The Friends of Chain Bridge Forge

Guide to Risk Assessment

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Risk assessment should always be conducted or supervised by a person that is experienced and competent to do so. Do not conduct a risk assessment if you do not feel that you are competent in doing it.

Activity

A separate risk assessment should be done for every activity undertaken, and every location the activity takes place.

Although many activities can be split into smaller actions it is not essential to assess each step. Treat the activity as a whole but consider its separate elements and whether any of them raise particular hazards or risks.

Think of the broadest picture of the area concerned possible and consider operational, cleaning and maintenance activities that might take place.

Hazard

A hazard is anything with the potential to cause harm.

Consider

- *Physical* (e.g. electrical, mechanical, noise)
- *Chemical* (solids, liquids, gases), including cleaning products left around. Remember that these might be invisible like carbon monoxide for example.
- *Biological* (e.g. bacteria, viruses), including food arranged or provided.
- *Ergonomic* (fit of person to activity) including height of stairs, feasibility of activity given different heights/weights/strength of people involved.
- *Psychological* (Stress, harassment, boredom) is the activity unnecessarily stressful for the organiser.

There are ways of identifying hazards:

- Observation of activities and conditions (are the floors in good condition, is the area tidy, are there loose wires, what is the light like, when is waste collected, what is the temperature like in different weather conditions)
- Talking to those involved and at risk - Of course if you have undertaken the event/activity before then your own experience will inform your observation of hazards, but if not it might be a good idea to talk to people who have – and note that near-misses are a good way to spot problems.
- Inspecting records – people rarely record near-misses but it is quite important to do so, see attached form.
- Reading documentation.

Persons at Risk

The people who should be considered are not simply those who undertake the activity but also anyone who comes into contact with the area or the group. For Friends, Volunteers, Supporters and members of the general public there purposes other than your activity and even emergency services – would they be at risk if they were called to attend. Young people or pregnant women and disabled or deaf people should be thought of as they have different requirements and could be at risk in different ways.

Severity of outcome

The severity of the outcome of the hazard should be evaluated numerically on the following scale:

1 – Trivial Injury (eg. Stubbed toe)

2 – Minor Injury (eg. Bruise)

3 – Over 3 day Injury (eg. Severe cut, sprain)

4 – Major Injury (eg. Broken bones)

5 – Fatality

Some hazards might result in injuries of different levels of severity (for example being hit by a car might just result in bruises and scrapes or could be lethal) in these circumstances the worst-case scenario should be the one evaluated.

Probability

The probability or likelihood of something happening should also be evaluated numerically using the following scale:

1 – Remote

2 – Possible

3 – Likely

4 – Highly Likely

5 – Certain

Note that ‘impossible’ is not included on this scale.

Risk Level

The risk level of a hazard is then calculated by multiplying the probability and the risk level therefore resulting in a figure that takes into account not only how serious a hazard is but also how likely it is that the accident will happen.

Control Measures

The control measures are the actions performed to reduce either the *probability* of the accident happening or the *severity* of the outcome, and where possible both. When considering what measures to put in place it is important to consider both severity and likelihood, in order to minimise the overall risk. Working through a 'hierarchy' of controls can help with thinking of alternative measures. The hierarchy is as follows:

1) Elimination – get rid of the risk altogether
2) Substitution – exchange one risk for something less likely or severe
3) Separation/Isolation – eliminate contact with hazard
4) Minimise Exposure – reduce contact with hazard
5) Safe Systems of work – rules in place to ensure safe use/contact with hazard
6) Information, instruction, training & supervision – warn people of hazard and tell/show/help them how to deal with it
7) Personal Protective Equipment – dress them appropriately to reduce severity of accident
8) Health surveillance – observe use/interactions with hazard – monitor health over time

For example: if the hazard is the possibility of being knocked down on a busy road control measures corresponding to the above hierarchy would be as follows:

1) Elimination – close the road (eliminate traffic)
2) Substitution – use other areas without busy roads for that activity
3) Isolation/Separation – keep people off the road
4) Minimise Exposure – reduce the number of times people cross/walk by the road
5) Safe systems of work – make sure people stop, look and listen and only cross when road is clear – impose speed limits for drivers
6) Information, instruction, training & supervision – inform people of how busy the road is, tell them how to cross, show them how to cross and make sure that they are watched and helped to cross road
7) Personal Protective Equipment – give the group reflective clothing to make them more visible to motorists
8) Health surveillance – monitor their health (not particularly useful in this example)

The most useful measures are the top four but they are not always possible to implement. However, if necessary it can be noted on the form that they have been considered, giving reasons why they were impracticable given the circumstances. The lower measures rely on people keeping accurate records – including any near misses and operating and maintaining the controls themselves. This is OK but it is worth bearing in mind that people to make mistakes. If for whatever reason someone

does not apply the measure, does that restore the hazard to its previous level of severity and probability?

Control measures should be practical, easy to understand (what to do and why they are doing it), applicable to the hazard, able to reduce the risk to acceptable levels, acceptable to the workforce and easy to operate.

If control measures have been put in place staff should be trained to understand why they have been put in place, what the purpose is, and what they have to do. If control measures are in place it is a legal requirement for staff to use those controls. However, that does not mean that they should not question them – since this is how risk assessments are improved (questioning, looking at alternatives etc).

If a note of who has responsibility for implementing the control measures is included on the form, that column can be copied and used as a check-list before the event.

The columns after control measures should be completed to demonstrate that the risk has been reduced by the implementation of the control measures. For example on a busy road, putting speed limits in place means that if a person is hit the outcome will be less severe, providing safe places to cross such as pelican or zebra crossings will reduce the likelihood of people unexpectedly stepping into the road, therefore reducing the probability of an accident.

Notes

This field should have details of any measures that were considered but were not practicable or possible and any comments about the measures in place.

General

The whole risk assessment should be reviewed at least once a year to ensure that it is up to date. The control measures should be monitored to ensure they are doing their job. Any accidents that happen should be recorded as should any near-misses as these will inform future assessments.

In general the hazards that should be considered are those that would apply in normal circumstances to reasonable people, plus any possible hazards that might occur if an unreasonable/irrational/idiotic person was put in the same situation with the same equipment. It is worth noting that it is impossible to consider every single possible event or use/misuse of equipment but all that you need to demonstrate is that you have gone to reasonable lengths to control risks.

Finally – get as many other people to check your risk assessment as possible – you will always miss something and other people will have other points of view so working with others will help to cover more possible occurrences.