

Example risk assessment for a charity shop

Setting the scene

The manager carried out the risk assessment in this charity shop, which is located on a busy high street. It sells clothing, books and other items but does not sell electrical or gas appliances. The manager is a full-time member of the charity's staff, as is the deputy manager who works part-time and provides cover for the manager. Both the manager and the assistant manager are appointed persons for first aid. There are eight other staff members, all volunteers and all part-time, working a variety of shifts. Five staff members are over 65.

At the rear of the shop are a staff toilet and bathroom, a small kitchen, a 'sorting room' and a stockroom. The store is open from 9:00 am to 4.30 pm, Monday to Saturday.

How was the risk assessment done?

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

- 1 To identify the hazards, the manager:
 - looked at HSE's website, to learn where hazards can occur, including the pages for small businesses (www.hse.gov.uk/business/index.htm), and the work-related violence case study for shop workers (www.hse.gov.uk/violence/hslcasestudies/walkers.htm) and at the health and safety pages of the Association of Charity Shops (www.charityshops.org.uk);
 - walked around the shop and all other areas, noting things that might pose a risk and taking into consideration what he'd learnt from the websites. He also took occasional activities, such as changing promotional displays or light bulbs, into account;
 - talked to members of staff to listen to their concerns and opinions about health and safety issues in the shop; and
 - looked at the accident book, to understand what previous problems there have been.
- 2 The manager then wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how.
- 3 For each hazard, the manager wrote down what controls, if any, were in place to manage these hazards. Where he didn't consider existing controls

good enough, the manager wrote down what else needed to be done to control the risk.

- 4 The manager discussed the findings with staff and pinned the risk assessment up in the staff room. He put the risk assessment into practice, making sure that each identified action was done and ticking each one off as it was completed. He also decided to make it part of the induction process for new staff.
- 5 The manager decided to review and update the risk assessment every year or straightaway if any major changes in the workplace happened.

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.

Company name: ABC Charity Shop Date of risk assessment: 1/7/08

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
Sorting donated stock	Staff may suffer injuries such as puncture wounds, eg from knives and needles, manual handling injuries from poor posture etc (see below) when sorting donated bags of stock.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Good supply of suitable protective gloves available and staff always wear them when sorting. ■ Initial 'look' done to identify any sharp objects etc that may pose a risk of injury. ■ Sorting tables available. ■ Staff trained in safe systems of work when sorting, eg not to thrust hands into bags, to use the sorting table, do careful initial sift, bag rubbish safely, wash hands afterwards etc. 	■ Suitability of bag openers to be explored.	Manager	7/7/08	6/7/08
			■ Remind staff not to overfill rubbish bags.	Manager	7/7/08	6/7/08
			■ Remind staff to speak to manager if they think of ways to sort more safely.	Manager	7/7/08	6/7/08
			■ Manage influx of donations and have removal systems in place to get rid of unwanted items asap.	Manager	7/7/08	6/7/08
Manual handling	Staff may suffer back pain or pain elsewhere from handling heavy and/or bulky objects, or poor posture, eg sorting items on the floor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All staff trained by manager in how to move and handle items, eg lifting properly, pulling trolleys, wheelie bins etc. ■ High shelves are for light goods only. ■ Trolley for moving bags of stock and staff trained how to use it safely. ■ Corridors kept clear. ■ Sorting tables available. 	■ Remind staff that they should never lift anything that they consider may be too heavy for them.	Manager and staff	7/7/08	6/7/08
			■ Checks to make sure that heavy stock is not stored on high shelves.	Manager	Ongoing	
Slips, trips and falls	Staff and customers may suffer sprains, fractures or bruising if they trip over objects, such as stock, or slip on spillages and fall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff 'clean and tidy up as they go'. ■ Wet floor warning signs used when appropriate. ■ Shop floor only mopped when shop is closed. ■ Door mats at entrance in wet weather. ■ Floor in good condition – any uneven floor areas or doorways marked or cordoned off until repaired. ■ Good lighting in all areas. ■ Staff wear sensible shoes (eg flat shoes with a good grip). ■ No trailing cables, any temporary lines, eg extension leads etc, to be put in cable covers or taped down. 	■ Remind staff stocking shelves not to leave boxes of stock in aisles, if suddenly called to help on the till.	Manager	7/7/08	6/7/08
			■ Remind staff that small spillages should be cleaned up immediately with paper towels and the floor left dry.	Manager	7/7/08	6/7/08
			■ Establish contact landlord/building management services to ensure repairs to uneven floors etc.	Manager	7/7/08	6/7/08

