



Risk Assessment Manual

During this module, you will be asked some questions to simply provoke thought and test your current knowledge please have a notepad or supervision workbook to hand to make notes. Your performance will only be measured by the answers you select when completing the knowledge test at the end of the module.



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Learning Outcomes

- Understand the methods and objectives of risk assessment
- Define what is meant by ‘hazard’ and ‘risk’
- Describe how risk assessments can help address dilemmas between individuals’ rights and health and safety concerns
- Know how to carry out a basic risk assessment

Complementary Manuals

- Health and Safety
- Infection Control
- Safety of People and Places
- Fire Safety



Chapter One

Acts for Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a required skill for all managers and employees. While your manager may be responsible for the formal assessments used to create safe working policies; you are responsible for the kind of informal assessments that enable you to do things safely.

There are a variety of Acts and regulations in place to protect workers and people who may be put at risk by working practices. Our modern health and safety legislation really began with:

The Health and Safety at Work (etc.) Act (HSWA) 1974

The inaugural legislation addressing various work and working environment aspects was the Health and Safety at Work Act. This act is considered a framework or foundation, as it offers broad guidance on numerous matters. Nonetheless, additional legislation became necessary to provide detailed instructions and assign specific responsibilities for managing risks.

Under the Act your employer must:

- Furnish you with written policies and procedures for safe working.
- Ensure the safety and proper maintenance of your working environment and equipment.
- Handle substances in a safe manner.
- Provide you with information, instruction, training, and supervision.
- Ensure you have appropriate welfare facilities, such as toilets and drinking water.

Your responsibilities under the Act are to:

- Adhere to your employer's safe working procedures and any given training and information while using equipment and performing tasks.
- Work in a manner that reasonably safeguards your health and safety and that of others.
- Collaborate with your employer on health and safety matters.
- Report health and safety concerns to the appropriate person.
- The cornerstone of compliance with health and safety law is risk assessment, which aids in identifying work hazards and determining the most effective control measures. For instance:
- Employers must identify hazardous substances and ways to improve their safety to handle substances securely.
- You should recognize hazards and be aware of methods to minimize them to work safely and protect your health.

The majority of Health and Safety legislation is based on risk assessment. It is crucial to be familiar with the Acts and regulations influencing your work practices and to understand your responsibilities, which broadly align with those outlined in the HSWA of 1974, emphasizing cooperation with your employer and maintaining a safe work environment.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

These regulations assign distinct duties to employers, managers, and supervisors in terms of conducting risk assessments and executing suitable control measures. The risk assessments must ensure the protection of employees and any individuals impacted by work practices, including clients or visitors to the premises.

The control measures should encompass:

- Effective communication of risks to employees
- Implementation of emergency procedures
- Designation of a competent person to aid in health and safety matters
- Regular monitoring of occupational health.

Fire Safety Regulations, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 2002

Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981

Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (MHOR updated 2004).

All these four examples are based on a risk assessment approach, which encourages employers to exercise autonomy in determining suitable control measures and equipment for their workplace and business size. Instead of mandating specific measures, these regulations rely on employers to act as experts in their own domains. As long as they can demonstrate that they have effectively reduced risks to acceptable levels using appropriate methods, they will fulfill their legal obligations.

To comply with these legislations, employers can utilize risk assessment to meet the requirements:

- Identify clients at higher risk during a fire outbreak and develop personalized emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for them.
- Evaluate potential skin problems caused by cleaning materials and introduce protective gloves to manage the risk.
- Estimate the number and type of accidents and medical emergencies likely to occur and use this data to stock suitable first aid kits.
- Assess the specific needs of clients and introduce appropriate equipment accordingly.

Even in workplaces with a strong risk-aware culture, accidents may still occur. In such cases, it is essential to report and record these incidents appropriately. Familiarize yourself with the accident book or forms used and ensure you understand when and how to complete them. Certain incidents must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive as mandated by specific regulations.

Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995

The Regulations on Reporting Injuries, Diseases, and Dangerous Occurrences empower enforcement agencies to oversee workplace accidents and health issues. Through this, they can pinpoint prevalent accident types, observe the correlation between workplace types and specific illnesses or injuries, and trace the transmission of infections.

