

Example risk assessment for general office cleaning

Important reminder

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 and you cannot simply adopt it by putting your company name on it. 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.

Setting the scene

Smith's Cleaners provide commercial cleaning services to businesses, and employ 20 part-time cleaners. Two of the cleaners do not speak English as their first language. They recently won a contract to clean two floors of an office complex in a city centre, Monday to Friday. Three cleaners, working every day from 5.00 pm to 7.00 pm, clean the offices, the kitchen and toilet areas, and machine clean the hard floors in reception. The company sometimes use temporary workers from an agency to cover staff absences. The offices have 24-hour security cover.

The contracts manager did the risk assessment.

How was the risk assessment done?

The contract manager first looked at relevant guidance on:

- [manage the risks in your business](#)
- [the cleaning industry](#)
- [advice and guidance on employing temporary workers](#)

She talked to the client company and agreed issues such as:

- lines and frequency of communication between the cleaning company and the client company
- facilities and equipment available to the cleaners, including storage space and welfare facilities
- the system for reporting near-miss accidents and risks discovered by cleaners, such as damaged floor tiles;
- the security of cleaning equipment and substances, to ensure only trained cleaners can access and use them; and
- the fire procedures for cleaners

She then identified the hazards in the offices. She did this by:

- walking around the areas where cleaning staff will be working, noting what might cause harm
- Talking to safety reps and all other staff to learn from their knowledge and experience and listen to

their concerns and opinions about health and safety issues

- Looking at the accident book to learn what had previously resulted in accidents or near misses

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

She noted what was already being done to control the risks and considered whether she needed to do anything more. She then recorded any further actions required.

Putting the risk assessment into practice, the manager set out what actions needed to be taken, who would do them and by when. She displayed a copy of the risk assessment on the cleaning cupboard door at the offices where all staff could see it and discussed the findings with them. She also went through it with the staff who don't speak English as their first language and made sure they understood it.

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

Company name: Smith's Cleaners

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 manage this risk?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Slips and trips Examples: spillages, loose cables	Staff may be injured if they slip on spillages or trip on machine cables or objects left on the floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is general good housekeeping at the client company ■ Wet floor signs are always used ■ Cleaners use electrical sockets nearest to where they are working to reduce the risk of tripping over leads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduce a two-mop system for cleaning floors (wet mopping followed by dry mopping) 	Manager	31/5/12	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind cleaners to wear sensible shoes eg flat shoes with a good grip 	Manager	31/5/12	
Contact with cleaning chemicals Examples: bleach	Staff risk skin irritation or eye damage from direct contact with cleaning chemicals. Vapour from cleaning chemicals may also cause breathing problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New staff are asked if they suffer from skin problems when using cleaning products ■ Mops/brushes and protective gloves are provided and used ■ Staff wash rubber gloves after using them and store them in a clean dry place ■ Products are used in accordance with safety data sheets and PPE is used when appropriate ■ All staff are trained how to safely use and store cleaning products and never transfer them to an unmarked container 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Replace 'irritant' chemicals with milder alternatives where possible 	Manager	25/5/12	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to report any health problems they think may come from cleaning products, and to check for dry, red or itchy skin on their hands. 	Manager	25/5/12	
Manual handling Examples: lifting and moving heavy objects or objects that are difficult to grasp	Staff risk injuries or back pain from handling or moving heavy/bulky objects, eg cleaning equipment or heavy waste bags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trolleys are available for moving heavy waste bags ■ Staff do not overfill waste bags or buckets ■ Cleaning equipment is provided on each floor and staff are trained how to use it safely ■ All staff are trained how to lift properly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide a new mopping system with a long-handled wringer and a bucket on wheels to reduce lifting and carrying 	Manager	31/5/12	

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Working at height Examples: Cleaning windows	Falls from any height can cause bruising and fractures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Appropriate equipment, eg suitable ladder, is provided and staff are shown how to use it safely ■ Staff are reminded to re-position the ladder before they clean another window, to reduce the risk of an accident from over-reaching ■ Ladders and stepladders only used for low-level, short-duration work (less than 30 minutes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No further action required 			
Cleaning machines Examples: Machines used to clean hard floors in reception	Staff and others risk injury from improper use of machines, eg if it bucks and hits feet or ankles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The right machines are provided for each job ■ Staff are trained how to use the machines safely ■ Machines are regularly examined and maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind cleaners not to use machines if they think they might be faulty and to report all faults to the supervisor immediately 	Manager	25/5/12	
Lone working	Staff could suffer injury or ill health while working alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cleaning staff sign in/out at the front desk. If they have not signed out by 7.15 pm, security staff look for them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advise staff on how to contact security staff if there is an emergency 	Manager	25/5/12	
Electrical equipment Examples: cleaning equipment	Staff could get shocks or burns from faulty electrical equipment. Electrical faults can also lead to fires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff are trained in basic electrical safety and do pre-use visual checks. Any defective equipment, plugs, discoloured sockets, damaged cables and on/off switches are promptly reported ■ Any faulty equipment is promptly taken out of use ■ Safety checks of the electrical equipment are carried out to ensure that it continues to be safe. Where necessary this is done by a competent electrician. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to always do pre-use visual checks and not to use any faulty equipment 	Manager	25/5/12	
Inexperienced staff	New or temporary staff are at risk if they unaware of safe working procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Risk assessments are discussed with all new staff as part of the induction process ■ Temps are briefed on safety procedures by the supervisor before beginning work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No further action required 			
Fire	If trapped, staff could suffer fatal injuries from smoke inhalation or burns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Office Management company has done a risk assessment and taken the necessary action See www.communities.gov.uk/fire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advise new staff on emergency procedures, including location of fire exits 	Manager	25/5/12	

