

# Example risk assessment for an office-based business

## Setting the scene

The office manager carried out the risk assessment at this company, which provides management and financial consultancy services, and which leases two storeys of a five story block.

Eighteen staff work at the company with one being a wheelchair user. The offices contain typical office equipment and furniture. There is also a staff kitchen, where drinks can be prepared and food heated, and there are toilet and washing facilities on each floor.

The offices are cleaned every evening by general office cleaning contractors. They store the cleaning chemicals in a locked cupboard.

The office block was built before the year 2000. The landlord has surveyed the building for the presence of asbestos and has shared his findings with the tenants. Asbestos-containing materials (ASMs) were found but in good condition and in places where they were not likely to be damaged, worked on, or disturbed. It was therefore decided to leave them in place.

The office block is locked from 9.00pm to 6.00am Monday to Friday and at the weekends. The building also has 24 hour / 7 day a week security cover.

## How was the risk assessment done?

The secretary followed the guidance in “Five steps to risk assessment” found on the Small Business Advice section of the HSENI website: [www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/risk-assessment-advice](http://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/risk-assessment-advice)

1. To identify the hazards, the manager:

- > looked at sector specific information found on the HSENI website to learn where hazards can occur. He also looked at the HSE information page for employees with disabilities: (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/disability/index.htm>);
- > walked around the office noting things that might pose a risk and taking this guidance into account;
- > talked to supervisors and staff, including the member of staff who is a wheelchair user, to learn from their knowledge and experience of areas and activities, and listen to their concerns and opinions about health and safety in the workplace;
- > talked to the office cleaning contractors, to ensure that the cleaning activities did not pose a risk to office staff, and vice-versa. He also looked at the accident book to see what had previously resulted in accidents.

2. The manager then wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how.
3. For each hazard the manager wrote down what controls, if any, were in place to manage these hazards. Were he didn't consider existing controls good enough, the manager wrote down what else needed to be done to control or eliminate the risk.
4. The manager discussed the findings with staff and pinned the risk assessment up in the staff room. He put the risk assessment into practice, making sure that each identified action was done and ticking each one off as it was completed. He also decided to make it part of the induction process for new staff.
5. The office manager discussed the findings with the staff and gave out copies of the risk assessment. The manager decided to review and update the risk assessment every year or straightaway if any major changes happened in the workplace.

### Important reminder!

This example risk assessment shows the kind of approach a small organisation might take. Use it as a guide to think through some of the hazards in your own organisation and the steps you need to take to control the risks.

Please note that this is not a generic risk assessment that you can just put your company name to and adopt wholesale without any thought. This would not satisfy the law and would not be effective in protecting people.

Every organisation is different - you need to think through the hazards and controls required for yourself.

# Example risk assessment for an office-based business

Company name: Smyth's Consultants

Assessment carried out by: John Smyth (Manager)

Date of next review: 14 Sept 2016

Date assessment was carried out: 14 Sept 2015

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action do you need to take?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
<b>Slips and trips</b>	Staff and visitors may be injured if they trip over objects or slip on spillages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good general housekeeping.</li> <li>• All areas well lit, including stairs.</li> <li>• No trailing leads or cables.</li> <li>• Staff keep their work areas clear, eg no boxes left in walkways, deliveries stored immediately.</li> <li>• Offices cleaned every evening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better housekeeping in staff kitchen needed, eg on spills.</li> <li>• Arrange for loose carpet tile on second floor to be repaired / replaced.</li> </ul>	<p>All staff and supervisor</p> <p>Manager</p>	<p>From now on</p> <p>17/09/15</p>	<p>----</p> <p>15/09/15</p>
<b>Manual handling of paper, office equipment, etc.</b>	Staff risk injuries or back pain from handling heavy / bulky objects, eg deliveries of paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trolleys used to transport boxes of paper and other heavy items when collecting deliveries etc.</li> <li>• High shelves are for light objects only.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind staff that they should not try to lift objects that that look or appear too heavy to handle.</li> </ul>	<p>Manager</p>	<p>20/09/15</p>	<p>18/09/15</p>
<b>Fire</b>	If trapped, staff could suffer fatal injuries from smoke inhalation / burns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with landlord, fire risk assessment done, see: <a href="http://www.fire.gov.uk/workplace+safety/">www.fire.gov.uk/workplace+safety/</a> and necessary action taken.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide fire safety refresher training for all staff at next team meeting.</li> </ul>	<p>Manager</p>	<p>30/09/15</p>	<p>30/09/15</p>
<b>Working at height</b>	Falls from any height can cause bruising and fractures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff stand on chair to file on high shelves, put up decorations etc.</li> <li>• Internal windows cleaned by contractor using a stepladder.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairs are too unstable. An appropriate stepladder will be bought and staff shown how to use it properly.</li> </ul>	<p>Manager</p>	<p>17/09/15</p>	<p>17/09/15</p>
<b>Electrical</b>	Staff could get electrical shocks or burns from using faulty electrical equipment. Electrical faults can also lead to fires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff trained to spot and report (to office administrator) any defective plugs, discoloured sockets or damaged cables / equipment.</li> <li>• Defective equipment taken out of use safely and promptly replaced.</li> <li>• Staff told not to bring in their own appliances, such as toasters, fans, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask landlord when next safety check of electrical installation will be.</li> <li>• Confirm with landlord the system for making safe any damage to building installation electrics, eg broken light switches etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Office Admin</p> <p>Office Admin</p>	<p>20/09/15</p> <p>20/09/15</p>	<p>20/09/15</p> <p>20/09/15</p>