Certain incidents must be reported by employers and managers, either through telephone communication (limited to fatalities and major incidents) or online submission (via www.hse.gov.uk/riddor). These reportable events encompass:

- Accidental fatality
- Accidents leading to more than 7 days of work absence
- Specific diseases/illnesses (a complete list available on the RIDDOR website)
- Non-employee injuries necessitating immediate medical attention
- Near misses (incidents with potential for serious injury but ultimately avoided, e.g., a hoist sling not tearing during use)
- Events like fires or building collapses.

The data collected through RIDDOR serves as a foundation for generating yearly workplace safety statistics and offers valuable insights to employers conducting risk assessments in pinpointing areas of worry. For instance, when the statistics reveal that carers consistently experience lower back injuries compared to other professions, care providers recognize the need to focus on potential causes and prevention measures.

Conducting risk assessments is an essential proficiency for legal and practical purposes. This guide will examine the assessment process and the diverse applications available to effectively handle workplace hazards.



Chapter Two

Risk Assessment Initiating

The main focus of this manual centers on formal risk assessments. However, it was established in Chapter One that all employees must conduct informal risk assessments while they work.

For formal risk assessments, employers and competent managers are responsible. This means they should possess the following capabilities:

1. Understanding the risk assessment process and receiving proper training to carry it out.
2. Familiarity with the working environment and the types of activities conducted within it.
3. Ability to identify appropriate control measures and assess the costs and benefits of implementing them.
4. Knowledge of the legal framework concerning Health and Safety at work.
5. Proficiency in communicating their findings.

Formal risk assessments follow a 5-step process, which we will examine individually:

1. Identify the hazards.
2. Determine potential harm to individuals and how it may occur.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on necessary precautions.
4. Document the findings and implement the proposed measures.
5. Regularly review the assessment and update it if needed (HSE 2011).

The information gathered under RIDDOR is utilized to compile annual workplace safety statistics, enabling employers to conduct risk assessments to identify areas of concern. For example, if the statistics reveal that carers consistently experience lower back injuries than other types of workers, care providers must give specific attention to potential causes and prevention.

Both for legal and practical reasons, risk assessment is an essential skill. This manual will delve into the steps involved in carrying out assessments and explore the various ways they can effectively manage workplace hazards.

Informal Risk Assessments

Informal risk assessments follow a non-linear approach, solely focusing on hazard identification, understanding potential harm and its recipients, and implementing control measures to mitigate risks. These assessments are conducted on the spot while planning and executing hazardous tasks.

Engaging in informal risk assessments is a routine occurrence, an integral part of our daily lives. Without this habitual evaluation, navigating through the day unharmed would be a matter of sheer luck. Familiar instances include employing the "green cross code" to cross the road and the "mirror, signal, maneuver" sequence while driving a car.

Although these actions may seem automatic, they can be dangerous when performed thoughtlessly, leading to instances such as absent-mindedly stepping into the road without looking or turning into oncoming traffic.

With practice, the cognitive process becomes more natural, making us less conscious of our actions. Children meticulously guide themselves through checking for traffic, whereas adults swiftly make these assessments due to their increased experience.

Veteran caregivers become more adept at their tasks through repeated practice and developing safe techniques. Nevertheless, with time comes complacency, introducing risks. After completing a task successfully 99 times, one may disregard potential difficulties on the hundredth attempt, failing to acknowledge any changes in the situation.

Consider this example: You store bedding on a high shelf and usually retrieve it by standing on tiptoe, neglecting the available steps. One day, as you tug at a duvet cover, a heavy box perched on top cascades down onto your head. This incident highlights the potential dangers of disregarding safety measures, as luck alone had previously spared you from harm.

In a work setting, vigilance towards hazards and prompt action to avert them are imperative. For instance, during manual handling tasks, you can use the acronym TILE to recall the key factors to consider for ensuring safety.

Activities

- What needs to be accomplished?
- What are our goals?
- What is expected to be included?

Individual (you)

- Do I possess the capability, competence, and confidence required to accomplish this task?
- Is there sufficient training and experience under my belt to ensure safe execution?
- Assessing my well-being today, am I in optimal physical condition?
- Have I dressed suitably, opting for comfortable attire, avoiding both overly loose or tight clothing, and selecting sensible shoes?

Load (Inanimate)

- What is its size like?
- Is it simple to grip?
- How weighty is it?
- Does it possess sharp edges?
- Is it prone to instability?

Environment

- Is there available space?
- What is the flooring condition?
- Do I need to navigate through doors or go upstairs? How challenging will this be?
- Are there any obstructions from furniture?
- Will there be individuals present?
- Is the lighting sufficient?

