



REVAMPED GUIDANCE TO SIMPLIFY RISK ASSESSMENTS

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has urged businesses to spend less time dotting 'i's and crossing 't's and more time on putting practical actions into effect. To help companies do this, HSE has issued a revamped risk assessment guide featuring examples that spell out, in plain English, what is – and what is not – expected.

Launching the guidance, HSE's Deputy Chief Executive, Jonathan Rees, said: "We want to save lives, not tie businesses up in red tape – good risk assessment is the way to achieve this. Risk assessment is at the heart of sensible health and safety. We believe it should be a practical way of protecting people from real harm and suffering, not a bureaucratic, back-covering exercise. On its own paperwork never saved a life, it needs to be a means to an end, resulting in actions that protect people in practice."

"I hope that this new, more straightforward guidance will help managers understand what's expected of them and get more focus on the kind of risks that cause real harm and suffering – the ones that killed 220 workers last year and resulted in 35 million working days being lost. This guide takes the user through the process step-by-step with the minimum of fuss to achieve this aim."

The guidance 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment', which was first published in 1993, has been revised and simplified to make it even easier for normal business people, not just health and safety experts, to use. It also places greater emphasis on making sure that decisions are actually put into practice.

The 11-page booklet, which is also available free online at www.hse.gov.uk/risk, provides advice and tips on five key elements to an effective risk assessment:

- Identifying the hazards;
- Deciding who might be harmed and how;
- Evaluating the risks and deciding on precautions;
- Recording findings and implementing them; and finally
- Ensuring they are reviewed at regular intervals.

This is supported by four examples of what a risk assessment might look like. The examples help emphasise that risk assessment need not be difficult and the paperwork need not be long and complicated.

Copies of Five Steps to Risk Assessment, INDG163 (rev2), are available from HSE Books (PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 2WA; tel: 01787-881165, fax: 01787-313995). Alternatively, the leaflet can be downloaded free from the new risk management web pages on the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk/risk.

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