



Environmental Health – health and safety

Safety Update

This newsletter is designed to provide local businesses like yours, with update information on health and safety to help you comply with the law. In general, if we have assessed a business as being low risk, we will make contact with you through mailshots like this and self assessment questionnaires.

We understand that many businesses may still prefer a personal advisory visit from an officer and this can still be arranged. If there are any issues arising from this update about which you would like further advice, or you would like to request that an officer visit you, please contact Environmental Health on 01799 510510.

This newsletter provides information about the help available if you are carrying out risk assessments or updating your health and safety policy.

What is the difference between a risk assessment and a health and safety policy?

The **policy** provides a general vision and arrangements for health and safety across the whole business.

Risk assessments provide a regular review of how you remove or control hazards, and whether you are doing enough, or if you require further controls.

If you have five or more employees, you must write your policy and risk assessments down.

How should I go about writing a health and safety policy?

A health and safety policy sets out your general approach, objectives and arrangements you have put in place for managing health and safety in your business. It is a unique document that says who does what, when and how.

But how should it look?

A written health and safety policy does not need to be complicated or time consuming. It tells

staff and others about your commitment to health and safety, and simply describes how you will implement and monitor your health and safety controls.

You can download a risk assessment and policy template at www.hse.gov.uk/business/policy.htm. This template brings together your risk assessment, health and safety policy and record of health and safety arrangements into one document to help get you started and save you time. There is also an example health and safety policy to show you what you need to think about when preparing your own.

A policy will only be effective if you and your staff act on it, follow it through and review it on a regular basis.

Why is risk assessment important?

Managing health and safety risks puts you in control since it leaves your business less open to chance. A risk assessment helps to prevent accidents and ill health to you, your workers and members of the public. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives and harm your business too if output is lost, equipment is damaged, insurance costs increase or you have to go to court. You are legally required to assess the risks in your workplace so that you can put in place a plan to control the risks.

Many employers struggle with this – what do you actually need to write down? What does a 'good enough' risk assessment record look like?

Great health and safety myths

The myth – Every possible risk needs a safety sign



The reality – using too many signs just guarantees no one will read any of them. Safety signs are useful when there is a significant risk

which can't be avoided or controlled in any other way. But that doesn't mean you should add a sign for every possible risk, however trivial.

Where there are serious risks in your workplace, don't just rely on signs – take practical steps to deal with them. If you do need a sign, make sure it has the right symbol and is clearly visible.

Worked examples of risk assessments

When you are going to do a risk assessment for your workplace, reading "Five Steps to Risk Assessment" will help – this can be downloaded from www.hse.gov.uk/risk. There is also a downloadable blank risk assessment form, as well as a number of worked examples to help you develop your own assessment. The examples show what a record of a risk assessment might look like. If your business type is not listed, pick the one closest to it, and then adapt it for your workplace.

Examples available:

- Betting office
- Butchers Call Centre
- Charity shop
- Cleaning large retail premises or a shopping centre concourse
- Cleaning offices
- Convenience store/newsagent
- Drycleaners Estate Agency
- Food preparation and service
- Hairdressing salon
- Motor vehicle repair shop
- Motor vehicle showroom
- Night club
- Off Licence
- Private hire Pub
- Road haulage
- Office
- Travel agent
- Village Hall
- Warehousing – chilled
- Warehousing and cold storage
- Warehouse
- Woodworking

But remember.....

You can't just put your company name on these risk assessments and adopt them wholesale without any thought. Doing that would not satisfy the law, and would not protect people effectively. Even where hazards are the same, the control measures you adopt may have to be different from those in the examples to meet the particular conditions in your workplace. Every business is different – you need to think through

the hazards and controls required in your business for yourself.

Take a common sense approach to risk.....

The myth – risk assessments must always be long and complex



The reality – on its own, paperwork never saved anyone. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. So risk assessments should be fit for the purpose and acted upon.

For the majority of risk assessments, short bullet points work well.

The myth – There's nothing you can do about slips and trips and they don't really hurt anyone anyway.



The reality – Most slips and trips are preventable and many happen when spills aren't cleaned up or clutter tidied away. In 2009, there were 4 fatalities and more than 10,000 employees were seriously injured when they had a slip or trip at work. This results in broken bones and time off work, costing the economy around £800 million per year. Don't take things for granted, cut corners or wait for someone else to do it. Clear up!

For other 'Myths of the Month', visit www.hse.gov.uk/myth.

For enquiries or further advice, contact :
Environmental Health, Uttlesford District Council,
Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden,
Essex CB11 4ER Tel:01799 510510
E-mail: environmentalhealth@uttlesford.gov.uk
We would be interested to have your feedback on whether you have found this update useful.