



## Risk Assessments & Safe Systems of Work

As part of managing the health and safety of your business you must control the risks in your workplace. To do this you need to think about what might cause harm to people and decide whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm.

Risk Assessments, Fire Risk Assessments, COSHH Assessments, Permit to Work, Safe Systems of Work / Method Statements are all critical business documents legally required by law - it's essential to make suitable and sufficient assessments of the risks to the health and safety of employees as well as to those not in employment i.e. clients/customers, to be a compliant business.

However the rules are confusing, stating that unless you have 5 or more employees your Risk Assessments don't need documenting. These are risk assessments that cover business hazards, directly related to managing potentially dangerous situations. How crazy is it to advise businesses not to bother writing these down?

We encourage all businesses whatever size to consider their risk assessments, and to see them as company health checks in terms of identifying anything that might need some attention. It is my mission to make health and safety a priority for all, no matter the size of the business and to bring to light the unexpected dangers that we often don't think about when working alone, or in a small team. I'm fighting to challenge the 'Health & Safety doesn't apply to me' mentality of small business owners and passionate about raising awareness around broader types of risk too, such as risks relating to employees mental health, and more logistical further reaching risk assessments such as those of a financial focus that help determine the sustainability of a business.

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### Background

I have completed risk assessments relating to clients' work activities and to their businesses as a whole - and it's not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but defining and documenting sensible measures to control the risk in your workplace.

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### What's Involved

Risk Assessments I have worked on have covered, but are not limited to the following, which required reference being made to differing regulations, guidance and requirements, such as the Manual Handling Regulations, Confined Space Regulations etc., to ensure best practice and legal requirements were being implemented.

We ensure the principles of prevention and Hierarchy of Control are implemented in each risk assessment.

HSE (Health and Safety Executive) website, IOSH (through my membership) and ROSPA guidance are also referred to for up to date best practice and precautions required:

Working at Height	Flammable liquids
Fragile Roofs	Hot Work
Flat Roofs	Asbestos
Ladders	Dermatitis
Scaffolding	Needles and Sharps
Sloping Roofs	Noise
Cement	Sewage
Driving of Company vehicles	Silica Dust
Dumpers	Vibration
Excavators	Manual Handling Office and Site
Forklifts	Stress
Use of Abrasive Wheels	Working with Lead
Use of Hand - held Power Tools	Working with / near animals
Stihl Saws	Display Screen Equipment
Confined Spaces	Environmental Impacts
Electricity	Lone Working
Buried Services	Slips, trips and falls
Road Works	Expectant Mothers
Working near water	Working in occupied domestic premises
Welding	Young Persons
Fuel Storage and usage	



If you are a business which deals with hazardous substances or uses a process that could create them, then the COSHH Assessments are for you. This looks at identifying them and the potential risks and focuses on finding ways to change things if necessary to reduce the risk. We ensure the principles of prevention and Hierarchy of Control are implemented in each risk assessment and also pay close attention to environmental impacts where possible, ensuring the correct transportation, handling and storage of substances takes place.

I have also created global risk assessments, which details the businesses health, safety and environmental hazards and risks, and the precautions / control measures to be implemented. Risk Assessments need to be specific to the work activity and work area, so a global risk assessment is ideal when repetitive tasks are being carried out. This works hand in hand with a Dynamic Risk Assessment, so teams would complete the DRA in line with the Global and pick out only what was needed for that task.

When looking to undertake work to lower the levels of risk involved the work must be carried out under agreed safety procedures and a 'Permit to Work'. It controls work such as maintenance activities and is generally used for works such as Hot Works, Confined Space Entry, Electrical Works etc.

They consider the following:

Contents (The work process involved, location of work, the procedures to be followed)

Objectives

Human Factors

Management of the work

Competency of the Workforce

I have written many of these bespoke to different business needs ensuring they comply to the regulations required.



To ensure the work is carried out safely Safe Systems of Work / Method Statements are often also required. This defines what procedures are needed, resulting from a careful study of a task, that informs how work must be carried out. Safe systems of work are developed by taking into account the people, substances and equipment involved in undertaking a task, identifying all foreseeable hazards and assessing the risks, and then seeking to minimise or eliminate these risks by providing a formal framework for workers to follow.

Safe systems of work are typically laid out in a written document, for example, written operating procedures. They can also be more informal through verbal instructions, a list of dos and don'ts, and accepted customs and practices. However, for the sake of clarity, ease of reference, and demonstrating compliance, written systems of work are preferable.

This is often done as a step by step procedure and you'd be amazed at what we have compiled them on e.g. how to lay kerbs, how to make a cup of tea ...!



### Why This is Great for Business

All of the above is great for business because it's all focused on the safety of teams - something hugely valued by employees and contractors alike, not to mention the legal requirements that **MUST** be adhered to. It also decreases the likelihood of disputes - something businesses can lose a huge amount of hours on, thanks to the clarity of the documentation.