

PRINCIPLES OF SENSIBLE RISK MANAGEMENT V 3.0

Sensible risk management **IS** about:

Ensuring that workers and citizens are properly protected

Eg: Reducing the toll

- Last year:
 - 220 workers were killed
 - 30,000 suffered major injuries
 - 2 million indicated that they suffered health conditions caused, or made worse by work
- It is not possible to prevent every single injury and case of ill health, but a very large proportion can be prevented by straightforward and affordable measures.

Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on controlling real risks – either those which arise most often or those with the most serious consequences

Eg: Back pain

- Back pain does not kill people, but it does cause enormous suffering and imposes costs on business and the economy as a whole.
- 450,000 people in Britain have back pain caused, or made worse by their work, as a result 4.9 million working days were lost.
- Cost to business is more than £300 million each year.
- A significant proportion of those affected become unable to work and become dependent on long-term sickness benefits.
- Practical measures to control the risks and help sufferers back into work are good for the workers, the business and the taxpayer.

Enabling innovation and learning, not stifling them

Eg: Children's right to learn and have fun

- Adventure activities reduce obesity, teach self-reliance and teamwork and make learning fun.
- They also help children learn to manage risks for themselves – an important life-skill.
- Many schools and other organisations do a fantastic job allowing children to experience these benefits.
- They do so through responsible management of the risks – simply ensuring that activities are properly organised and planned.

Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage serious risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action

Eg 1: Fork lift trucks in a warehouse

- Many companies use fork lift trucks to handle goods, they cut the risk from manual handling, but do result in serious and fatal injuries as they overturn or trap people.
- The company creates the risk and so has responsibilities such as training their drivers, maintaining the trucks in good working order and laying out workplace to minimise hazards such as blind corners.

eg 2: Rides in a theme park

- Rides allow people to enjoy the thrill of speed and apparent danger. In reality they are extremely safe because they are well designed and maintained.
- Parks that make their business out of operating rides have a clear duty, both morally and in law to manage the risks responsibly.
- It is also in their best business interests to do so. The fact that risks are so well managed means that visitors have confidence to visit without a worry.

Ensuring that individuals understand that as well as a right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility

Eg 1: Fork lift truck driver in a warehouse

- The driver has a right to be protected, but also has responsibilities:

- to put the training they received into practice;
- to report faults on the truck promptly;
- to stick to any one way systems or other instructions and not take short-cuts;
- to set a good example to less experienced workers.

eg2: Visitors to a theme park

- Visitors have a right to expect that the rides they enjoy are well designed and maintained.
- But they also have a responsibility themselves to follow the instructions they are given – such as keeping their hands inside the ride, not standing up etc.

Sensible risk management **IS NOT** about:

Creating a totally risk free society

Eg 1: Swimming lessons

- There is unfortunately a very, very small risk from organised swimming lessons; very occasionally someone drowns and that is a tragedy.
- However this risk is incredibly small compared to the vast numbers of visits to swimming pools each year. Pools are very safe indeed.
- The only way to be absolutely sure no one drowns in a swimming lesson would be to stop them all.
- There would never be another drowning during a lesson – but how many more people would drown in the sea, rivers and canals because they never learnt to swim?

Eg 2: Work is good for you!

- There are risks involved in work that need managing.
- But there are some pretty significant risks in not working.
- Quite apart from the economic effects, people who are unemployed have significantly higher levels of depression and other psycho-social disease.
- We can manage workplace risks, we can even substitute particular hazards (eg switching from toxic substances to less harmful alternatives). But we cannot eliminate risk altogether.

Generating useless paperwork mountains

Eg 1 Major petrochemical works

- Where a failure could result in serious harm to large numbers of people both on and off site, we expect rigorous risk management.
- That means a written safety case, submitted up-front. That is appropriate to the risk.

Eg2: The average small business

- Most businesses have far less significant levels of risk to deal with – far less paperwork is required.

- Risk assessments are important in identifying and managing risks appropriately.
- But for the vast majority of small businesses all they need to record are short, sharp bullet points.
- In really small businesses written records have limited value – people simply talk to one another. Businesses that employ fewer than 5 people are not required to record anything at all.

Scaring people by exaggerating or publicising trivial risks

Eg: Conkers bonkers

- Millions of games of conkers are played each year, it's a British tradition that's stood the test of time.
- Some children who play get bruised knuckles – the odd bruise is a part of growing up.
- In living memory there have been a handful of incidents where a child has suffered a serious eye injury when playing.
- But the risk is infinitesimally small; children face far more significant risks every day, such as crossing the road.
- It is irresponsible to play-up the risk or to try to introduce controls on such a safe and enjoyable pastime.

Stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risks are managed

Eg 1: School trips

- Trips make learning fun, they can inspire pupils and open up new possibilities.
- Most schools and teachers manage trips very sensibly. Their risk assessments tackle the serious risks and avoid getting bogged down in trivia. Risk assessments findings are proportionate to the level of risk. They should be congratulated.
- We must ensure this good practice continues and grows, and that the relatively infrequent examples of excessive risk aversion and bureaucracy are reduced.

Eg 2: Adventure activities

- Life without any risk would be very tedious indeed. We all need to let off steam at times, and that's particularly true of teenagers.
- If adventure activities are reduced in a misguided attempt to eliminate risk altogether, people will find other outlets. These may be anti-social, expose them to very high risks – or both (eg trespassing on railway lines).
- We need to ensure that adventure activities continue to go ahead, giving people a chance to experience risk in a sensibly managed way.