

Example risk assessment for office work in a manufacturing company

Setting the scene

Smith's Goods is a company that employs 15 people and provides a range of manufactured goods to a variety of markets.

They have assessed the risks in their factory, but not in the general office. The office contains typical office furniture and equipment, and has central heating. Three people do administrative and accounting work there.

Important reminder

This example risk assessment shows the kind of approach a small business might take. Use it as a guide to think through some of the hazards in your business and the steps you need to take to control the risks. Please note that it is not a generic risk assessment that you can just put your company name on and adopt wholesale without any thought. This would not satisfy the law – and would not be effective in protecting people.

Every business is different – you need to think through the hazards and controls required in your business for yourself.

They also clean the adjacent staff kitchen, where drinks can be prepared and food heated, and the nearby toilet and washing facilities.

The offices were built before 2000. The office, kitchen and toilet and washing facilities have been surveyed for the presence of asbestos. Asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) were found but, as the ACMs are in good condition and in places where they were not likely to be damaged, worked on or disturbed, it was decided to leave them in place.

The managing director (MD) did the risk assessment.

How was the risk assessment done?

The MD followed the guidance in *Five steps to risk assessment* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf).

- 1 To identify the hazards, the MD:
 - looked at HSE's office health and safety web pages, including the *Officewise* leaflet, and at the cleaning web pages to learn where hazards can occur;
 - walked around the office, noting things that might pose a risk and taking into consideration what was learnt from HSE's guidance;
 - talked to staff who worked in the office, and the
- company safety representative, to learn from their knowledge and experience of areas and activities, and to listen to their concerns and opinions about health and safety issues in the workplace; and
- looked at the accident book, to understand what has previously resulted in incidents.
- 2 The MD then wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how.
- 3 The MD noted what controls, if any, were in place to manage these hazards. He compared these controls to the good practice guidance provided in HSE's office health and safety web pages. Where existing controls were not considered good enough, he wrote down what else needed to be done to control the risk.
- 4 Putting the risk assessment into practice, the MD decided and recorded who was responsible for implementing the further actions and when they should be done. When each action was completed, the MD ticked it off and recorded the date. The risk assessment was pinned up in the kitchen for all staff to see.
- 5 The MD discussed the findings with the staff, and decided to review and update the risk assessment every year, or straightaway if any major changes in the workplace happened.

Company name: Smith's Goods

Date of risk assessment: 1/10/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Robbery, violence and threatening behaviour inside the office Verbal abuse	Staff may suffer stress and/or injury from assaults, threats and abuse from members of the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained not to resist a robbery. ■ CCTV installed and clearly visible. ■ Usually always two staff on duty. ■ Panic alarm located out of sight. ■ All incidents recorded in 'incident book'. ■ Staff trained to provide good, polite service and not to confront customers. ■ Gaming machines emptied at quiet times. ■ Cashing up is done out of sight of customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contact local police station for advice on what else can be done (eg safe procedures for opening up and closing). 	Manager and staff	7/7/07	6/7/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Manager to talk to staff about coping with disputes. 	Manager	14/7/07	14/7/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure incidents of abuse investigated so lessons can be learnt. 	Manager	As required	
Robbery, violence and threatening behaviour outside the office	Staff may suffer stress and/or injury from robbery when taking cash to the bank.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trips to the bank made at different times during the week. ■ Staff taking cash to the bank carry a personal alarm and mobile phone. ■ If a taxi is used, it is pre-booked and the number of the cab recorded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contact local police station for advice on what else can be done. 	Manager	7/7/07	6/7/07
Slips and trips At doorways (rain), spillages	Staff/customers risk fractures or bruises if they trip over objects or slip on spillages, and fall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff 'clean as they go'. ■ Floor only mopped when shop is closed. ■ Doormats at entrance in wet weather. ■ Good lighting in all areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Repair damaged floor tile near counter. ■ Put down larger doormats to stop rainwater being walked in beyond mats. 	Manager to ensure action on both issues.	31/7/07	29/7/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Display screen equipment	Some staff working intensively at computers without adequate breaks 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 or screen image is poor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff tell the manager if they have pains they believe are associated with using computer terminals. ■ DSE training and assessments of workstation from CD ROM carried out by all new starters early on in induction. Any actions to be carried out ASAP. ■ Reassessment to be carried out at any change to work feature, eg equipment, furniture or the work environment such as lighting. ■ Workstation and equipment set to ensure good posture and to avoid glare and reflections on the screen. ■ Shared workstations are assessed for all users. ■ Work planned to include regular breaks or change of activity. ■ Lighting and temperature suitably controlled. ■ Adjustable blinds at window to control natural light on screen. ■ Noise levels controlled. ■ Eye tests provided for those who need them, dutyholder to pay for basic spectacles specific for VDU use (or portion of cost in other cases). ■ Laptop users trained to carry out own DSE assessment for use away from office. When used at office laptop should be used with docking station, screen, keyboard and mouse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supervisors to monitor to ensure staff continue to get breaks away from the computer. ■ Check that identified actions from self-assessments are followed up ASAP. ■ Tell staff that they are to inform their manager of any pain they have that may be linked to computer use. ■ Remind laptop users to carry out regular DSE assessment to avoid problems and identify any issues 	Supervisors Manager	4/10/07 21/10/07	4/10/07 21/10/07
Work at height Changing light bulbs, cleaning TV screens	Falls from any height can cause bruising and fractures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Appropriate stepladder in good condition provided, if needed, and staff know how to use it safely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to always use the stepladder when working at height and not to stand on chairs or other furniture. 	Manager	20/7/07	17/7/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Contact with bleach and other cleaning chemicals	Staff (who clean) risk skin irritation or eye damage from direct contact with cleaning chemicals. Vapour may cause breathing problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mops, brushes and strong rubber gloves are provided and used. ■ Staff shown how to use cleaning products safely, eg follow instructions on the label, dilute properly and never transfer to an unmarked container. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Replace 'irritant' chemicals with milder alternatives, where possible. ■ Staff reminded to check for dry, red or itchy skin on their hands. ■ Staff reminded to wash gloves before taking them off carefully and storing them in a clean place. 	Manager	20/7/07	20/7/07
Electrical Faulty building wiring, faulty electrical appliances	Staff could get electrical shocks or burns from faulty electrics, including portable electrical equipment – heaters, fans etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained to spot and report to manager any defective plugs, discoloured sockets, damaged cable and on/off switches, and to take any defective equipment out of use. ■ Staff know where the fuse box is and how to safely turn the electricity off in an emergency. ■ Clear access to the fuse box. ■ Qualified electrician does regular checks on televisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Qualified electrician does safety check of building electrics every five years. 	Manager to ask landlord when next safety check due.	20/7/07	19/7/07
Fire Smoking, faulty electrics, arson	If trapped, staff could suffer from smoke inhalation/burns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fire risk assessment done, see www.communities.gov.uk/fire and necessary action taken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to keep backyard gate locked out of hours to stop intruders getting in. 	Manager	20/7/07	20/7/07

Assessment review date: 1/7/08