personal protective equipment (for example, clothing, footwear or goggles); and provide welfare facilities (for example, first aid and washing facilities for removal of contamination)

## *Deciding if control measures are adequate*

Deciding if the control measures in place are sufficient depends upon whether the risks highlighted are adequately controlled.

The law requires an employer to do everything ‘*reasonably practicable*’ to protect people from harm. This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the risk in terms of money, time or trouble. However, it is not necessary to take action if it would be grossly disproportionate to the level of risk.

It may be necessary to refer to industry standards, guidance, Approved Codes of Practice and British Standards when deciding if control measures are adequate and represent good practice.

It is important for a manager to involve staff so that they can be sure that what is proposed will work in practice and will not introduce any new hazards.

The Corporate Health and Safety Team can also advise on the suitability of the control measures proposed.

## Step 4 - Record the findings and implement them

As well as being a legal requirement for a large organisation such as NCC, writing down the results of the risk assessment and sharing them with staff ensures everyone involved is clear on what they should be doing.

The recorded risk assessment should include the significant findings, namely:

- a clear list of hazards and risks
- a record of the preventive and protective measures in place to control the risks
- what further action, if any, needs to be taken to reduce risk sufficiently.

When writing down the 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'.

A risk assessment does not have to be perfect, but it must be "suitable and sufficient". A manager will need to be able to show that:

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

The person completing the risk assessment should be competent to do so. They should have the necessary experience or training in risk assessment and hazard identification and be familiar with the activity or process to be assessed. They should also have technical knowledge of the plant or equipment involved.

The Council's risk assessment form should be used to record the findings. If it transpires that there are several improvements that need to be made it is important not to attempt to remedy everything at once. Instead, make a plan of action to deal with the most important things first. The plan should clearly state who is responsible for carrying out the action and the timescale by which it should be completed. Establishing or revising safe working procedures, permits to work, method statements, induction material and training needs analysis are typical actions which could result from risk assessment.

It is important to communicate the findings of risk assessments and records should be kept to demonstrate this. As the number of risk assessments increases it is appropriate to develop an index of assessments to aid with training.

## **Step 5 - Review the assessment and update if necessary**

Risk assessments should be periodically reviewed and updated where necessary. The time between reviews is dependent on the nature of the risks and the degree of change likely in the work activity, however, it is recommended that this is completed at least annually. The review should consider if there have been any changes or if there are any outstanding actions. Employees should be asked if they have noticed a problem.

During the year, if there is a significant change, do not wait to review the assessment; do it straight away. Circumstances which would warrant this include:

- If there has been an accident or serious near miss
- A change in process, work methods (such as the introduction of shifts) materials or workplace
- Moving
- Changes in legislation
- The introduction of new plant or technology
- If new information becomes available.

## **Generic Assessments**

Directorates that control a number of workplaces where similar activities take place may produce generic risk assessments reflecting the core hazards and risks associated with these activities. Such generic assessments may be applied by employers or managers at each workplace, provided they can:

- satisfy themselves that the generic assessment is appropriate to their type of work
- adapt or add to the generic version to detail their own actual work situations. Guidance for this process is dealt with later in this section covering the review of risk assessments using forms and flowcharts.

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## Arrangements for Risk Assessment in Northumberland County Council

In order to make the completion of risk assessments as easy as possible a number of forms have been devised. The principal form is the corporate form RA1. However, other forms have been devised for specific activities, some arising from specific legislation. The table below details the various forms that are available.

Risk Assessment Requirement	Form and Comments
Assessment of risks in general work activities	Form RA1 – page 11
Assessment of risks to young people in our employment	Form RA1 – page 11
Workstation Risk Assessments	Workstation Assessment Form – See section <i>L2 - Display Screen Equipment</i>
COSHH	COSHH RA Form - See section <i>H1 - COSHH</i>
Manual Handling Risk Assessment – Objects	Manual Handling RA Form (General) – See section <i>L1 - Manual Handling</i>
Manual Handling Risk Assessment - Pupils	Specialist form issued to schools
Manual Handling Risk Assessment – Service Users	Specialist form issued to Adult and Children’s Services
Personal Protective Equipment Control of Lead at Work Ionising Radiation Regulations	Form RA1 – page 11
Designer’s Duties under CDM	See <i>J1 - CDM</i>
Noise at Work	See <i>I1 - Noise at Work</i>
Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations	See section <i>G1 - Work Equipment</i>
Fire Precautions	See <i>Fire Log Book</i>
Personalised Risk Assessment	Form RA1 – page 11
Assessment of risks to new and expectant mothers	Form RA1 – page 11. Also see section <i>L10 – New and Expectant Mothers.</i>

## Arrangements within Each Directorate

In accordance with current legislation and Northumberland County Council's Health and Safety Policy Statement all Directorates within NCC must devise and implement procedures to ensure the following objectives are achieved:

- Identify and generate any new risk assessments as required
- Review existing generic and specific risk assessments
- Develop Action Plans to incorporate findings from assessments
- Communicate the existence of risk assessments and appropriate findings to all staff.

In order to achieve the above objectives the relevant Director is responsible for ensuring suitable and sufficient arrangements are made to fulfil the requirements detailed below:

### 1. Assign Responsibilities

Identify Managers who will assume responsibility for ensuring that risk assessment process is undertaken.