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Falling objects	Staff and customers may suffer crush/impact injuries as a result of stock and other items falling from displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heavy items to be kept at low level, only small, light-weight items on upper shelves. ■ Shelves and displays to be secure – fixed to walls, stocked in correct way (see above) to ensure stability. ■ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff to be shown how to stock shelves, including guidance to only put light objects on higher shelves, heavier items at the bottom. 	Manager (on recruitment of new staff)	Ongoing	Ongoing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Manager to check shelves are secure on weekly basis. 	Manager	Ongoing	
Violence and threatening behaviour	Staff may suffer assaults, threats and abuse from members of the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained not to resist a robbery. ■ Manager or deputy manager always on duty (so volunteers not left alone in the shop). ■ Staff trained to provide good, polite service, eg not to confront customers. ■ Staff report any incidents of abuse etc to manager for discussion/support. ■ 'Panic' alarm/baby monitor used on till to alert back room staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contact local police station to get advice on what else can be done, eg safe procedures for opening up and closing, taking cash to bank . ■ 	Manager	20/7/08	17/7/08 All staff spoken to 17/7/08 29/8/08 – allocation made for next budget period
Working at height Eg changing light bulbs and promotional displays.	Falls from any height can cause bruising and fractures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong stepladder (in good condition) provided. ■ Manager/deputy manager know how to use stepladder safely, including doing a pre-use check. ■ Only manager/deputy manager allowed to use stepladder. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reiterate to staff they are not to use step ladders. 	Manager	20/7/08	All staff spoken to by 17/7/08
Hazardous substances Contact with bleach and other cleaning chemicals.	Staff doing cleaning risk skin irritation or eye damage from direct contact with cleaning chemicals. Vapour may cause breathing problem.	<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. 	Manager	20/7/08	20/7/08
			<p>Staff reminded to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ check for dry, red or itchy skin on their hands and tell manager if they notice any; and ■ to wash gloves before taking them off carefully and storing in a clean place. 	Manager		

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Electrical	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. ■ Only staff who have been trained and checked by the manager may carry out minor repairs, eg changing a plug, replacing a fuse. ■ Clear access to the fuse box. ■ Qualified electrician does annual safety check of building electrics every five years. ■ Staff trained to do annual visual inspection of portable appliances. ■ Qualified electrician to carry out PAT testing on appliances in accordance with HSE book, HSG107 <i>Maintaining portable and transportable electrical equipment</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Manager to do visual check of plugs, sockets, cables and on/off switches every three months. 	Manager and all staff	20/7/08	First check done on 18/7/07 (next due 18/10/07)
Fire	If trapped, staff could suffer fatal injuries from smoke inhalation/burns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fire risk assessment done based on approach set out in www.communities.gov.uk/fire and necessary action taken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monitor to ensure actions identified as necessary by fire risk assessment are carried out. 	Manager	Ongoing	Ongoing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduce 'passive' fire drills (ie randomly get each member of staff to explain fire evacuation procedures and assembly point location – record date against the staff name when correct answers were given). 	Manager	Ongoing	Ongoing

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Vulnerable workers being harmed by otherwise low-risk hazards	Vulnerable workers may be at greater risk from a range of low hazard issues.	<p>Manager to go through main duties and health and safety controls with new recruit and ask if there are any problems, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Can they use the main means of escape? ■ Have they any pre-existing medical or other conditions that may be aggravated by handling or coming into contact with items or substances that may be found in the shop, eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – asthma or other breathing difficulties; – skin or other allergies; – back or other musculoskeletal conditions; – women who are, or who think they might be, pregnant or who are nursing mothers? ■ Are they young people who might be more susceptible to certain risks, eg lack maturity to deal with aggressive visitors? <p>Manager agrees action plan to address any specific needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Question set to be agreed with area manager. 	Manager	7/7/08	6/7/08
Working alone	Staff may be at greater risk of violent attacks when alone, or may have a medical emergency or accident and are unable to summon help.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Panic alarm available for staff when working alone to summon help in case of emergency. ■ Buddy system within the shop to check when lone workers finish shift. ■ Checking-in system with manager or colleague for staff who live alone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check with police and emergency services on arrangements for summoning help when working alone. 	Manager	20/7/08	18/7/08
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contact neighbouring shops to establish buddy system. 	Manager	20/7/08	18/7/08

Assessment review date: 1/7/09