Try answering the questions in the table below as if you were assessing a task.

Mrs. Jarman wants you to help her out of bed; Use a notepad to note what you think would be the appropriate information to enable you to carry out the task safely.
Where would you look for details of the level of assistance Mrs. Jarman needs?
What would you need to find out about Mrs. Jarman immediately prior to assisting her?
What do you need to know about yourself?
What hazards might you look for in the environment you are working in?
What would you do if there were new hazards present e.g., Mrs. Jarman had become less physically able or her bed had been moved and your access was restricted?

If encountering novel hazards or unfamiliar situations while working, do not hesitate to seek guidance from a manager or a seasoned colleague. It is crucial, especially when handling new equipment or performing tasks like administering medication, to undergo proper training. Employers should conduct competence checks to ensure all employees possess the required skills for a safe working environment.

Formal Risk Assessments

When conducting risk assessments, the foremost step for employers and managers is to pinpoint workplace hazards that necessitate evaluation. Hazards, which have the potential to cause harm, can be identified through the following approaches:

- Engaging in discussions with staff to ascertain their perception of safety threats.
- Analyzing accident reports and workplace injury statistics to identify common occurrences in healthcare settings or previous incidents within the specific workplace.
- Inspect the premises to identify hazardous working practices, improper equipment storage, poor maintenance, etc.
- Drawing upon experience and knowledge of the premises and work practices to determine potential risks, areas of vulnerability, and individuals with access to different zones and the types of activities involved.

Employers can create an initial checklist of anticipated hazards, which then guides their inspection and staff interviews. Assessors should maintain an open mind, ensuring thorough premises tours and fostering honesty when seeking feedback from employees.

Workplace accidents and ill health are typically categorized into three main types of hazards:

1. Occupational hazards - those linked to the nature of the work being performed.
2. Environmental hazards - pertaining to the physical location where the work is conducted.
3. Human hazards - associated with the individuals performing the work.

Therefore, in health and social care, primary concerns may include the following: [List the specific concerns here, which were not provided in the original text.]

Professional Issues

- The unpredictability inherent in caring for individuals
- Dealing with infectious diseases and managing bodily fluids
- Engaging in repetitive tasks, such as bed-making and cleaning duties
- Individuals facing mobility challenges
- The presence of stress
- Handling cleaning and laundry chemicals

Environmental Factors

- Inadequate space to conduct tasks safely, especially in modified facilities
- Flooring or outside areas that are not well-maintained
- High temperatures
- Inadequate lighting

Human Factors

- Insufficient training / inadequate competence
- Impatience
- Hurrying

- Absence of compassion
- Negligence
- Weak concentration

Select a room within your workplace, such as the kitchen, and generate a comprehensive list of hazards you can identify. Jot down what you believe you might encounter, then inspect the room thoroughly and augment your lists accordingly. Use a notepad to document the risk factors and hazards.

<i>Risk factor</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional• Environmental• Human



Chapter Three

Risk Understanding

Employers should adopt a pragmatic approach to risk assessment, aiming to establish practical measures for appropriately and adequately reducing risks, rather than getting bogged down in excessive paperwork and unnecessary policies to prevent highly unlikely incidents.

An interesting anecdote illustrates this point: some libraries have purportedly denied customers the ability to borrow staplers, citing concerns of potential injuries to themselves or others. Employees defending this decision refer to the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, which necessitate employers to offer sufficient training, information, instruction, and supervision for safe equipment use.

Although staplers are considered work equipment, most capable adults can be trusted to use them responsibly and without causing harm. Conducting a risk assessment for such straightforward tasks is unlikely to be necessary.

In situations where little or no risk is present, there is no need for elaborate assessments or the creation of exhaustive safety policies and procedures, as doing so only wastes valuable time and resources. By conducting effective risk assessments, employers can efficiently allocate their time and funds to ensure the health and safety of all those who might be impacted.

Victim

After identifying hazards, the subsequent phase involves determining the potential targets of harm and the nature of that harm. According to the legislation, employers are obligated to safeguard not only their employees but also any individuals impacted by work practices, encompassing clients, visitors, contractors, neighbors, and passers-by.

These groups may also require subdivision based on specific requirements. For instance, the risk level for employees can vary based on age, experience, pregnancy, existing injuries, or general health. Special considerations must be given to children entering the premises, and personalized care approaches necessitate individual assessments for each client.

