

Example risk assessment for a drycleaners

Setting the scene

Five people work at the drycleaning shop: the manager and deputy manager who work full time and three part-time staff.

The shop is a two-storey building with a counter at the front, where staff deal with customers, and drycleaning equipment in the back and upstairs. The shop was built in the 1990s. The landlord has surveyed the building for asbestos and none was found.

Important reminder

This example risk assessment shows the kind of approach a small business might take. It can be used 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.

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 drycleaning web pages for free guidance, including the HSE leaflet *Drycleaners: Are you in control?* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg310.pdf). The manager also looked at guidance on HSE's COSHH essentials site (www.coshh-essentials.org.uk);
 - walked around the shop, noting what might pose a risk and taking HSE's guidance into consideration;
 - talked to staff to learn from their knowledge and experience, and to listen to their concerns and opinions about health and safety; and
 - looked at the accident book, to learn about previous problems.
- 2 The manager then wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how.
- 3 For each hazard, the manager wrote down what risk controls there were to manage these hazards. These controls were then compared to HSE guidance. Where existing controls were not considered good enough, the manager wrote down what else needed to be done.

- 4 The manager discussed the findings with staff and displayed the risk assessment in the mess room for everyone to see. It was also made a part of the induction process for new staff. The actions identified as necessary were implemented. As each action was completed, the manager ticked it off.
- 5 The manager decided to review and update the risk assessment every year or straightaway if there were major changes in the workplace.

Company name: A drycleaners

Date of risk assessment: 1/4/07

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
Use of chlorinated solvents, eg perchloroethylene (perc)	Staff may suffer from headaches, fatigue, nausea and other ill effects from breathing in perc vapour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Machine positioned away from customers, maintained regularly by a competent engineer and checked regularly by staff for leaks. ■ Machine extraction system inspected every 14 months by competent engineer and maintained. Fumes vent to safe place. ■ Staff wear personal dosimeters and check to make sure their exposure is as low as possible and certainly below the exposure limit (50 ppm over 8 hours). ■ Staff trained in using machine safely. ■ Shop has extraction fan and is well ventilated; staff also use room fan to disperse fumes further when machine door open. ■ Staff know the hazards of perc and are trained in safe systems for storing and using it, eg replace lid immediately, don't remove articles from machine if they are still damp, wear correct PPE etc. ■ Staff trained in safely cleaning up small spillages immediately, and in the emergency plan for large spillages. 	■ Remind staff to tell manager at once if exposure reading rises unexpectedly.	Manager	17/4/07	16/4/07
			■ Make random spot checks. Check that staff know how to safely empty button traps, clean lint filters and clean the still.	Manager	17/4/07	16/4/07
			■ Remind staff of importance of following safe systems of work.	Manager	17/4/07	16/4/07
			■ Display 'solvent precaution notice' provided by perc supplier).	Manager	17/4/07	16/4/07
			■ Display copy of emergency plan for large spillages.	Manager	17/4/07	16/4/07
Use of chemicals for spot-cleaning	Staff may suffer skin soreness, itching, rashes and blistering and eye damage from contact with chemicals. Some products can also cause asthma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Premises well ventilated and extraction at spot-cleaning table (extraction tested every 14 months by competent engineer). ■ Staff trained in safe storage, handling and use of chemicals, eg replacing the lid immediately, using the right personal protective equipment (PPE) etc. ■ Safe use of solvents notice displayed in spot-cleaning area. ■ Only ready-for-use solutions that are as safe as possible are used (eg those containing hydrofluoric acid not used). 	■ Remind staff of the risks of using spotting chemicals.	Manager	17/4/07	16/4/07
			■ Ask supplier to review chemicals used to see if safer alternatives are available.	Manager	17/4/07	16/4/07

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
Musculoskeletal injuries	Staff risk injuries, particularly to the back, from handling heavy/bulky objects (eg clothes racks), or from standing for long periods (eg when ironing).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trolley available for moving heavy items, eg during deliveries. ■ Staff shown how to lift and carry safely and know not to lift heavy items without using the trolley or getting help. ■ High shelves used for light goods only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Move ironing area away from sloping roof, to eliminate awkward work posture. 	Manager	30/4/07	28/4/07
Slips and trips	Staff/customers risk injuries such as fractures/bruises, if they trip over objects or slip on slippages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff clean up spillages promptly and, where necessary, use 'wet floor' signs. ■ Stairs well lit and in good condition. ■ Door mats put at entrance in wet weather. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some clutter is building up in upstairs storage area – a 'clear-out' needed. 	Manager to set a date	30/4/07	28/4/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff reminded not to leave items, eg boxes, on the floor. 			
Violence and threatening behaviour	Staff may suffer assaults, threats and abuse from members of public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained not to resist a robbery. ■ Staff trained to provide good, polite service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contact local police station to get advice on what else may be done. 	Manager	31/8/07	28/6/07
Working at height Eg changing light bulbs	Staff risk injuries such as bruising or fractures from falls from any height.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong stepladder in good condition provided and staff are trained to use it safely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Periodic checks on condition of the stepladder needed. 	Manager to set up check system	30/4/07	First check 29/4/07
Electrical Eg faulty building wiring or faulty electrical appliances	Staff could get electrical shock and burns from faulty electrics, including portable electrical equipment such as fans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained to spot and report any defective plugs, discoloured sockets, damaged cable and on/off switches and to take defective equipment out of use. ■ Staff know how to safely turn off electricity in an emergency. ■ Clear access to the fuse box. ■ Landlord arranges for qualified electrician to do safety check of building electrics every five years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regular visual checks of plugs, sockets, cables and on/off switches needed. 	Manager to set up check system	30/4/07	First check 29/4/07

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
Pressure vessels	Staff may suffer burn injuries from releases of steam, or blast injuries in an explosion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Insurance company arranges for steam boiler to be thoroughly and regularly examined and maintained by a competent person. ■ Staff know what to do if an alarm sounds. ■ All pipes are insulated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure staff are aware of door interlocks and that they check them regularly. 	Manager	16/4/07	16/4/07
Fire Eg smoking, faulty electrics, arson	If trapped, staff risk serious, possibly fatal injuries from smoke inhalation or 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"> ■ Random checks to make sure that the actions identified as necessary in the fire risk assessment are being taken. 	Manager	Random checks	Random checks
Asbestos	Staff breathing in asbestos fibres over long periods risk serious respiratory illness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff know the risks of asbestos and do not accept clothes contaminated with asbestos (or, in case of doubt, that they believe may be contaminated). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Display sign in customer area stating that clothes contaminated with asbestos are not accepted. 	Manager	17/4/07	16/4/07

Assessment review date: 1/7/08