### 2. Review Existing Assessments

Carry out gap analysis and identify new assessments required.

Further information on these requirements is detailed below:

Action	Responsibility
Managers should be trained to carry out risk assessments.	All Managers
Risk assessments should be completed for all areas of significant risk within each Directorate.	All Managers
A set of generic risk assessments, which apply to all parts of the Directorate, will be produced. These should be signed and dated by the relevant manager.	All Managers
Where appropriate generic risk assessments should be considered by the relevant H&S Group.	H&S Group



Copies of all locally produced team specific risk assessments and local procedures will be kept by the relevant manager and these should be signed, dated and updated, as necessary.	All Managers
Relevant risk assessments should be included as part of the Induction Programme, and fully explained to staff.	All Managers
All specific and generic risk assessments should be reviewed periodically or when significant changes occur. The index should also be amended.	All Managers

## Hazard Identification Checklist

This checklist should be used as an aide memoir when examining each work activity to identify hazards. It is not an exhaustive list:

Category	Hazards Associated with Activities
<b>Environmental</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Lighting/heating Weather Travel Ability to summon assistance Space Fabric and condition of building/site Protecting public/others Working conditions such as height/excavations Work along highways, parking	Glare from windows on workstations Snow and Ice on access routes Breakdown Working alone in remote locations Overcrowded and noisy work areas Trips and falls Falling objects Collapse of trench, fall from height  Struck by vehicle
<b>Individual</b>	
Level of training  Level of experience Fitness/health/pre-existing problems Human error	Lack of training leading to unsafe systems Inexperience leading to poor choices Vulnerability Lack of secondary protection
<b>Activity</b>	
Use of substances Use of equipment General fire electricity noise utilities Interaction with colleagues/client/public Movement of goods/items/people Transport Infection control Psychological impact Physiological impact Occasional/non routine operations	Asphyxiation Trapping  Overloading circuits Lack of maintenance Exposure to excessive levels Inadvertent contact with supplies Violence Lifting excessively heavy equipment Excessive driving times Inability to wash hands Regular verbal abuse Poor posture Contact with unprotected conductors

<b>Department:</b>	<b>Service:</b>	<b>Reference:</b>
<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Site:</b>	
<b>People at Risk:</b>	<b>Additional Information:</b>	
<b>Name of Person Completing Form:</b>	<b>Job Title:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
		<b>Review Date:</b>

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Initial Rating L, M, H</b>	<b>Existing Control Measures</b>	<b>Final Rating L, M, H</b>	<b>Additional Action Required (action by whom and completion date – use separate Action Plan if necessary)</b>

# Guidance on Completing the Risk Assessment Form (RA1)

## Activity

Identify the activity for which the risk assessment is being completed (e.g. hedge trimming).

## People at Risk

Identify the people at risk (e.g. employees, volunteers, contractors, visitors, pupils, members of the public).

## Name and Job Title of Person Completing, Date and Review Date

If completing electronically please remember to enter these details. If completing by hand please ensure this is legible. The assessment should be reviewed periodically or when changes to the process or task occur or following an accident or near miss. The periodic review date should be added to the form.

## Additional Information

Cross-reference to other available documentation, such as generic risk assessments, data sheets, safe working procedures, operations manuals, HSE guidance, British Standards and standard texts.

## Hazard

Identify each hazard involved in the activity in a separate box. Remember that a hazard is something with the potential to cause harm (e.g. noise, dust, working at height, weather conditions, moving parts, flying debris).

## Risks

Identify the risks associated with each hazard (e.g. if the hazard is working at height, one of the risks might be injury arising from falls). Remember the risk is the potential for an incident to happen and, if so, its likely seriousness (e.g. minor or major injury or damage to plant or equipment)

## Initial Rating

To determine the initial risk ratings, consider the likelihood and the severity for each risk. Any existing control measures should be ignored at this stage.

Assign the rating H, M or L based on the following matrix (e.g. if there is a possibility of a fatality and it is likely that an incident will occur, then the risk rating is H).

Type of Injury	Likely	Possible	Remote
Fatality	High	High	Medium
Serious Injury	High	Medium	Medium
Minor Injury	Medium	Low	Low
No Injury	Low	Low	Low

## Existing Control Measures

Detail the control measures which are already in place (e.g. details relating to dust extraction, machine guarding, training, maintenance, inspection and personal protective equipment)

## Final Rating

The risk matrix should now be used to determine the final rating, taking into account the effectiveness of the existing control measures. If existing control measures do not sufficiently reduce the risk then additional action will be required.

## Additional Action Required

If it is determined that the existing control measures sufficiently reduce the level of risk (see Final Rating above) then this box can be left blank, although it would be good practice to enter 'none'. If additional control measures are deemed necessary, then identify in full what additional measures need to be put in place. A follow up report or action plan to Management may be required to implement items detailed in this section.

Make a final decision about the urgency of the additional action required and record the date by which the action(s) should be implemented and by whom. Timescales should be determined by the Final Rating:

- **H** requires immediate action
- **M** requires action within three months
- **L** requires action within 12 months.

# Risk Assessment Review