As an employee, it is your responsibility to inform your employer about any unique circumstances that might increase the risk of harm to yourself or others. You must communicate the following:

- Existing joint or spinal injuries
- Presence of any infectious illness
- Health conditions that could impact your work requirements
- Sensory difficulties, such as hearing impairments affecting alarm audibility
- Pregnancy (notification required 15 weeks before the due date)
- Recent childbirth or breastfeeding status.

While pregnant women are not obligated to inform their employer during the early stages, this could lead to a lack of awareness regarding potential risks to them or their babies. To address this concern, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations places a specific responsibility on employers to evaluate risks for all women of childbearing age and implement appropriate control measures.

Determining individuals susceptible to workplace risks should be relatively straightforward; however, identifying the specific harm they might encounter can be more challenging. Certain injuries or health issues may be evident, like a higher likelihood of burns from fats and hot surfaces in a kitchen, increased chances of slips, and common injuries from knives.

Difficulties arise when risks become more pronounced with prolonged exposure or when the harm inflicted is less visible than physical injuries like burns or cuts. Risk assessors must be well-versed in understanding the root causes of conditions such as work-related upper limb disorders (wrulds) resulting from repetitive stress on the wrists, elbows,

or shoulders; respiratory difficulties caused by inhaling substances; and vision deterioration linked to prolonged use of display screen equipment.

Make a note on your notepad of who you think might be harmed by the Hazards below and what harm may occur?

Hazard
Non-mobile client to be transferred from bed to chair
Dishwasher detergent
Deep fat fryers

Environment Issues

Not only individuals but also the environment can be endangered due to inadequate working methods. It is the responsibility of employers to safeguard the environment by ensuring the safe handling of chemicals, appropriate waste disposal, and avoiding air pollution. Among the particular workplace hazards are clinical waste, medications, and cleaning chemicals.

Possibility of Harm

Personal biases and attitudes towards risk can influence risk assessment; cautious individuals might overestimate risks, whereas more adventurous people might underestimate them. For a more accurate evaluation of hazards, assessors should seek supporting evidence to guide their calculations, such as accident reports and national statistics.

One straightforward approach to assessing risk involves assigning numerical values to the severity and likelihood of harm, which are then multiplied to determine the degree of risk. This method operates as follows:

Severity:

1. Minor (e.g., a bruise or cut)
2. Significant (e.g., a broken bone or injury lasting over 7 days)
3. Major (e.g., death, serious injury, or chronic illness)

Likelihood:

1. Unlikely
2. Possible – could happen or may occur regularly
3. Imminent – will almost certainly happen or will happen frequently

For example, a hazard rated as unlikely to occur (1), potentially causing minor injury (1), would have a risk value of 1 (1 x 1). Conversely, a hazard rated as imminent (3) and likely to cause major harm (3) would have a value of 9 (3 x 3). These values can then be employed to prioritize control measures; higher numbers indicate a more urgent need for action.

Risk Management

Risk assessment can be perceived as negative since it focuses on potential harm and determining ways to control dangers, primarily to safeguard workers. Care providers need to be mindful that their work environment is their clients' home, and any safety measures implemented can have an impact. For instance, while emergency exits must be marked, having signs scattered all over the clients' house may make it look institutional.

While workers have the right to be protected and ensure the safety of others, clients also deserve protection, but they retain the right to take risks if they choose to do so.

It's crucial not to unnecessarily restrict clients' freedoms. While you have a duty of care to protect them, it must be balanced with their rights. You cannot employ health and safety concerns or personal feelings to limit clients' lives. A positive approach is necessary – listen to the client's desires and concentrate on how they can be fulfilled, rather than dwelling on the obstacles.

The Human Rights Act 1998 has been utilized to challenge health authorities' use of blanket policies, such as 'no lifting,' which were found to be unlawful due to their failure to consider individual differences, limit freedom of choice, and potentially be discriminatory (Ref The Queen v. East Sussex County Council 2003).

Effective risk management maintains clients' safety while preserving their freedoms. Adequately trained care staff must assess clients' activities and make appropriate decisions regarding potential risks. The intention of these risk assessments should be to enable the activity, not to find reasons to impede it.