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<b>Display Screen Equipment (DSE)</b>	Staff risk posture problems and pain, discomfort or injuries, eg to their hands / arm, from overuse or improper use or from poorly designed workstations or work environments. Headaches or sore eyes can also occur, eg if lighting is poor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSE training and assessments of workstation from CD ROM carried out by all new all new starters early on in induction. Any actions done ASAP.</li> <li>• Reassessment to be carried out at any change to work feature, eg equipment, furniture or the work environment such as lighting.</li> <li>• Workstation and equipment set to ensure good posture and to avoid glare and reflections on the screen.</li> <li>• Shared workstations are assessed for all users.</li> <li>• Work planned to include regular breaks or change of activity.</li> <li>• Lighting and temperature suitably controlled.</li> <li>• Adjustable blinds at window to control natural light on screen.</li> <li>• Eye tests provided for those who need them, dutyholder to pay for basic spectacles for VDU use (or portion of costs in other cases).</li> <li>• Laptop users trained to carry out own DSE assessments for use away from the office. When at office, laptop to be used with docking station and screen, keyboard and mouse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisors to monitor to ensure staff continue to get breaks away from their computers.</li> <li>• Check that identified actions from self-assessments are followed up as soon as possible.</li> <li>• Tell staff that they are to inform their manager of any pain they have that might be linked to VDU use.</li> <li>• Broken window blind near accounts section - letter to landlord to be issued.</li> <li>• Remind laptop users to carry out regular DSE assessments to avoid problems and identify any issues.</li> </ul>	Supervisors	From now on	----
				Supervisors	From now on	----
				All staff	From now on	----
				Manager	19/09/15	15/09/15
				Supervisors	16/09/15	16/09/15

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<b>Asbestos</b> Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) are present in some partition walls.	Staff and others carrying out normal activities at very low risk as asbestos only poses a risk if fibres are released into the air and inhaled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partition walls in good condition and asbestos unlikely to be disturbed during normal activities.</li> <li>• Systems in place to inform contractors and others who might disturb the asbestos, where it is and to ensure safe working.</li> <li>• 'Danger! Asbestos, do not disturb' signs posted at partition walls.</li> <li>• Staff told to report any accidental damage immediately.</li> <li>• Condition of partition walls checked periodically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At next staff meeting, remind staff that the asbestos must not be disturbed and to report any accidental damage to the partition walls immediately.</li> </ul>	Manager	30/09/15	30/09/15
<b>Stress</b>	All staff could be affected by factors such as lack of job control, bullying, not knowing their role etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff understand what their duties and responsibilities are.</li> <li>• Staff can talk to supervisors or manager if they are feeling unwell or ill at ease about things at work.</li> <li>• 'No bullying' policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind staff that they can speak confidentially to manager or supervisor (on a no-blame basis) if they are feeling unwell or ill at ease because of work.</li> </ul>	Manager	30/09/15	30/09/15
<b>Lone working</b>	Staff could suffer injury or ill-health while out of the office, eg when visiting clients' offices, or while working alone in the office.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff write visit details in office diary and give a contact number.</li> <li>• Staff not returning to the office after a visit call in to report this.</li> <li>• Security staff check all areas, including toilets, before locking up at night.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whereabouts of staff 'out of office' to be monitored by office-based staff.</li> </ul>	Office Admin Team	From now on	----