

Example risk assessment for an Estate agency



Setting the scene

The office manager carried out the risk assessment in this estate agency, which employs 12 staff and is located on a high street. The shop deals primarily with domestic premises, with occasional involvement in the sale and letting of commercial premises. Some members of staff go out on their own to visit premises and arrange viewings. The shop is open from 9.00 am to 6.00 pm, six days a week and 10.00 am to 4.00 pm on Sundays.

How was the risk assessment done?

The office manager first looked at relevant guidance on the HSE website, including:

- The health and safety toolbox: How to control risks at work (www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/index.htm)
- HSE publication *Working Alone* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.htm)

He then identified the hazards in the estate agency office. He did this by:

- walking around the office, staffroom, and all other areas, noting what might cause harm
- talking to staff to learn from their knowledge and experience, and listening to their concerns about health and safety issues
- looking at the accident book to find out what had previously resulted in accidents or near misses.

As he identified the hazards he also thought about who could be harmed and how accidents might happen.

He noted what he was already doing to control the risks and considered whether he needed to do anything more. He then recorded any further actions required.

To understand the hazards to staff working alone he decided to talk to those who did viewings and visits and make sure that relevant hazards were covered in the risk assessment.

Putting the risk assessment into practice, the manager set out what actions needed to be taken, who would do them and by when. He displayed the risk assessment in the staff kitchen area and discussed his findings with staff

The manager decided to review the risk assessment whenever there were any significant changes such as new work activities or staff.

How to use this example

This example risk assessment shows a wide range of hazards that might be present in this type of small business. It can be used as a guide to help you think through some of the hazards in your business and the steps you need to take to control the risks.

However, this is not a generic risk assessment. Every business is different. To satisfy the law you must identify and assess the hazards your business poses, think through the controls required to provide effective protection to people who may be affected by them, and record the significant findings from your risk assessment of your business.

Company name: Smith's Estate Agency

Date of risk assessment: 1/5/12

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to control this risk?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Lone working Visiting clients or premises	Staff could suffer injury or ill health when travelling to or visiting clients/premises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Customers causing concern are always seen by two reps ■ Visiting staff carry a mobile phone and a personal alarm ■ Staff write details of visits in the office diary ■ Staff who are not planning to return to the office after a visit call in to report this 	■ Monitor the whereabouts of staff on visits	Office Manager	20/5/12	20/5/12
			■ Remind all staff of the contact procedures for out of office work, eg to let the office know if their itinerary changes and put their car details in the diary	Manger/All staff	20/5/12	20/5/12
			■ Remind staff to report all incidents so that managers can discuss with them and offer support	Office Manager	20/5/12	20/5/12
Visiting hazardous premises	Staff could suffer injury or ill health when visiting premises that are in poor repair or contain hazardous substances, eg houses with poor electrics or sites that may have asbestos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When taking an enquiry, staff ask about the condition of premises and discuss any concerns with the manager before visiting ■ Staff know not to take risks on visits, eg not to try and restore electricity or gas supply 	■ Remind staff of the types of hazards found in some premises	Office Manager	20/5/12	20/5/12
			■ Discuss any incidents at team meetings	Office Manager	20/5/12	20/5/12
Doing maintenance work on landlord's premises	Contractors' staff could suffer injury or ill health when carrying out cleaning and maintenance work at landlord's premises.	■ Manager makes sure that contractors are competent to do the work and train their staff in the correct safety procedures	■ No further action required			
Manual handling Lifting and moving heavy objects or objects that are difficult to grasp	Staff risk injuries or back pain from handling heavy bulky objects, eg deliveries of paper, bulk mailings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heavy items are stored and are accessible at the appropriate height ■ 'For Sale' signs are put up/removed by a contractor 	■ No further action required			
Slips and trips Doorways(rain), spillages, stock on floor, uneven surfaces	Staff and customers may be injured if they slip on spillages or trip over objects, eg boxes left on floor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ General good housekeeping is carried out ■ Doormats are placed at the entrance in wet weather ■ Trailing cables and leads are avoided or secured 	■ Talk to staff about clearing up spills promptly in the kitchen area	Office Manager	20/5/12	19/5/12

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to control this risk?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Working at height Pinning up property details and changing displays	Falls from any height can cause bruising and fractures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Appropriate equipment is provided and staff are shown how to use it safely ■ When ladders are used they are positioned so that they are stable and steps are horizontal ■ Ladders are only used for short duration jobs eg those taking less than 30 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to always use the equipment provided safely and as instructed when working at height 	Office Manager	3/5/12	19/5/12
Computers, laptops and similar equipment	Staff risk posture problems and pain, discomfort or injuries (eg to hands/ arms) from overuse, improper use or from poorly designed workstations or work environments. Headaches or sore eyes can also occur, eg if the lighting is poor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workstations are assessed, risks are reduced and information and training are provided ■ Assessments are reviewed upon change of user or equipment ■ Work activities are planned to include a change of activity or regular breaks ■ Eye tests for display screen equipment users and basic spectacles for visual display unit use (or portion of cost in other cases) are paid for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Make sure any issues arising from workstation assessments or related concerns raised by staff are followed up quickly 	Office Manager	20/5/12	20/5/12
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide any further information, training or equipment as identified by the assessment 	Office Manager	20/5/12	20/5/12
Contact with cleaning chemicals, eg bleach	Staff risk skin irritation or eye damage from direct contact with cleaning chemicals. Vapour from cleaning chemicals may cause breathing problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff are shown how to use and store cleaning products safely ■ Mops, brushes and protective gloves are provided and used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Replace 'irritant' chemicals with milder alternatives where possible 	Office Manager	20/5/12	20/5/12
Electrical equipment and installation Heaters, fans, sockets	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"> ■ Staff are encouraged to spot and report any defective plugs, discoloured sockets, damaged cables or on/off switches ■ Faulty equipment is promptly taken out of use ■ Staff know where the fuse box is and how to safely turn off the electricity in an emergency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Arrange for safety checks of the electrical equipment and installation to be carried out as appropriate to make sure it continues to be safe 	Office Manager	20/5/12	20/5/12
Fire Faulty electrics, arson	If trapped, staff could suffer fatal injuries from smoke inhalation or burns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fire risk assessment has been done, and any necessary action taken, see www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No further action required 			