To support equality and fairness, risk assessments must be carried out individually, avoiding reliance on stereotypical ideas about clients' conditions. People with the same diagnoses (e.g., dementia, epilepsy) can have vastly different abilities and disabilities. One may be capable of living independently, while another may require significant support.

Decision-making should be impartial and without assumptions. Those conducting risk assessments must have confidence in their abilities and not fear legal repercussions. Proper record-keeping is essential to document the reasons for allowing clients to take certain actions if harm does occur.



Chapter Four

Evaluating and Materializing Risk Assessments

Employers are obligated by law to undertake all actions that are 'reasonably practicable' and implement 'suitable and sufficient' measures to lower risks to acceptable levels. It is their responsibility to determine suitable control measures, convey these measures to relevant employees and individuals, and conduct necessary reassessments when needed.

Control Measures

Employers need to assess the level of risk against the costs and effort involved in implementing specific control measures. Prioritizing work based on risk assessments is crucial, and the closer the risk level is to 9, the more urgent it is to take action and mitigate the risk to safe levels.

Immediate and straightforward control measures can be addressed promptly. For instance, installing window limiters to prevent falls is an inexpensive and quick solution that effectively prevents harm. However, more complex measures may require planning and budgeting. Risk assessors should provide timelines for completing the necessary work.

If it's possible, hazards should be entirely removed. Otherwise, appropriate and effective control measures should be applied.

Control measures include:

- Substituting hazardous substances with safer alternatives, whenever possible.
- Isolating hazards by using guards or locked doors to restrict access.
- Reducing exposure by rotating staff between different tasks.
- Providing training.
- Introducing personal protective equipment (PPE) like gloves.
- Offering welfare facilities, such as sinks for handwashing.

The first three measures on the list are more effective than the last three, as the latter require changes in behavior. While training is essential, it should be used in conjunction with other measures, not solely relied upon to eliminate risks. For example, the introduction of equipment reduces but does not eliminate the risks of moving and handling; employees should also receive training on the safe use of the equipment.

For training and PPE to be effective, it is necessary to check for competence and compliance through appropriate supervision.

Welfare facilities represent the essential prerequisites that employers must provide to safeguard the health and well-being of their employees.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Regulations 2002

PPE serves as a means to mitigate risk in situations where other control measures prove insufficient. In cases where a risk assessment identifies the necessity of PPE, the employer must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Provide suitable PPE at no cost to all employees impacted by the hazard.
- Ensure the availability of the equipment at the right time and location, maintaining its good working condition.
- Verify that the PPE conforms to the appropriate British and European standards, denoted by the CE mark.

Employees are required to utilize PPE as indicated by the risk assessments and employ it in accordance with the provided information or training.

Examples of personal protective equipment include:

- Gloves, either disposable or rubber, which prevent cross-contamination when handling food, bodily fluids, etc.
- Aprons, color-coded based on their purpose, utilized in kitchen settings or personal care scenarios.

Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981

Regardless of the control measures implemented at your workplace, it is crucial to establish arrangements for addressing injuries and medical emergencies, aiming to reduce potential harm.

Employers must guarantee the presence of sufficient first aid resources, well-trained first aiders, and protocols for reporting and documentation. While specific requirements are not predetermined, the employer, in collaboration with designated first aiders, should assess the potential types and frequency of incidents that might arise. Utilizing this assessment, they can determine the contents of first aid kits and devise appropriate staff training programs.

First Aid Tools:

- Gloves, plasters, and dressings must form part of the content.
- Placement should ensure easy accessibility in case of an emergency.
- Alongside them, blankets and aprons ought to be kept.
- Medicines and creams should not be included in the storage.
- Regular checks and restocking are necessary responsibilities assigned to a nominated individual.

First Aiders:

- Availability on each shift is a necessity.
- Training should be current and suitable.

Documentation:

- If first aid is necessary, it is essential to fill out an accident/incident report.
- Whenever required, ensure to report under RIDDOR. **Possible control measures for the hazards identified on page 15:**

Hazard	Who may be harmed? What harm may occur?	Control measures
Non-mobile client to be transferred from bed to chair	Carers/clients anything from cuts and bruises to fatalities	Introduce equipment e.g., hoist Training for staff Maneuver to be carried out by two members of staff
Dishwasher detergent	Clients/children may mistake it for a drink if stored badly; may cause serious damage to the digestive system and can be fatal.	Store in the original container in an appropriate place that is inaccessible to clients and visitors. Ensure first aid data is available
Deep fat fryers	Kitchen workers are at the highest risk of burns; may cause fires that put anyone on the premises at risk	Keep them properly maintained and supervised at all times. Keep the floor clean and dry to avoid slips Have a fire blanket in the kitchen.

Record searching and implementing

The effectiveness of control measures hinges on people's awareness of them and understanding their role in implementation. The outcomes of risk assessments should be employed to craft written and communicated safe working policies and procedures.

The written safe working procedures will become an integral part of your organization's health and safety policies, and in relevant cases, they will be incorporated into clients' care plans. Knowing how and when to access necessary safety information is crucial for performing work safely.

To ensure the utilization of control measures, the following steps may be necessary:

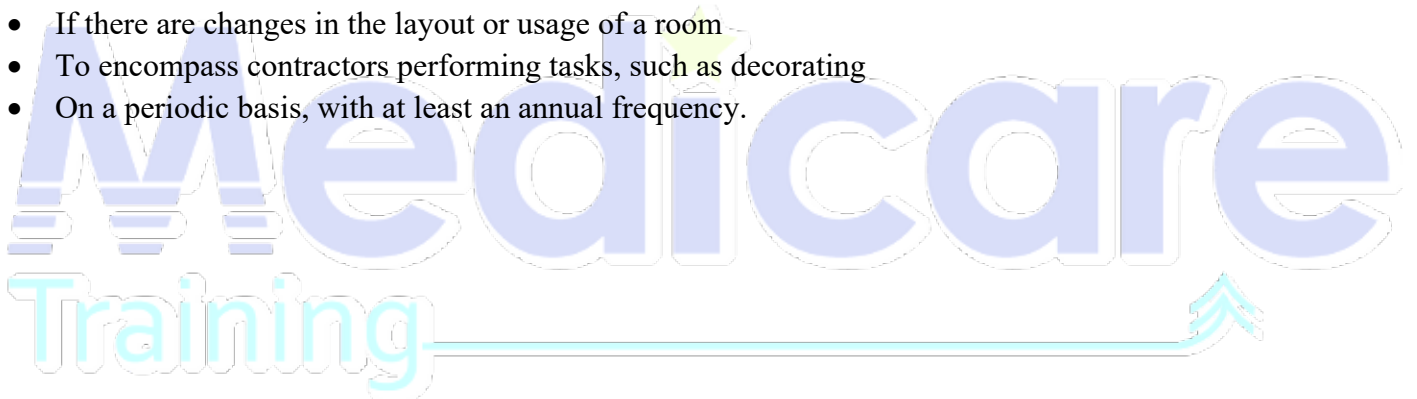
1. Providing written information to staff and others (e.g., clients) who can benefit from it. For instance, if a client has an infectious illness, people entering the premises may receive a leaflet outlining precautions like handwashing.
2. Employing a combination of training and supervision to ensure staff competence. For instance, when receiving new equipment, employees should be shown how to use it and observed using it before working unsupervised.
3. Utilizing signs to remind individuals of safe or unsafe behavior, such as 'Now wash your hands,' 'fire door, keep shut,' or 'No naked flames.'
4. 4. Setting an example for others by having managers and supervisors adhere to safety procedures and avoid taking shortcuts. For instance, senior staff must not be seen standing on shelves or using improvised methods when safe practice requires the use of a step ladder in a storage area.

Assessment Review

Risk assessments are dynamic documents that must be adjusted to align with workplace alterations. To ensure safety is upheld, control measures' efficacy should be supervised and evaluations conducted when required.

Evaluations should take place in the following scenarios:

- When accidents transpire or work-related illnesses manifest
- Upon the introduction of new equipment
- Upon the arrival of new employees or admission of a new client
- If there are changes in the layout or usage of a room
- To encompass contractors performing tasks, such as decorating
- On a periodic basis, with at least an annual frequency.



Conclusion

The foundation of health and safety at work lies in risk assessment, encompassing the management of hazards related to work procedures, equipment, substances, and human unpredictability. Adequate control over these risks is paramount.

Assessments should be appropriate and comprehensive in order to minimize risks to a safe extent. Employees must be safeguarded to the greatest extent practically possible, while clients might opt to accept a certain level of risk to preserve their quality of life and preferred lifestyle.

Employers bear the responsibility of ensuring that control measures are continuously monitored for their effectiveness and adjusted as needed to accommodate evolving requirements.

